

Star Johnston faced threat of extradition

EX-SECRET FILES REVEAL COLD WAR SCANDAL

By Cyril Dixon

BRITAIN'S armed forces would have been overwhelmed had the Russians attacked us in 1978, secret papers released yesterday revealed.

The RAF's Phantom jets had enough ammunition for just two days' fighting, air defence missile batteries could only be fired twice, and the Navy could not match the Soviet submarine threat.

The Army, meanwhile, would be so stretched that, even when fully mobilised it would have been unable to cope with the expected campaign of sabotage and subversion by Soviet special forces.

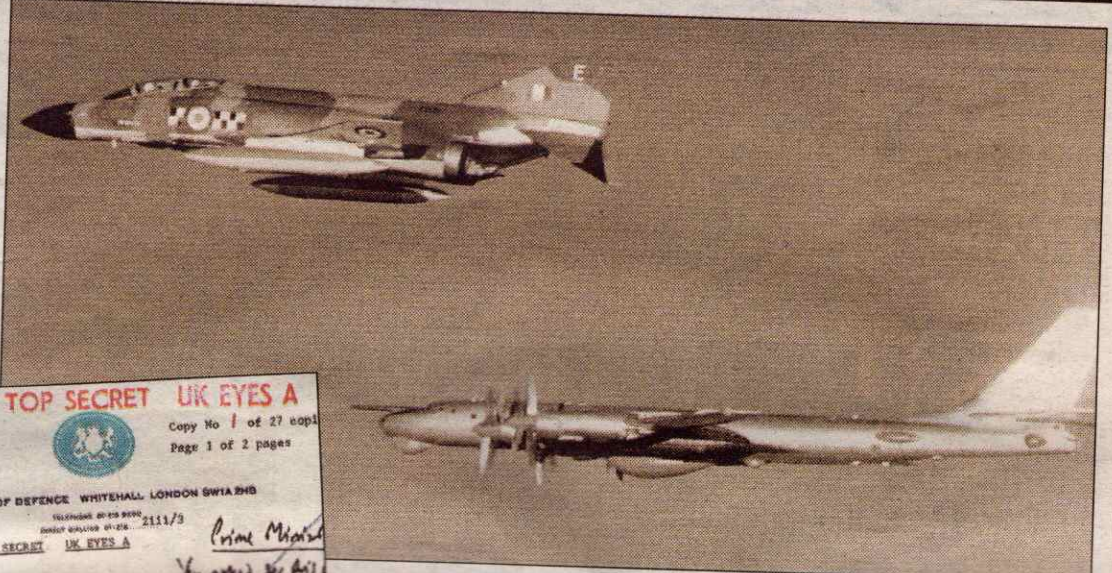
Shocked Prime Minister James Callaghan described the situation as a "scandal" when he learned how the forces had been depleted, and called for heads to roll.

"Heaven help us if there is a war!" he raved in one handwritten note.

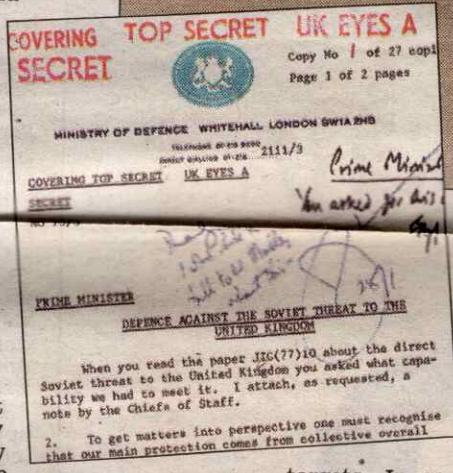
But with money tight, ministers had to accept that there was little they could do until new equipment, such as theornado jet fighter, became available in the mid-1980s.

The scale of problem became apparent after the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) - the UK's most senior intelligence body - warned in late 1977 that, in the event of a conventional war, the Russians could unleash 200 bombers and 18 submarines against the UK.

In addition, the Russians were expected to mine Britain's coastal waters while landing special forces troops from the Soviet diversionary brigades - disguised as civilians or NATO soldiers - to sabotage key



An RAF Phantom jet shadows a Soviet TU-142 bomber during the Cold War threat to the UK, revealed by the files released yesterday.



targets. In response to this level of threat, the assessment of the Chiefs of Staff was stark - they could not cope.

They noted in a top secret document in January 1978: "Air defences would be outweighed because aircraft would be outnumbered and stocks of air defence munitions would sustain operations for only two or three days.

"Maritime forces need better anti-submarine weapons, and face a massive threat from submarine and air-launched missiles and also from mines; the most serious deficiency is in numbers.

"The Army in the UK would,

until mobilisation is complete, have insufficient forces to meet its commitments.

"After mobilisation of the reserves, a process taking 15-20 days, the Army would be able to counter the currently assessed Soviet land threat during the initial stages of the war but, lacking supporting arms and logistic support, it would be inadequate to deal with any more significant threat, including sabotage or subversion on a wide scale."

The chiefs warned that much of the military command and control system was "unhardened, insecure and vulnerable to sabotage and jamming" while the Bloodhound surface-to-air missiles protecting key bases had only enough ammunition for a single re-load.

However, British and US commanders were confident that they could take out the entire leadership of the Soviet Union in

the event of a nuclear war, say other secret files made public today.

Three hardened bunkers had been identified around Moscow where, it was believed, the Russian Politburo would take refuge if the Cold War turned hot.

All three were thought to be "vulnerable" in the event of a nuclear strike, an assessment made by the JIC in September 1978 found.

The report said: "At least three of these sites - at Chekhov, Shavapovo and Chaadayevka (near Penza, some 620km south east of Moscow) - are for the use of the top national and military leadership.

"All these bunkered sites are believed to be vulnerable to a direct hit or a very near burst."

The report does not say how the bunkers were discovered, although they may have been identified by US spy satellites.

Callaghan's plot against Thatcher



LABOUR Prime Minister James Callaghan plotted desperately to derail Margaret Thatcher's rise to the top of British politics, official papers made public today reveal.

He abandoned plans for a snap General Election in 1978 out of a "malicious" delight in confounding the Tories.

Mr Callaghan's obsession

By Padraic Flanagan

in Kew, Surrey, Mr Callaghan's fixation on blocking Mrs Thatcher's career stooped to surprisingly petty levels.

Royal

In 1978, he had the Tory

ensuring that there was no space in the box for Mrs Thatcher.

That year, "Sunny Jim" Callaghan was in a similar position to Gordon Brown last year, toying with the idea of an early election as Labour picked up in the polls following a long spell in the

