

World War III: an exclusive preview

The military 'Square Leg' exercise, which has just finished, tested out the anticipated course of a major nuclear attack on Britain. The military planners' map of likely Russian targets, shown here — the first time that such information has ever been published — shows that the advice given to the public by the Ministry of Defence and the Home Office has been intentionally dishonest and misleading. Art treasures take precedence over city dwellers — who the government does not intend to survive. **DUNCAN CAMPBELL** previews the holocaust.

'IF BRITAIN is ever attacked by nuclear bombs or missiles', says the introduction to the Home Office's absurd pamphlet *Protect and Survive*, 'we do not know what targets will be chosen or how severe the assault will be'. Indeed we do not know the moment-to-moment feelings of Soviet Strategic Rocket commanders, but that does not mean that British defence planners do not have a very good idea indeed of which parts of the country face the greatest threats of obliteration — and which will survive.

The Home Office and the Ministry of Defence have never, however, willingly shared that information with the public, who are taking the risks, and casualties, in such planning. Indeed, they have used such public ignorance as the lever for a policy of non-evacuation which, it is now apparent, is an attempt at the wholesale and cynical writing-off of most of the urban civil population. The Central Office of Information film, for example, which would accompany the issuing of *Protect and Survive* before an anticipated attack claims:

No place in the United Kingdom is safer than anywhere else . . . you will be far better off at home.

This may be true for residents of the Scilly Isles, but it is scarcely worthwhile advice for those living in important industrial centres or near major strategic targets. The publication of the government's own plans shows the protect and survive policy to be an explicit deceit.

The Ministry of Defence has been no more honest. It has most recently been engaged in an expensive propaganda campaign aimed at the residents of the Greenham Common (Newbury) and Molesworth (Northampton) areas, the purpose of which has been to convince them of the value of the new US Cruise Missiles. A major part of this propaganda campaign has been the distribution of £8,500 worth of glossy colour brochures on Cruise Missiles. The brochures claim that

The precise locations of the peacetime Cruise Missile bases are not . . . likely to be a priority target

because the missiles are mobile and will disperse before attack.

As residents of these areas may now see for themselves, the Ministry of Defence actually expects these US bases to be obliterated very quickly indeed.

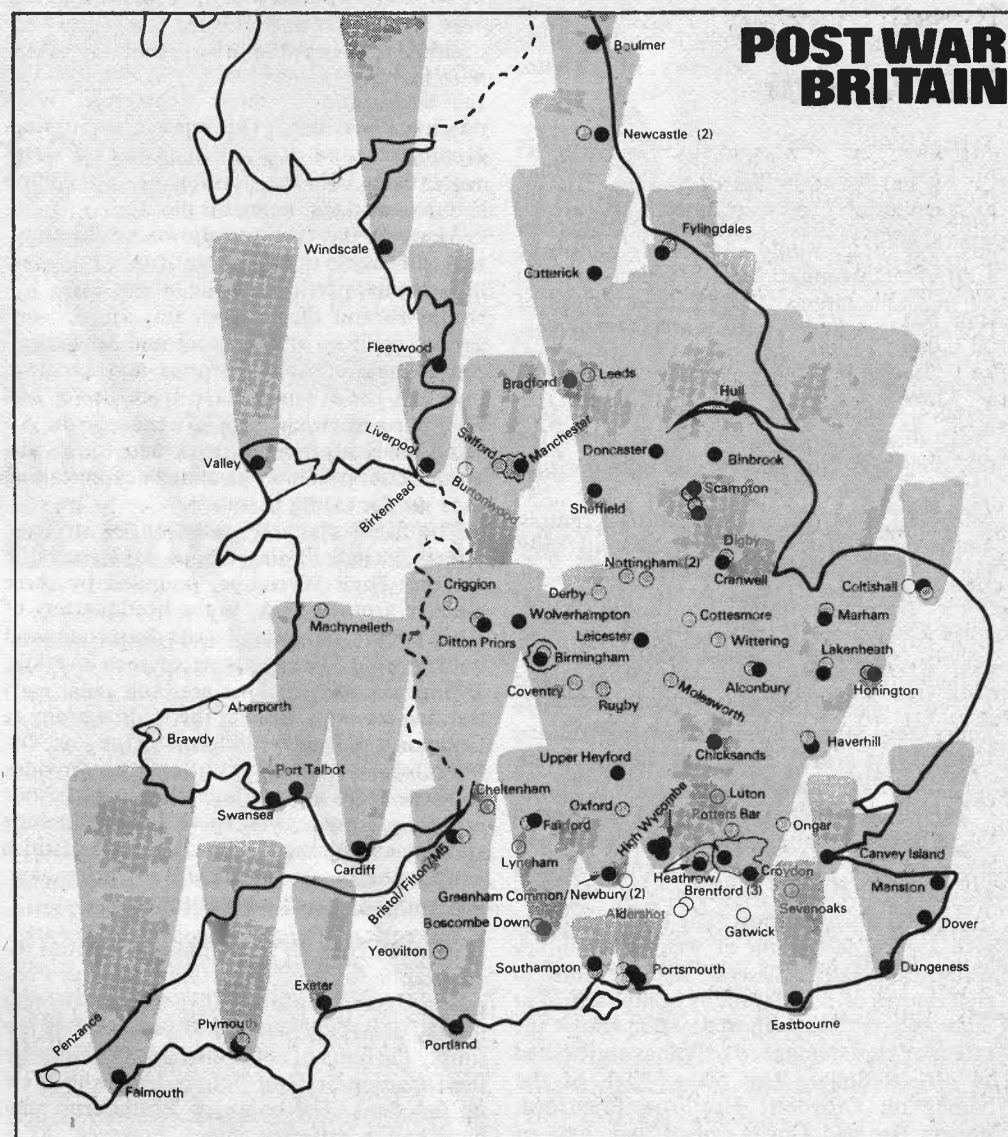
To be precise, Greenham Common was obliterated by a 3 Megaton airburst at 15,000 feet at 12.04 on Thursday 19 September. At

