

# At home week in the nuclear bunkers

'It's a sham' says CND as chemical lavatories, Treasury tags, orange squash and soap go on display. Martin Wainwright reports

LONDON'S Government is holding an "At Home" in its nuclear bunkers this week, inviting all and sundry to inspect its emergency supplies of chemical lavatories, Treasury tags, and soap.

The capital's three control centres will open every afternoon until Sunday from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. to coincide with a week of action by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

The secretary of CND, Monsignor Bruce Kent, posed with a large pair of cardboard scissors at an "opening ceremony" outside the romantically-named Pear Tree House bunker yesterday. He described the Government's civil defence initiatives as a sham which forced local councils to waste money on futile measures at a time of financial cuts.

Behind him a steel door led into London's south-east sector control, which takes up two basement floors of a block of council flats on the slopes of Gipsy Hill, near Crystal Palace. Only cleaners have paid regular visits to the 23 rooms since Labour took control of the Greater London Council in May, 1981, and opted out of the regular war games.

Vandals have tried to force the door but failed (although they got into one of the other bunkers at Wanstead, and stole some radios), and Mrs Violet Farr's electrician was allowed in a year ago. "All my electricily boxes are down there, apparently," she said in her flat, No 1 Pear Tree House, which would form part of the bunker's

outer defensive layer of rubble if the bomb fell.

Her neighbour at No 2, Mrs Maria Kimonides, said that she had been driven out of the house when the bunker was used regularly. "It was a terrible nuisance, and kept us up half the night when they were drilling away — bzzzzz," she said.

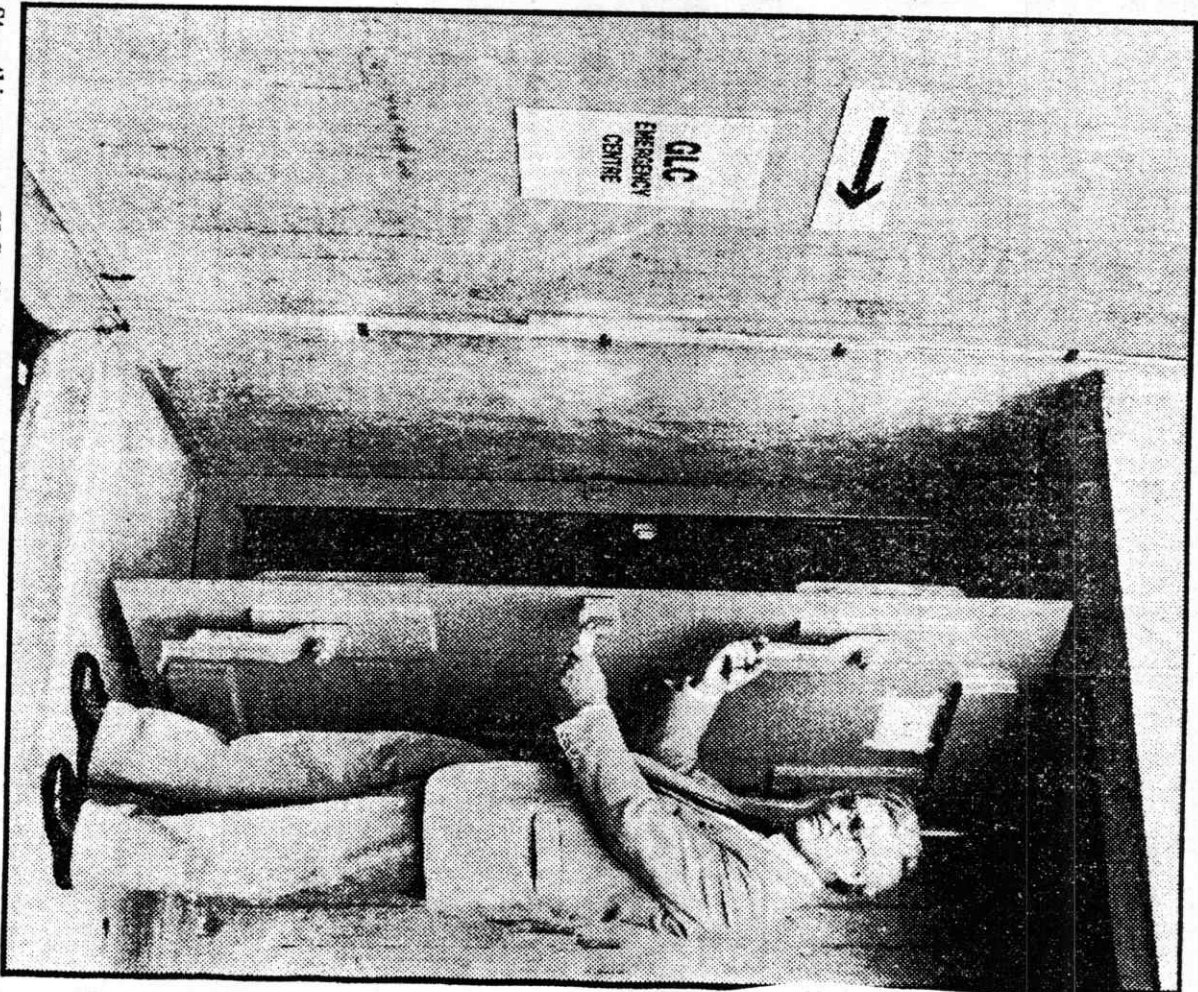
Three years in mothballs have added extra unreality to the hideaway, which was never intended to have much to do with life as most of us know it. The fridge is empty, apart from a three-quarters full bottle of orange squash. Various clocks have stopped at different times of day, and only the stationery cupboard with a large number of Treasury tags, dozens of files, and a box of 144 mapping pins suggests that civil servants may one day return.

The GLC is obliged to keep the bunker, which is rented for £6,000 a year from Lambeth council, but not to do anything with it other than the vague obligation to have an emergency plan. The official view is that the whole thing is a waste of time.

Councillor Simon Turney, chairman of the public services and fire brigade committee, said that the steel doors were so ill-fitting that they would need to be backed up with Sellotape.

But visitors will be left to make up their own minds, and government material on civil defence is available in each bunker as well as anti-nuclear leaflets.

Council emergency officers like Mr Alan Brinkley will be on hand to explain that



Step this way: a GLC official, Mr Jerry Noakes, invites visitors to explore the delights of the West Norwood bunker

the concrete boxes are theoretically capable of housing 50 planners and police for up to 30 days when radiation levels, in the Government's opinion, will be low enough to allow them out.

Recalling the war game days, he commented rather forlornly: "This place is full of ghosts." The CND view is that nuclear war would fill it with a whole lot more.

The bunkers are at Pear Tree House, Llanham Road, West Norwood, London SE19; Church Hill Road, North Cheam, Surrey; and Northumberland Avenue, Wanstead, London E12.