

will become Ambassadors, were educated at public schools and Oxbridge than the equivalent group in the Home Civil Service. A high proportion studied arts subjects at university. Their social background and their style of life, which some think too grand and therefore inappropriate for government officials representing Britain abroad in the 1980s, does not endear them to the Left.

HOWEVER, while the reform of the Home Civil Service has been considered recently (for example in a Fabian pamphlet edited by David Lipsey) little thought has been given to the reform of the Diplomatic Service. Labour's discussion document — a Socialist Foreign Policy — makes no reference to reform of the FCO. It merely states 'diplomats frequently send back false and misleading information'.

The Review of Overseas Representation produced by the Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS) made many recommendations for change, some of which were implemented under the last Labour government. Others have been introduced under the Tories as part of their programme of public expenditure cuts, in spite of their howls of outrage when the Report was first published. There are, however, a number of unresolved matters which need examining if the next Labour government is to have the kind of bureaucracy it needs to help it develop and implement its foreign policies.

The most important of these is the question of the retention of a quite separate Diplomatic Service from the rest of the Civil Service. Foreign and domestic policies are now so closely intertwined that they cannot be compartmentalised; nor should the officials responsible for them be compartmentalised. Expertise is required in both the UK and abroad, for areas like export promotion or aid policy and administration. Currently we employ in Britain mainly Home civil servants to undertake this work in the Department of Trade or in the Overseas Development Administration. Abroad, we use diplomats.

This system has obvious disadvantages. It means those who work on these matters in London lack experience overseas and those who work on them overseas have insufficient knowledge of the UK end. The use of the Diplomatic Service as an agent for home departments abroad also means individual diplomats at all levels have to work on a huge variety of different functions during their careers. Lack of specialisation carries with it the danger of lack of expertise. Moreover, aid and trade, crucial activities for a Labour Government, tend to carry slightly lower salary and less kudos in the Diplomatic Service than the 'political' jobs, reporting on and analysing political developments in foreign capitals.

One solution which the CPRS suggested as one of three possible options for reform was that the Home Civil Service and the Diplomatic Service should be amalgamated. Within the unified service there would be a Foreign Service Group whose members would be found in a number of home departments as well as the FCO. They would have an obligation to serve abroad and would specialise in the particular functions of their own departments.

The next Labour government might consider implementing this proposal or at least a modified version of it. There would be fierce opposition to it from the diplomats as there was when it was originally put forward. The esprit de corps of the existing Diplomatic Service would be lost, but that might be no bad thing for Labour.

Partly because domestic politics are of much greater importance politically (meaning electorally) than foreign policy, the Labour Party, including its Left wing, has given these issues scant attention. That has been reflected in its uncertainty over the Falklands. Labour's discussion document on foreign policy of September 1981 merely asks the following inconclusive if unexceptionable question:

How can our commitment to decolonisation be reconciled with the desire for colonised people for protection against the threats of annexation from powerful and autocratic neighbours? The Falklands dispute has been deadlocked for years. Party policy is that the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands should not be handed over to a regime which violates civil and human rights. It is likely that a change of regime in Argentina will be necessary before fruitful tripartite discussions can be undertaken. Meanwhile the rights of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination must be upheld.

Such a statement begs more questions than it answers. But there has rarely been any serious debate in the Labour Party about foreign policy with the exception of those questions that relate to defence such as NATO and unilateralism. It is more convenient to push foreign policy issues under the carpet since such issues pose such fundamental questions of value and ideology in a party that is already so internally divided.

As a result the Left has not resolved its differences on the EEC. It has not yet worked out a consistent line on trade policy, and the development of the Third World. These are areas where the Foreign Office has a particular view. It is strongly pro-Europe. It is inclined to see aid first in political and then in export terms rather than in relation to developmental aims. Without clear priorities in the event of a new Labour government the Foreign Office and the diplomats will decide them, with the rest of Whitehall playing second fiddle. And they will not be quite what Ministers intended.

