

DISSENT FIRST TARGET OF NUCLEAR REHEARSAL

A FULL-SCALE, SECRET rehearsal for nuclear war began this Tuesday in government offices, and military and police headquarters throughout Britain. The exercise is partly concerned with rehearsing NATO's inevitable wartime decision to 'go nuclear' — but during the present, 'pre-war' phase, exercise 'play' is almost entirely concerned with civil measures to be taken inside Britain. DUNCAN CAMPBELL reports

KNOWN in full as WINTEX/CIMEX 85 (Winter Exercise/Civil-Military Exercise), the exercise has two aspects. WINTEX is a two yearly top level 'command post' exercise, during which embunkered political leaders and military commanders make the key decisions to go to war against the Warsaw Pact, and then launch a nuclear attack. CIMEX is a co-ordinated rehearsal of national plans to mobilise civil and military resources for war. Each NATO nation participates in the exercise, which is carried out on paper only.

According to the 'events lists' prepared for WINTEX/CIMEX 85 and previous WINTEX/CIMEX exercises, at least half the events with which military and police commanders are now dealing concern civilian dissent or resistance to mobilisation for war. NATO planners identify trades unions and peace groups as the principal 'internal threat' to be combatted during the early phases of the exercise.

According to the British government's training manual for scientific advisers and other documents, the internal threat, besides sabotage and 'subversion', includes 'adverse public reaction to government policy'. 'Dissident groups', which it describes, will come under attack and eventually be subject to military 'subjugation and elimination'.

The 'pre-war' phase

During the current pre-war phase, Her Majesty is to issue Queen's Order 2, calling out the reserves. Parliament will be expected to pass the first of several Emergency Powers Acts, all currently top secret, granting sweeping powers. (The subsequent acts are even more draconian, but it is not expected that Parliament will be consulted; they will be enacted by Royal Decree, if circumstances still permit constitutional niceties).

The war itself begins early next month, and then goes nuclear before 'play' ends on 13 March. The exact timing of the nuclear attack and the events thereafter are kept secret from exercise 'players' until they have been officially announced to them.

After the war begins, more attention is given to military events such as conventional air attacks, and civil dissent is dealt with using emergency powers.

As part of WINTEX/CIMEX, members of a top level committee, the Transition to War Committee (TWC), are now meeting daily in the Cabinet Office to order the seizing of food and fuel supplies, conscription of labour, and other plans in the government's War Book. Inside each government department, a Deputy Secretary has been put in charge of a

Transition to War Executive Committee (TWEC).

In Edinburgh and at nine regional Department of the Environment offices, Regional Emergency Committees are to meet to coordinate local action. But despite the present government's frequent attempts to bully local authorities to carry out nonsensical official and civil defence proposals, no local authority in Britain has been allowed any information about or participation in WINTEX.

At 10 Downing Street, a Standing Committee on Information Policy has been set up to 'ensure positive and continuous guidance' of the media. Bernard Ingham, the Prime Minister's press secretary, takes charge of the subordinate Press Working Party, which is in charge of official announcements via the press, BBC, and ITV. The press are expected to be entirely compliant to government and NATO information policy.

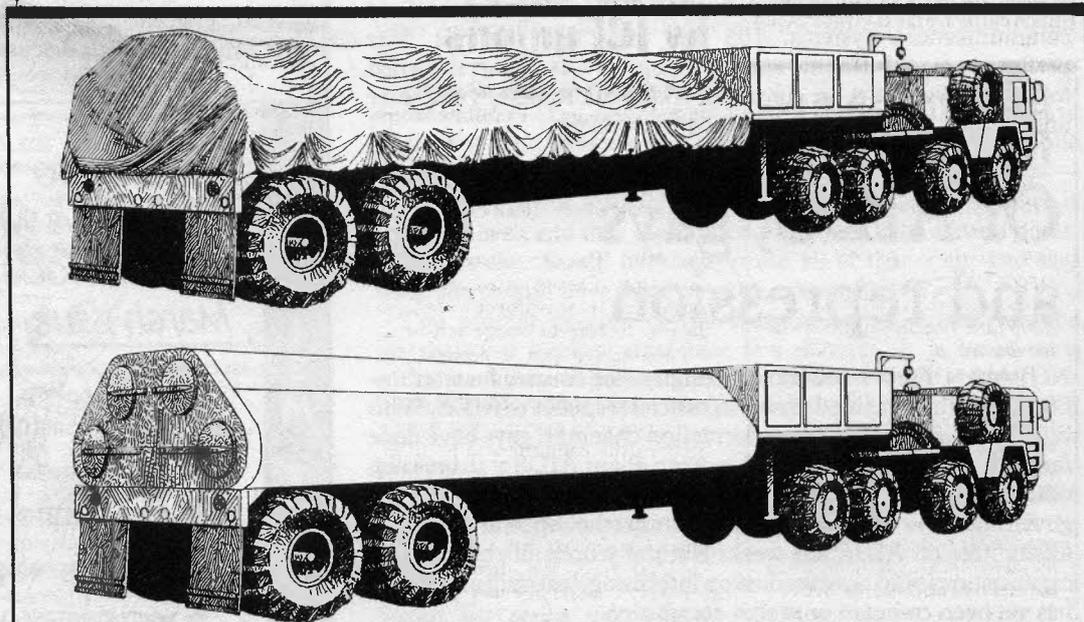
Yugoslav 'flash-point'

This year (as in WINTEX 81), the crisis is understood to start in

Yugoslavia, where the possibility of Soviet military invasion is feared likely to create a military confrontation between East and West. The first moves in this crisis started on Tuesday.

As the nuclear crisis approaches, early in March, the final, top secret step in the official 'Machinery of Government in War' plan will be the pretended evacuation of designated central government officials and key cabinet ministers from London. When it is decided that the capital will not survive, the order goes out from TWC to each department by a secret codeword. Each official on the evacuation list is passed the codeword and must, immediately, run to a central point in Whitehall where a fleet of buses stand, engines running. (Such officials are by now presumed to be at their desk night and day, toothbrushes at the ready.)

In WINTEX 1983, this manoeuvre was fully rehearsed to the extent of having the chosen bowler-hatted few actually muster for roll-call in front of their buses — and not a few bewildered tourists. It is not yet known whether this event will be repeated in 1985.



Cruise vehicle's peculiar outline

GAVIN STRANG MP has tabled a question this week to the Minister of Defence after looking at photographs and videos of the cruise convoy which regularly creeps out from Greenham and makes its way to exercise on the heavily guarded Salisbury Plain.

Members of Cruisewatch, who have been severely harassed by the police for tailing the convoy, have become suspicious about some of the vehicles. Pictures taken while the convoy was out on 11 December and 16 January show a tarpaulin covered vehicle; on close inspection the tarpaulin sags deeply at intervals where there would normally be the hard metal surface of the launcher (as shown in our artist's diagram, reconstructed from photos).

Strang, MP for Edinburgh East, has asked Heseltine 'Why is it necessary to use dummy cruise missile launchers on exercises?'. Meanwhile, Cruisewatch members are wondering whether this could explain the aggressive behaviour of the police which included — during the 16 January exercise — taking a crowbar to a van windscreen driven by Cruisewatch women.

Asked about the strange vehicle the Greenham press office told the NS 'We are prohibited by the MoD from discussing these matters — though we wish it weren't so'. The MoD said: 'It's always been our policy not to discuss composition of the convoys.' (see also 'That convoy could be a hoax', NS 27 July 1984)

Jane Dibblin