more or less the same time, a 2 Megaton bomb groundburst to the west over Newbury itself. Nothing would remain in the town itself, and blast damage would extend across a band 30 miles wide. Both of these weapons arrived very quickly indeed during the hypothetical Soviet 'first strike' — precisely 9 minutes after Attack Warning Red at 11.55 am, the first actual warning of an attack in progress. Greenham Common was only the second target to be 'struck' according to the nuclear burst charts for Square Leg which the *New Statesman* has obtained. (The first was Boscombe Down airfield, north of Salisbury; in peacetime an experimental aircraft base, in war another reserve US base.)

The picture of the UK under attack which was produced during Square Leg is highly plausible, but Home Office minister Leon

Brittan, who is responsible for Home Defence, refused to release details of the bomb plot during a visit to a London sector bunker at Wanstead last week. He claimed that people might be misled into thinking that the plans represented the 'actual intelligence estimate of what the Soviet Union intends, should nuclear war happen'.

The charts we have obtained give virtually the complete picture of the attacks on the UK assumed during Square Leg. They may not be the latest, most exact 'intelligence estimates', but they are certainly highly intelligent estimates of likely target areas. The pattern of attack, categorised by strategic studies experts as 'mixed urban-industrial and military', accords exactly with well-understood Soviet targetting intentions. The types and patterns of warheads used do not precisely match the



The 'Bomb plot' of nuclear attack used in Square Leg. Open circles indicate airbursts which in general cause little fallout; black circles show groundbursts which are responsible for most of the fallout. The map has been copied from a variety of official sources including maps on display at the Basingstoke and Wanstead bunkers which were open to the press last week. Almost all of the bombs 'used' were in the range of 1/2 to 3 Megaton — or from 25 to 150 times the power of the weapon which devastated Hiroshima. Broadly speaking, these are the sorts of warheads currently fitted to Soviet missiles targetted on Western Europe.

The attack came in two phases: a first strike very quickly after the attack warning, between noon and 12.10; a second strike drifted in from 1pm to 3pm. The shaded area on the diagram represents the limits of fallout after 3 hours, although the intensity of radiation in this zone would range from the mild to the quickly lethal. Around each bomb site would be a zone of blast damage and a 'main fire zone' which would in urban areas often turn into a firestorm. For a 2MT groundburst on a clear day (which this was), heavy blast damage would extend to 3 miles, with a main fire zone of 6 1/2 miles radius.

exact current Soviet missile force, but features such as the multiple bombs on important targets are wholly authentic. (Since missiles are at best around 70 per cent reliable, and generally now have multiple warheads, an important target such as a nuclear bomber base will receive two or even three attacks from warheads on separate missiles.)