It is then vitally important that the Labour Party should be clear on what its overseas policies are and that it should have the right instrument to implement them. If we were starting from scratch we certainly would not re-invent the Diplomatic Service and deploy it as at present. The problem is to get Labour leaders to take sufficient interest in how to reform it. But the greater problem is to get them to accept the implications of Britain's reduced economic status which means we cannot be active in all the areas we once were, including the South Atlantic. On the acceptance of this rest many of the reforms that are needed. □

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FALKLANDS 1

No lessons learnt

Despite the Falklands, international arms dealing will continue and the South Atlantic will be a less safe place. DUNCAN CAMPBELL reports.

'BRITAIN DOES not appease dictators', we have been told again and again. We always have, of course, but the Falklands has at least focused attention on some of the consequences for the developed and underdeveloped world of the supply and sale of advanced, highly sophisticated arms. Ferranti workers in Edinburgh and Manchester made the *Isis* bombing sights with which the Argentine Skyhawks were fitted, and which were employed so effectively against *Ardent*, *Antelope* and *Coven-*
try. Their French counterparts at Bourges made the Exocets. Sterling Armaments of Dagenham sold the Argentine some 100 sub-machine guns seven years ago, which may have turned up at Goose Green but were probably bought for a grimmer domestic purpose. Five were fitted with silencers, which reduce the performance of the bullets too much for conventional military use.

If Aerospatiale have learnt a lesson, it may be to strike while the iron is hot. Two weeks ago both Aerospatiale, and its partners Dassault-Breguet (who make the Super Etendard fighters), took new advertising in military magazines for their wares. The zest with which the lethal weaponry is advertised is striking. Exocet missiles, say Aerospatiale:

- are FIRE AND FORGET and SEA SKIMMING, which makes them practically INVULNERABLE to all enemy defences.

- provide SUPERIORITY in anti-surface warfare to those countries which adopt them, owing to their range, speed, accuracy and killing power.

1,800 Exocet have been sold to 25 countries, they say, and the orders are pouring in.

Britain's contribution to Third World arms transfers will not cease as a result of the Falklands and our naval losses. While Aldershot mourns the dead of the Parachute Regiment, the British Army Equipment Exhibition will be held there from 21 to 25 June. BAEE is an international arms sales show; Sterling Armaments and Ferranti will be exhibiting.

This is the fourth such event, mounted at considerable public expense, and now facing — ironically — a declining interest from some British manufacturers whose marketing and sales budgets will not stretch to cover the plethora of annual and biennial European arms shows. In 1976, just three months after we had broken off

diplomatic relations because of the military takeover by the Junta, two Argentine generals came to Aldershot. In 1978, ten officers came. In 1980, after the restoration of diplomatic links, five generals visited Britain. The Ministry of Defence even paid their air fares. There was nothing special about Argentina — every other military dictatorship from Turkey to the Americas got the same treatment.

The timing of the exhibition shows a remarkable lack of sensitivity by the government. It will take place right in the middle of the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament.

The largest display at BAEE is always by the Royal Ordnance Factories who make ammunition and bombs. They are government-owned but will shortly be 'privatised' to investors by Mrs Thatcher. Details of their contracts overseas are classified (of course) but they cover about 60 per cent of their production. We do know that ammunition and mortars, such as the Commando and Parachute regiments now face, were on the Junta's shopping list when David Owen, as Labour Foreign Secretary, fixed up a private visit for Air Force Chief of Staff Agosti in 1978. Indeed, all the way through Labour's suspension of diplomatic relations, the arms flow continued unabated.

Nor is there any sign that the policy of the French socialist government will be any more restrained than that of its predecessors. We have Jimmy Carter's human rights policy to thank for the fact that *Sheffield* and *Atlantic Conveyor* were lost to Exocet and Super Etendard, and not to

American Corsairs with Harpoon missiles. As soon as US 'human rights' policy led to arms supply restraint, France leapt in. There is no sign from Britain or anyone else in Europe that the Falklands war will have changed the world of arms dealing.

