



THE DEFENCE OF BRITAIN

A Sequel to
PROTEST AND SURVIVE

by
E. P. THOMPSON

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THE DEFENCE OF BRITAIN

This is the most important general election to be fought in Britain in this century. Yet I am already weary of it, after only ten days, and I find that my neighbours and acquaintances are weary also.

The British people must take a decision on June 9th which will affect, in the most literal sense, their lives, and the lives of their children and of their children's children, if these are to have any lives at all. Yet we are not being serious about it.

The matter which we must decide concerns the defence of Britain and how this may be best conducted. When I consult the dictionary I find that 'defence' means 'protection' or 'means of resisting attack'. I take it that we all regard this as an important matter.

We would wish to protect this island against a foreign invasion or occupation. There may be a few things wrong with this country—in fact we are coming to realise that there are a great many things wrong in this country, with its economy and its social life—but we none of us suppose that they will be made any better by having Russians or Americans ruling over us.

'Defence' also makes us think of various good things, like our 'liberties' and our 'traditions' and our 'way of life', although I find that people are becoming more and more uncertain as to what their liberties and traditions are, and whose way of life (that of the security services or that of the unemployed?) is to be defended?

Yet whatever doubts we have, we all can think of things in the British way of life which we like, and we would want to protect these against attack. I would think, for example, of our jury system and of our free press.

But the strange thing here is that when we think of the things that are worth defending, it often turns out that the attack is coming, not from without our society, but from

within. The Russians have not been tampering with our jury system—it is something which we might hope to export to them if times become happier—but this has been done by British police commissioners, judges, attorney-generals and the present Lord Chancellor. And a large part of our free press has been bought, over our heads, by money (some of it foreign money), making it more and more inaccessible to the common voice of our people.

So that the 'defence of our way of life' turns out to be something which cannot be done by paying over large taxes to a Ministry of Defence (which used to be called a Ministry of War) to buy more and more deadly nuclear missiles. A cruise missile cannot do anything at all to protect British liberties, any more than it can do anything to export liberties to people who live 'under the yoke of Communist totalitarianism'. No-one has even tried to explain how nuking other people will make them more free.

The 'protection' of our liberties against 'attack' has, for the greater part of our history, only rarely come to the issue of battles and weaponry. It has been done by means of law and pamphlet and sermon and the formation of democratic organisations—parties and chapels and trade unions—and by debates within the nation, and even (for this has not yet been bought over our heads by the property developers) by means of the vote.

The nuke and the vote belong to two distinct and opposed human technologies: mechanical brute force or the skills of civilised human life. They can buy the first (out of our own public revenue) but I hope that they cannot yet buy the second. The true defence of our liberties today requires defending these against the insatiable appetite of 'Defence'.

I must now explain to readers a certain difficulty about this pamphlet which they are reading. Over three years ago I wrote a small pamphlet called *Protest and Survive*. It made a little stir at the time, sold a good many copies, became adopted as a slogan, was republished in a Penguin book of the same title, and altogether it was the most ill-advised action of my life, for which I have been kicking myself ever since.

For I passed, with its publication, from being a private

citizen and a free-lance writer and historian into being a famous (or infamous) Public Person, 'Professor' (which I am not) E.P. Thompson, on call at any hour of the day and sometimes night for the service of a huge, untidy, sometimes quarrelsome but always high-spirited and dedicated movement arising in every part of the globe which is called 'the peace movement'.

I did not call this movement into being. It happened of itself and I was happened by it. It was a necessary event. If, after 38 years of gathering nuclear threat, and the insatiable and growing appetites of the nuclear armourers, some people had not stood up and started waving banners to each other across the globe, then one could properly have assumed that the human spirit had rolled over on its back and given up the ghost.

But I had myself become, with a few strokes of the pen, a prisoner of this peace movement. After all, one cannot come forward before the public and inform it that there is an extreme and immediate danger that civilisation is moving into a terminal stage—that everything we know of as civilisation may be at an end in some twenty or thirty years unless this process is reversed—that whatever enfeebled populations survive us amidst civilisation's radio-active ruins will carry all the infirmities of genetic damage—one cannot utter a mouthful like that and then say: 'Thank you, I am now going back to look after my garden.'

No way. I had said that if we hoped, in this island, to survive, then we must protest. And it follows that I must be seen to be protesting with the protestors, or else I must eat my words. If I could have seen a way to eat my words, perhaps I would have done so, even though some of them were large and unappetising. They were not nice orotund, facile words, such as the 'True Peace-Keepers' use ('deterrence', 'security', 'negotiating from strength') which the Great British Public is invited to swallow three times a day, and which leave it burping contentedly before the telly. Some of my words were too acid to swallow, and others (like 'exterminism') would have taken an awful lot of chewing.

I could not eat my words because I still consider them to

be true. I still consider civilisation's condition to be near-terminal. I still think that we must protest if we are to survive. Indeed, one or two of the more sombre predictions which I made over three years ago have already come to pass. The nuclear arms race has become very much worse. The hawks of one side continue to feed and to fatten the hawks of the other. The East and the West are hardening the lines of ideological combat against each other. New areas of the globe (Central America, the Middle East) are being sucked up into the cold war confrontation. Newcomers are expected daily to enter the nuclear club: perhaps, this autumn, Argentina. As the cold war confrontation hardens, so the security state is visibly strengthened on that side and on this, and a shadow is thrown upon civil liberties here in our 'free' world as well as in the Communist world.