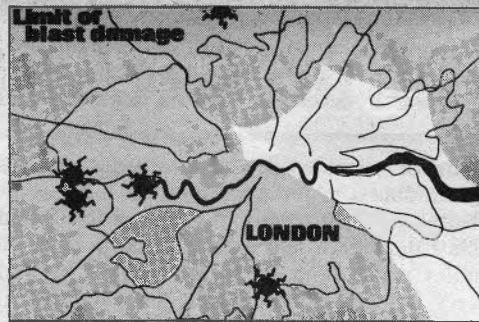
Another authentic feature of the map is the attacks on little known targets of actual strategic importance. Thus, for example, there are bombs on the US Air Force electronic listening station at Chicksands just south of Bedford, and RAF Digby in Lincolnshire, which does similar work. (These stations would both be attempting to monitor the communications of Soviet aircraft.) At Rugby, and at Criggion in Shropshire, bombs landed on the very low frequency radio stations which are the main means of communications with submerged submarines, particularly the Polaris force. And a bomb in a remote corner of Wales in fact hit the most important US undersea monitoring centre in Europe. It is less obvious why other parts of Wales took a pounding; Aberporth near Cardigan is a dispersal base, but Machynlleth sports no likely target, unless the Ministry of Defence knows more than it is letting on.

THE MINISTER'S CLAIM that these are mere guesstimates for the sake of exercise may thus be disregarded. The latest Defence Intelligence estimates will be little different, and any 'real' attack would, most likely, simply be a different permutation of or selection from the available targets. Huddersfield instead of Doncaster, perhaps, or the NATO HQ in Northwood, Middlesex instead of High Wycombe. As one examines the plot in more detail, it is increasingly clear that this is a very 'real' attack plan, and one which shows the doctrines of *Protect and Survive* to be corrupt.

The targets, broadly, fall into two categories: first, the urban-industrial centres, and secondly strategic targets such as airfields, ports, depots, communications, and command and control centres. In the former category, there are early attacks on Port Talbot, Nottingham, Derby, Salford (west of Manchester), Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and Leicester. In the second strike about three hours later, targets included Birmingham and Coventry, Cardiff, Swansea, Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield and Liverpool.

Surprisingly, perhaps, London was not a target *per se*, although much of the capital was more or less destroyed by bombs landing around the outskirts, particularly the three on or near Heathrow airport. The London bombs give a good indication of what the military whimsically call 'collateral' damage done to civil centres of population by bombs aimed at other targets. The map of London shows the extent of blast damage to buildings anticipated on official Square Leg plans. Each of the bombs on Croydon, Heathrow/Brentford, Potters Bar and Ongar caused wide arcs of damage which left only parts of East London — and, of all places, the City — intact.

Among strategic targets, US bases took clear prominence. These include the well known airfields at Alconbury, Lakenheath (with Mildenhall close by), and Upper Heyford, and the current reserve bases, soon to be Cruise Missile centres, at Greenham Common and Molesworth. Fairford is a US tanker base. Boscombe Down, Cranwell and Aberporth are all believed to be earmarked for



Post world war III London: bombs on Ongar, Potters Bar, Heathrow, Croydon and Canvey Island damaged most of the capital through blast and fire (shaded area). Heavy radiation covered central London from the Croydon bomb while more arrived later from Eastbourne and Dungeness. In a similar attack on Birmingham during Square Leg, casualties by the fourteenth day were estimated to be 40%, excluding those who would die later from radiation sickness or disease.

wartime use by the US Air Force, under 'joint basing' agreements. The bombs on Haverhill, Essex may have been intended for another US reserve base, Wethersfield.

British and American nuclear bombers would also have dispersed from other bases on the bomb plot, namely Scampton, Waddington, Marham, Cottesmore, Wittering, Honington and Coltishall. Two US arms depots in the UK — at Burtonwood and Ditton Priors — also feature on the plot.

