

2. The final curtain

In his second report in the

Secret Society series,

DUNCAN CAMPBELL reveals the codeword that would signal the end of civilisation in Britain

THE ULTIMATE act of the British government's secret war plans is the declaration of 'Operation Chanticlere'. Chanticleere is the signal for the evacuation of a selected handful of senior ministers and civil servants from London in the face of a probable nuclear attack on the capital. Whitehall has selected as its metaphor for imminent extinction the crowing cock of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a cock that is seduced from its proper duty to give early warning of the dawn, so invoking the Fall — Doomsday.

At the cry of Chanticleere, spread round Whitehall by Principal Establishment Officers, civil servants on the secret evacuation roster have to grab their briefcases and toothbrushes and rush to a convoy of waiting military buses in Horseguards Parade. About two hours' drive from London are selected and fortified citadels to accommodate those whose names the Cabinet Office has selected for nuclear survival (however temporary). The major central government citadel is at Hawthorn, near Bath; another is said to be close to Leamington Spa. Other central government staffs would evacuate to East Anglia and the Midlands.

One unlikely group that has been secretly placed on the list for survival is the Department of Transport's Shipping Policy Directorate. This group of Whitehall warriors have a crisis home in a giant concrete bunker on the outskirts of Cambridge. There, they would become the staff of NATO's Defence Shipping Agency. There is an organisation which has no powers in peacetime, but which would, in war, control the operations of every civilian merchant ship of all the NATO nations. Film showing the NATO Defence Shipping Agency bunker — even though its exact location was unidentified — was cut from this week's *Secret Society* episode at the last minute, even though it had previously been approved for

transmission by the BBC.

Suburban Nottingham houses another bunker for one more minor outpost of Whitehall. A giant concrete blockhouse in the east of the city would become home to part of the Department of Energy, and to many employees of the major oil companies. The Nottingham bunker is the headquarters of the NATO Wartime Oil Organisation, NWOO.

These NATO wartime civil agencies have been established for many years, and are intended to control the withdrawal or transfer of civilian resources to military use in a crisis. They are part of a broad spectrum of planning, which includes three secretly written Emergency Powers Bills, and general 'wartime host nation support' plans for visiting foreign troops.

Chanticleere is the final and most secret part of an extensive crisis emergency network now in place in

Whitehall, thoroughly revised and restructured since Mrs Thatcher took office in 1979. It protects and preserves what Whitehall considers the greatest essential of British society, its 'machinery of government'; that is, themselves. But every aspect of this planning has been secret. The broad details, Whitehall concedes, would tell the Russians nothing. But they would frighten the natives, a motive for secrecy that some of the former planners themselves now suggest is improper. The former Ministry of Defence Permanent Secretary Sir Frank Cooper told me last year that he thought that many aspects of war emergency planning 'manifestly were not secret . . . I think that, in a democracy, on the whole, we should try and take the people along with us.'

