

Civil defence open to new scrutiny

From Air Marshal Sir Leslie Mavor
Sir. It emerged yet again from the interventions of some elected members of local authorities attending as welcome guests this association's recent annual study that discussion of civil defence is unlikely to be fruitful until the ground on which opponents of civil defence or critics of civil defence policy base their objections is exposed and examined.

Of the several factors that contribute to the prevailing miasma none is more stultifying in its effect or more actively promoted by "nuclear free" councils and the so-called peace movements than the holocaust fixation.

A continuous barrage of adroit propaganda has made this deep-seated but, given time for thought free from the horrors of the doom-watchers, might not one reasonably conclude that the existence in great strength in both East and West of submarine-based nuclear weapon systems that cannot be knocked out would be a very powerful damper on the early use of nuclear weapons in any conflict and on any escalation thereafter?

What has been missing too long in the general perception of civil defence is the idea of a developing conflict that, having started almost certainly through miscalculation or mistake rather than by deliberate design, we and our allies must aim to halt somewhere along the line, sooner rather than later, by the vigour of our resistance and the skill of our diplomacy.

In other words, what we should now be thinking about is not an inevitable holocaust but the need, should we ever be attacked, to put up such resistance from the outset of hostilities as will enable some mutually acceptable political accommodation to be achieved and the conflict halted; and this fighting resistance in the early, almost

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certainly non-nuclear, stages of conflict can only be optimized if we stand firm at home, and how firm we stand at home will depend very largely on the effectiveness of our civil defence.

Although we cannot totally dismiss the possibility that at some stage in any hostilities between East and West all rational war aims might indeed be abandoned and all-out nuclear war released and so have to make some preparation against this remote possibility, the real importance of civil defence lies increasingly in its effectiveness at the lower levels of conflict.

Regrettably, the facile but appalling and outdated assumption that "war" means all-out nuclear war has not only led many local authorities to refuse to make plans against the ultimate contingency but induced them to reject civil defence planning *in toto*. Instead, these authorities for the most part make much of their efforts to prepare for the emergencies of peacetime - a planning activity that is plainly so much a public duty falling to councillors and officers alike as scarcely to justify public mention.

Further, this stratagem of concentration on peacetime emergencies is presented as the "all hazards" approach, a claim that conveys a laudable principle but in practice is bogus.

In short, wherever a local authority professes its commitment to the "all hazards" approach in emergency planning, those whose safety should be its constant concern are well advised to ask of it, how "all" is all?

Yours faithfully,
LESLIE MAVOR (President,
The Association of Civil Defence
and Emergency Planning Officers),
Bariaston House,
Alne,
York,
June 28.

Russians put more emphasis on détente

From Richard Owen
Moscow

10/7/85
Soviet comment on the Star Wars programme remained uncompromisingly harsh yesterday despite reports from the United States that Soviet negotiators at the Geneva arms talks might be willing to consider a flexible formula under which testing of Star Wars weapons would be banned but research would be permitted.

Members of an eleven-man House of Commons delegation from the Foreign Affairs select committee who held talks with senior Soviet officials yesterday, said they detected little or no Soviet flexibility over Star Wars.

The Soviet side, led by Mr Boris Ponomarev, a candidate politburo member, had not made a distinction between research and testing, and had said the Star Wars research led directly to weapons production.

The Russians had appeared obsessed with Star Wars and had admitted they had their own laser technology research but had insisted it was for peaceful purposes only.

At the same time diplomats noted a growing stress on détente in Kremlin pronouncements in the wake of the announcement that Mr Mikhail Gorbachov and President Reagan are to hold a summit in November at Geneva.

Making his first appearance

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as Foreign Minister since he was unexpectedly appointed last Tuesday. Mr Eduard Shevardnadze agreed with Mr Péter Varkonyi, his Hungarian counterpart, that there was "a real chance of reviving détente".

The statement appeared in a communiqué in *Pravda* yesterday, together with a call for "honest and constructive" East West dialogue.

Mr Shevardnadze, a man of almost no experience in diplomacy and foreign affairs, has his eye not only on the November summit but also on the East-West meeting in Helsinki in three weeks time. He will face some tough talking from several long serving Western foreign ministers over Soviet abuses of human rights.

Mr Shevardnadze, aged 57, has spent the past week winding up his affairs in Tbilisi, where he has been Georgian party leader since 1972.

Officials in Moscow are waiting to see if Mr Shevardnadze will bring any advisers with him from Tbilisi. Diplomats said that even if he did the experienced professionals who served under Mr Gromyko at the foreign ministry would dominate the conduct of policy.

'Surprise' over level of radiation leak

The former manager of the Windscale nuclear reprocessing plant told Carlisle Crown Court he was surprised by calculations which showed that 4,000 curies of radioactive material had been pumped into the Irish Sea.

British Nuclear Fuels, the state-owned company which runs the Sellafield atomic plant in west Cumbria, maintains that

only 1,500 curies were discharged after an incident in November 1983.

The company pleads not guilty to three charges brought after a stretch of beach near the plant was contaminated.

Mr John Doran, who was general manager of Windscale at the time, said a quantity of radioactive ruthenium 106 was

sent in error from a reprocessing plant into a sea tank

An attempt was made to pump the highly active portion known as crud back into another treatment plant by using an emergency pipeline.

During the operation a quantity of radiation was discharged to the Irish Sea.

The case continues today.

Civil defence scrutiny

From Vice-Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly

13/7/85
Sir. Whilst agreeing with much of Sir Leslie Mavor's letter (July 9) may I make some comments?

Over the years the main reason for the creation of "nuclear-free zones" (an idea planted by foreign propaganda) has been largely due to the well-meant but inept eruptions from the Home Office and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. These, in turn, have been religiously distilled and promulgated as they are bound to be) by the conscientious county civil defence and emergency planning officers. The credibility of the resulting scenario has thus been wholly

rejected by most ordinary, well-meaning and patriotic folk.

The perception that war will occur through miscalculation or mistake has long been the most obvious scenario. Further, as the Soviets, like the West, do not relish a holocaust, such a war would almost certainly start by the Soviet armies "mingling" so fast with those of the West that a preemptive battlefield strike (and thus escalation) by the West would be unlikely.

Undoubtedly any Soviet incursion into Europe would be accompanied by the descent of Spetznaz (SAS-type shock brigades) not only on to the swathe of Allied airfields across England (thus severing the link with the USA), but also on all the vital centres of command

and communication, to the extent that their ever-increasing trained resources would permit.

The defence of our country is needed against nuclear and conventional might, black propaganda, subversion, sabotage, espionage, organised anarchy, and terrorism. It should, therefore, no longer be the responsibility of several ministries working to individual scenarios and competing for the few funds available.

A National Security Council is needed which can allocate responsibilities and resources and monitor procedures and efficacy.

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