Many of the facilities shown would be attacked because of their significance for troop movements, particularly the movement of US troops to and through Britain. The US has special facilities at Liverpool and Southampton for the arrival of troops and supplies; many of these would leave from Dover and Hull (also Harwich, here left unscathed). Attacks on Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton airports would primarily be aimed at forestalling their use for troops in transit.

The MoD planners' selection of strategic targets include both obvious and recondite choices. High Wycombe, pounded by three massive groundbursts, is the headquarters of RAF Strike Command, whose deep command bunker would be the target of such overkill. Fylingdales and Boulmer are both radar early warning stations. Besides the VLF stations at Criggion and Rugby (both run by the Post Office) Ongar, another PO station, also provides overseas radio links. Catterick and Aldershot are major army centres. As well as the listening stations at Chicksands and Digby, the British listening headquarters, GCHQ at Cheltenham, also comes in for an early attack.

A FEW CENTRES which have no obvious industrial or strategic importance, such as Penzance, Oxford or Machynlleth may be wrongly plotted or wrongly aimed; or perhaps they are simply the butts of some malicious humour by the Directing Staff of Square Leg, who drew up the plans. The bomb on Eastbourne may have had a different intent, however. As a groundburst, the fireball would suck up large quantities of earth which would be later deposited as fallout. Given the prevailing southerly wind at the time of the attack, the fallout plumes (see shading on map) would quickly spread to cover London and other parts of the south east. The radioactive ash of the Eastbourne dead would thus be used as a weapon against those alive to the north.

Although the idea of deliberately enhancing fallout in this way may be fanciful as far as

Eastbourne is concerned, it is clearly the reason for the attack on Dungeness, site of two nuclear reactors. The effects of attacks on civil nuclear power reactors are so serious that some groups have even proposed that the nuclear holocaust should have its own version of the Geneva Convention rules under which nuclear power reactors would be exempt from direct attack. The reactor core — which would be widely distributed as fallout — contains many unusual long lived radio-isotopes, particularly those of caesium.

The consequences of the attack on the reprocessing centre and 'nuclear dustbin' waste storage facilities at Windscale would be even more horrific, leaving the centre's inventory of waste strewn, in this case, as an unpleasant radioactive cocktail across central Scotland. (The Square Leg exercise had an unusual southerly wind which would more often be southwesterly — tilting the fallout pattern shown on the map more to the east.)

For the second exercise running, the planners 'dropped' a 5 Megaton bomb in the Thames Estuary between Canvey Island and Chatham, perhaps an economy measure as it assails the refinery and the naval base at one go.

THE EXHORTATIONS of *Protect and Survive* do not fit well with such concealed official expectations of what will happen during an attack. With threats and pleas, *Protect and Survive* urges people to 'stay put'. This may be good advice while you are sheltering from fallout; it is nonsense, except to the bureaucrats, before an attack. The correct, commonsense point of view was expressed succinctly in a 'Nuclear Survival Handbook' published by Arrow last week:

Persons living near the 'earthquake crater' areas (ie near the centre of a likely explosion) should ignore all threats or inducements intended to make them remain in that area, and should evacuate it even if they had made no previous arrangements regarding their destination.

If everyone followed this advice, the government would have to think seriously about providing extensively for refugees from the urban areas and other likely targets. They would have to arrange greater food stocks and make early plans for emergency accommodation for hundreds of thousands of people. They would have to reconsider the current plans for sealing off roads. During the trip to the Wanstead bunker, the press were able to see the 'restricted' plan for Essential Service Routes (ESRs) around Greater London. All 14 major roads from London would be designated ESRs, reserved for government traffic only.

Ultimately, the Home Office would have to abandon the policy, now explicit, of deliberately trying to ensure that a large part of the urban population *does not survive* an attack. It is worth comparing this policy with some other features of the highly detailed Square Leg scenario, which we have obtained from classified military plans for the exercise. Here are a few of the steps up to war:

27 August: HMG requests preparations to be made to remove art treasures.

12 September: Cabinet approves Queens Order 2 (Suspension of Parliament and assumption of Emergency Powers).

13 September: Panic buying in some cities. War was declared on 15 September, four days before nuclear attack; in between, the government bunkers were manned, so that the top brass might join the nation's art treasures on the survival list.