The secret bills

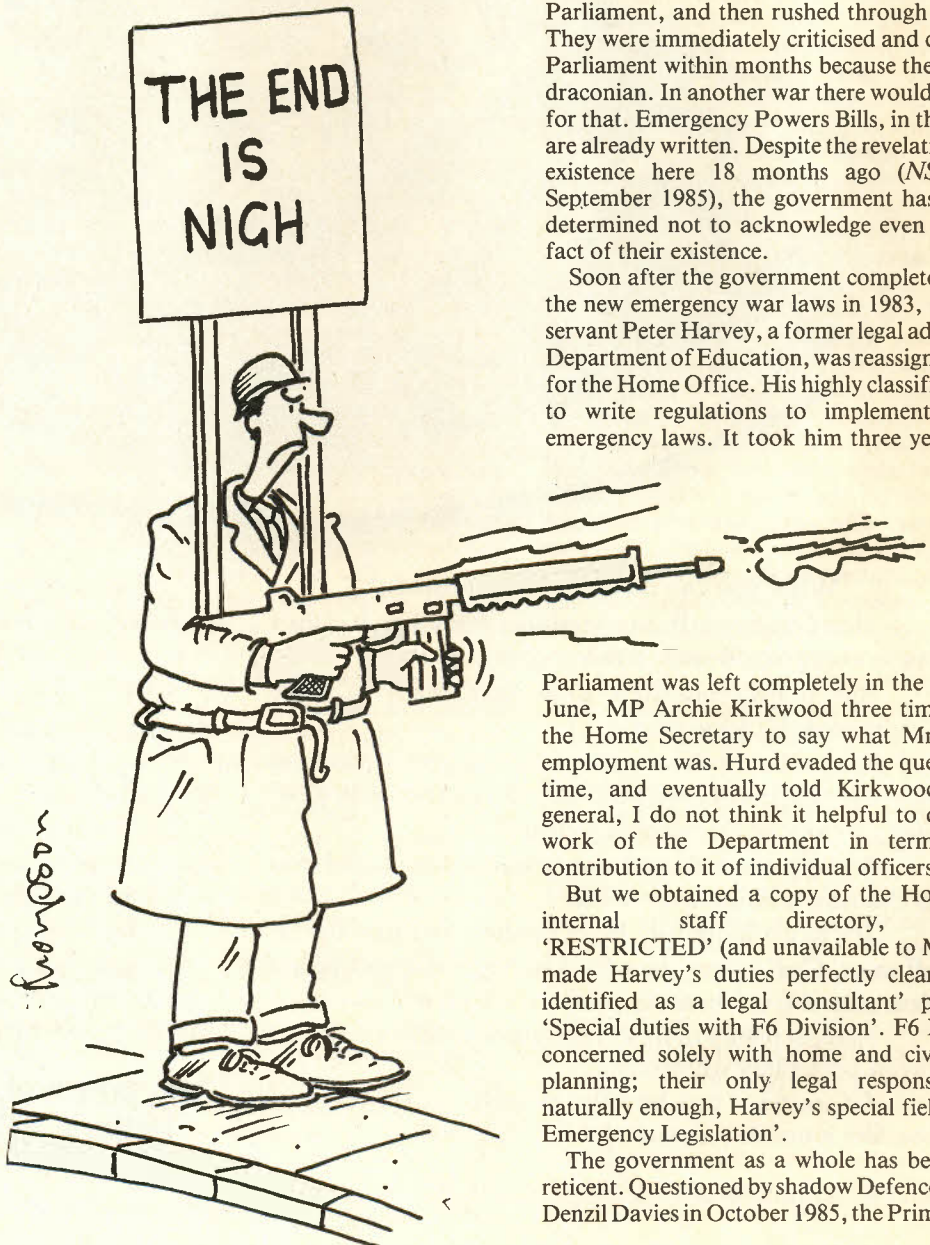
But that wasn't what happened in 1939. Secretly written Emergency Powers laws were hidden from Parliament, and then rushed through in a crisis. They were immediately criticised and changed by Parliament within months because they were too draconian. In another war there wouldn't be time for that. Emergency Powers Bills, in three stages, are already written. Despite the revelation of their existence here 18 months ago (*NS* 6 & 13 September 1985), the government has remained determined not to acknowledge even the simple fact of their existence.

Soon after the government completed drafting the new emergency war laws in 1983, senior civil servant Peter Harvey, a former legal adviser to the Department of Education, was reassigned to work for the Home Office. His highly classified job was to write regulations to implement the new emergency laws. It took him three years — and

Parliament was left completely in the dark. Last June, MP Archie Kirkwood three times pressed the Home Secretary to say what Mr Harvey's employment was. Hurd evaded the question each time, and eventually told Kirkwood that 'in general, I do not think it helpful to discuss the work of the Department in terms of the contribution to it of individual officers.'

But we obtained a copy of the Home Office internal staff directory, classified 'RESTRICTED' (and unavailable to MPs). This made Harvey's duties perfectly clear. He was identified as a legal 'consultant' performing 'Special duties with F6 Division'. F6 Division is concerned solely with home and civil defence planning; their only legal responsibility is, naturally enough, Harvey's special field — 'War Emergency Legislation'.

The government as a whole has been equally reticent. Questioned by shadow Defence Secretary Denzil Davies in October 1985, the Prime Minister



THE ANCIENT WISDOM

There is a tradition that behind all the religions and philosophies, there is a vein of persisting truths which never change. They relate to the very nature of the Cosmos, both on the vast and the minute scale. We are in and of that nature. Makes you think — Yes?

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refused to admit to the existence of any draft emergency laws — let alone newly written Bills. She told Davies that:

It will be for the government and parliament of the day to determine the content and introduction of any such measures. It is not a matter which parliament need address now.

But addressing the issue now is the whole point, according to former Defence Ministry civil servant Clive Ponting — who has seen and worked on the new emergency laws and regulations. Otherwise, he pointed out, they would simply be a legal *fait accompli* in any crisis:

Parliament is going to be under pressure to pass these Bills rapidly. The amount of discussion is going to be very limited. In effect, what's being decided now inside Whitehall is what is almost certainly going to happen.

The issue is not that War Emergency Legislation is an inappropriate or improper part of government planning, but that plans to fundamentally alter the legal system from an early stage in a crisis are being kept secret. Parliament is being lied to. Britain is almost unique in NATO in having kept its emergency laws secret. Fourteen out of 15 other NATO nations have debated such laws, and put them on the statute books.