THE THATCHER RHETORIC has moved from the non-appeasement of dictators to the 'restoration of democracy' to the Falklands. It is a funny sort of democracy. The Islands had an Executive Council (Exco) and a Legislative Council (Legco). Laws were made by Ordinance of the Governor, normally with the approval of both councils. Exco, a majority of whose members were appointed or *ex officio*, took almost all decisions. Legco, which was mainly elected, did not, however, have absolute control over legislation. The Crown, through the Governor and the Foreign Secretary, was the ultimate authority. Ultimately, the Falklands were ruled, just like any other colony in this late colonial period.

The Falklands Constitution 'is much the same as Hong Kong', suggested Alex Smith, of the Foreign Office's Falklands desk. In fact, the remark does the place a little less than justice. Of Hong Kong's 4.5 millions, only some 100,000 are registered to vote. Only some 12,000 ever bother to vote, and they can elect only a minority of that colony's Urban Council, which has powers over street sweeping and parks. Hong Kong's Legco and Exco are entirely composed of officials and appointees.

Until some changes in 1977, the Falk-



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lands Legislative Council was in the same position; four out of nine members only were elected, and the Governor chaired the council and had the casting vote. Now, six out of nine are elected – but the resulting Council is still a long way from anything resembling Westminster democracy, even in miniature.

THERE IS ONE further aspect of the 'military option' on the Falklands – the establishment of a new US air and naval base at Port Stanley. This is seen in Pentagon circles as feasible and, indeed, desirable. A CIA report on the Falklands, quoted by Jack Anderson in the *Washington Post* last month, noted:

Argentina geographically dominates the ocean route between the South Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean . . . Were the Panama canal not operable or available, or in the event of a protracted war, this route would have a high strategic importance . . .

If the US can reconcile the establishment of a Falklands base with its Latin American policies, it will rapidly and easily find the strategic need for it. The southern oceans are becoming increasingly militarised and

in them the US operates largely through a chain of island outposts – including, for one purpose or another, the Seychelles, Diego Garcia, Ascension, and the Azores. The Falklands would be a useful extension of the chain of US sea power in the southern hemisphere.

That would be destabilising, if it happened. The extended deployment, and greater size of the US Navy, could only spur the Soviets on to enhancing the Red Navy's own long-range 'blue water' capabilities. And there is immense potential for long-term conflict in the region, over the exploitation of Antarctic resources. The Antarctic Treaty is not formally alterable until 1995, but Argentinian or other ambitions could upset it a great deal earlier. The secret CIA report had already anticipated that the US, not Britain, might by now have been at blows with Argentina over Antarctic bases. It also revealed that in 1976, an Argentine destroyer had halted an unannounced British expedition prospecting for oil in the Falklands area. It will now be surprising if the Falklands war does not leave the region with a more serious permanent legacy. □

FALKLANDS 2

The price of Admiralty

Naval architects still cling to ships that look dashing but do not suit modern naval warfare. PHILIP GEDDES looks at what is wrong with the old greyhounds of the sea

TWO TYPE 42 destroyers, *Sheffield* and *Coventry*, and two Type 21 frigates, *Ardent* and *Antelope*, have now been lost off the Falklands. So far no serious damage has been reported to the much more numerous, but older and more replaceable, Leander class of frigates. Much has been written about the loss of these four ships. The Ministry of Defence has started trying to lay the blame elsewhere. In truth the blame lies fair and square on the Ministry and on its outmoded thinking.

It has been extensively reported that the Type 21 has an aluminium superstructure. Contrary to Ministry reports, the Type 42, a MoD design, uses large quantities of aluminium also: the engine uptakes, the funnel, the helicopter hangar, ventilation and cabling ducts, and most significant of all, the upper deck bulkheads use an alloy of aluminium mixed with magnesium in proportions of 2 per cent to 4 per cent of the mix. This is the essential ingredient of many explosives when used in powder form, including a wide range of missiles and torpedoes.

In normal circumstances aluminium is an excellent conductor of heat and therefore does not melt or ignite. Most saucepans are made of it. However, if very large quantities of heat are applied suddenly, the oxide layer on the surface of the aluminium is broken. If oxygen is freely available at that moment aluminium will literally blow up,

scattering fine particles over a wide area. In effect, this is what would happen when a missile struck an aluminium superstructure. If aluminium does explode, a limited quantity of water put on the fire will have the effect of feeding it rather than fighting it, as hot aluminium reacts with the water. The oxygen will separate from the hydrogen and both will explode separately. Thus in certain circumstances fire control systems may increase a blaze.

Using such vulnerable metals is the inevitable consequence of a philosophy of ship design that is years out of date. Put simply, a warship is just a platform for carrying weapons. It is inevitably a compromise between several factors – stability, weight, range, load and speed. For half a century the Royal Navy has required speed of its ships, if necessary at the expense of other virtues. In conventional wisdom the only way of achieving speed has been to have a long thin hull; the greyhound look that is always associated with warships. The classic hull shape has a ratio of 9 units of length for every one of beam. However, advances in naval technology have made this lean shape increasingly unstable.

Second World War ships had big, heavy engines, large shell magazines low down in the hull, and big quantities of heavy fuel oil. The result was that you could put a lot of weight on the top of the ship in the form of guns and solid superstructure without losing stability. The modern ship is very different. Most of the Navy's main ships are powered by compact, lightweight gas turbine engines which use up fuel much quicker. The big guns have gone, and with them the large magazines deep in the hull. They have been replaced with a small

number of missiles, stored in ready-to-use compartments near the top deck. The eyes and ears of the modern warship – radar and other electronic sensors – must be mounted as high as possible in the ship to increase their range. The result of all this technological development has been that the basic centre of gravity of the ship has been affected adversely: to compensate, the upper works of a modern ship must be lightweight – and that means thin-skinned, vulnerable ships.

But many experts question the need for speed. Even at 30 knots, a modern frigate could not keep up with the latest class of Russian submarines, which are reputed to make 40 knots submerged. For this reason all RN escorts now carry helicopters to chase subs. Speed is expensive in both construction and running costs: above 25 knots every extra knot costs disproportionately more to obtain.

The price paid for those extra knots is serious: the main lesson from the Falklands is that our ships are woefully under-armed. A second world war destroyer had a useful load – weapons, fuel, crew, superstructure and the like – of about 50 per cent of its total fully laden weight. That figure for a Type 22 is only 12 per cent. The weapons of ships like the Type 42s are also poor because of this low load-carrying ability. Naval architects have called *Sheffield* an obsolete design from the start, and now events in the Falklands have proved them right. But Type 42s are still being built in British yards.

The same applies to the navy's 'modern' weaponry. Two weapons which have, by all accounts, worked well are ones the Navy dislikes – the highly versatile 4.5 inch gun, and the Sea Harrier. The missile enthusiasts of the Admiralty have been trying to get rid of guns for years – and in one class, the Type 22s, have succeeded. The Sea Harrier has proved itself in repeated actions against supposedly superior aircraft. But when originally developed, no one in the Admiralty wanted to buy it: it didn't fit with Navy preconceptions – short take off and landing threatened the Admirals' much loved massive aircraft carriers. They ignored the benefits of the Harrier, with the result that today the latest navy carrier *HMS Invincible*, has a flight deck nearly twice as long as is needed for Harrier take off.

All the signs are pointing to a Ministry of Defence cover-up operation, aimed at showing that the mess is everyone else's fault but theirs. A full inquiry into what went wrong is vital, in order that the lessons of the Navy's disastrous conservatism can be learned. The principal conclusion must be that we should abandon long thin greyhounds of the sea, however good they look on Navy Days, and go for ships which can carry a proper weapons fit. In all likelihood this will benefit the taxpayer too: for many designs do exist for warships with a proper ability to carry weight which can be built for much less than the price of the greyhounds the Navy is building now. For the moment though, it is the seamen of the Royal Navy, and their families, who are paying the price of Admiralty. As Kipling said, 'If blood be the price of Admiralty, Lord God we ha' paid in full.' □