Under the US-UK Lines of Communication Arrangement, Britain agreed to provide the US armed forces with supplies and services, including fuel and food. According to Rear Admiral Eugene Carroll, formerly the Director of Military Operations for the US European Command, the US requirements from Britain are very extensive:

We were looking for everything that was necessary to receive materiel — ports, warehouses, supply depots, magazines, airfields; and then the ability to identify the materiel, assemble it into shipments, and to move it on into the battle zone.

Since the *NS* revelations in 1985, government ministers have now acknowledged the USUKLOC Arrangement, and admitted that it provides for food, fuel, hospitals, transport and the services of British workers to be provided to the Americans in a crisis.

Even Labour Defence Ministers were left in the dark about the implications of the USUKLOC arrangement. Roy Mason, Secretary of State for Defence between 1974 and 1976, told us that he was never informed about the agreement. His successor, Lord Mulley, was aware that an arrangement had been made, but wasn't told about plans which had been made, based on it.

According to Sir Frank Cooper, the USUKLOC plan was agreed as a result of American pressure 'for NATO countries to do more'. NATO also argued that it would 'keep some of the American senators off our backs'. Admiral Carroll agreed that the pressure was American, and resulted substantially from 'Vietnam problems':

We had drained a great deal out of Europe. As a result, it was necessary to step up the apparent contribution of the host nations, the European members of NATO.

Special treatment

Many controversial and unattractive features of the British emergency plans were described to me by people who had worked on them, at quite different levels. A plan for controlling traffic on major roads would mean virtually sealing off civilians in cities. According to Clive Ponting and other civil service sources, roads would be effectively given to military traffic only. Former

Royal Military Police Staff Sergeant Ricky Hill told me how, in the Army reserves in the 1970s, he had been extensively exercised on such home defence planning:

I was told . . . as part of a major planning . . . that large proportions of the population would be virtually penned in.

Before an attack, he learned, there would be internment camps for dissidents, and after attack (in effect) death camps for diseased survivors. He said he was 'shocked' to be sent on exercises to practise interning British dissidents, as he'd 'never realised that that was the type of thing that the TA was going to be used for'. One type of internment camp he encountered was to hold genuine enemy saboteurs. An island off the south coast had a quite different role, where the targets were to be

Pacifists, politicians, et cetera . . . They were people that would be singled out for special treatment.

THE USUKLOC PLANS include National Health Service hospitals which have been secretly identified and earmarked for emptying and handing over to the United States. In Scotland, *Secret Society* obtained a list of the hospitals which have secretly been included in the medical plan. They include two major, thousand-bed hospitals in Glasgow — Stobhill and Gartnavel. In a crisis, they would be taken over and used to house US Navy casualties.

The emergency planning officer for the Greater Glasgow Health Board, Dr Scott Wilson, told me that he had been given no official information about hospitals in his emergency plans being given over for US use. He said that he had heard 'vague' rumours about Stobhill hospital being handed over to the Americans. He had never even heard rumours about the second hospital, Gartnavel. (Indeed, it is suggested that this hospital was eventually turned down by the Americans as its facilities were inadequate.)

Other 'standby' hospitals are to be provided by the Americans themselves. But even at US provided hospitals, British resources will be extensively required. At Burtonwood US Army base near Warrington, Lancashire, two

prefabricated, 1,000-bed mobile hospitals for the US Army are already fully stockpiled, in kits. But to put the hospital kits together, Britain has to provide, according to official US information, 182 railroad cars, 28 trailers, and 490 skilled local workers.

According to Admiral Carroll, he and his colleagues applied 'tremendous pressure' to the UK in the 1970s to get 'tens of thousands' of hospital beds allocated for US casualties. But not because wounded US soldiers would all necessarily need treatment in the UK. A major reason was a historically deep-rooted distrust by US general officers of their own casualties, whom they feared would not return to the battlefield if they were permitted to be evacuated as wounded to the US itself.

Former Health Minister Ray Whitney has admitted to Parliament that 'contingency plans for . . . National Health Service resources' do cover 'NATO military casualties'. Such plans would be 'incorporated in those for the National Health Service as a whole in time of crisis or war'. The phrase 'as a whole' is Whitehall speak — acknowledging that individual NHS regions have *not* been told that their resources are secretly to be commandeered, and would not be available to the public.

It is government fear of public alarm and discomfort, not national security, that now inhibits discussion of these sorts of plans, according to Clive Ponting:

There is no reason why you can't discuss the principle of what's contained in the Bills without actually passing them. Then they're put away in cold storage until required.

National security wouldn't be threatened. But how any future international crisis is managed, domestically as well as internationally, is critical to survival, according to Admiral Carroll. If current military plans proceed unchallenged, he warned, war will again be as inevitable as it was in the days before World War I:

We're going to come together at such a rate of speed, it's almost like a nuclear explosion. We're going to create a critical mass. We're not going to be able to control that mass, on both sides of the Curtain. □

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