So I must, for a little longer—either until the forces of peace win some little victory (and we have won no victories yet) or until the sky becomes so dark that it is too late for anything to matter—continue as a prisoner of the peace movement.

There could be worse forms of captivity. For this work has, in the past three years, brought me the friendship and companionship of thousands of people—people whose resourcefulness remind me of the best moments in our nation's history, and even make me wonder, in incautious moments, whether our people are really as dead and deluded as our media and our rulers seem to intend them to be?

On May 1st of this year I was invited by the very vigorous branch of CND on the Isle of Wight to speak at a meeting, and, since I had never visited the island, my wife and I decided to take a day off walking on the downs.

It was a beautiful day, and the Island was spared some of the drenching weather the rest of us have been having. What came into my mind, as we walked the downs, was what an extraordinarily favoured part of this planet we have the good fortune to live upon, and also how favoured this planet itself is in a universe which is mostly made up of emptiness and fire and gas and dust.

It is a fit which is falling upon me more frequently, in the intervals of 'grass-roots activism', and I suppose it is a pre-

monition of something: perhaps senility. It came upon me again, three days ago, when I drove across from Worcester to a rally of Christian CND in Carmarthen in South-West Wales. Mile upon mile a garden unfolded itself before me, with lush grass and with huge trees with late-opening leaves and lilacs in bloom; the wet spring had left these counties as the greenest place in the whole universe, the place with the strongest grass-roots of anywhere in the globe. It seemed to be a pity to leave this place in the knowledge that, in a few decades or so, it would be burned up.

I think that we are favoured, and that we owe a duty, not only to ourselves, but also to our ancestors who attended to the culture both of our fields and of our laws and institutions—who made them kempt and yet not too tidy nor too disciplined—and a duty also to hand on the place to the future. Despite the worst that agro-businesses and multinationals can do, despite the avarice of developers, despite the blasting of our inner cities, and despite the growing invasion of an arrogant state upon our rights, there is still enough here—not just to preserve but carry us forward: to bring us through to a humane commonwealth.

That sort of mood fell upon me also on the downs in the Isle of Wight. We are not well-fitted by our history to be the kind of people who just lie down and give up the ghost. There is something here that is still worth defending. Even if there is little opportunity for livelihood now in our shattered inner cities, there are people there who still inherit a culture which enables them to resist. And I thought of a pamphlet which I might write, as my contribution to the coming election next October. It would be a sequel to *Protest and Survive*, and it would be about the defence of all this—of our lives and of our liberties. It would be called *The Defence of Britain*.

In the next few days I mentioned the idea to a few friends, and also on my telephone. This was a great mistake. For someone who keeps my activities under surveillance must have carried the news post-haste to Mrs Thatcher, and she, hearing that I was about to write another pamphlet, with a great whirring of wings, like a pheasant trying to get lift-off into the air for fear of a fox, rushed across to the Palace and

instructed the Queen to call an instant election.

She supposed that in this way she had put an end to my pamphlet, and, indeed, she and Mr Heseltine borrowed its title for their own election manifesto (a matter of plagiarism which I may not discuss here since it has still to be argued before the courts). And I supposed much the same. But the conduct of this election, in its first week, was so disgraceful and the treatment of the issues placed before the nation has been so trivial, and I have been made by this so generally angry, that the idea of a pamphlet came into my head once more.

I must explain my meaning more clearly. It is not that all the political parties have policies, on the questions which affect the nation in critical ways, which are equally meaningless and awful. That has been the usual situation in the past thirty years, but this time it is different. On the question upon which all other questions hang, that of nuclear weapons, several of the contending parties have very good policies: and the parties have been influenced in making these policies by the arguments of the peace movement over the past three years. In particular, the Labour Party, Plaid Cymru, and the Scottish National Party, as well as several lesser parties such as the Ecology Party, have admirable stated policies and I commend them warmly.

The members of the Liberal Party also have an admirable policy, and the Party itself *ought* to do so also, but in fact it does not. Instead it has a sort of shifty hole, called 'Don't Know', on the crucial question of cruise missiles. This is because of a successful exercise in a well-known British tactical ploy called moving the goal-posts.

What happened was this. The Liberal Party Conference met at Llandudno in the late summer of 1981 and debated the issue of cruise missiles very thoroughly. As it happens, both I and my friend Bruce Kent (whom the Papal Pro-Nuncio Monsignor Bruno Heims—a Swiss gentleman who usually occupies himself entertaining prominent Conservative Catholic laymen to dinner, and making the sauces with his own hand—has recently described as a 'useful idiot', but whom the British people, if they survive, will come to remember as the most useful Englishman of this decade)—

both I and Bruce were invited by the Liberal delegates to speak at the Conference at fringe meetings.

I will only say that this fringe meeting was one of the most searching and thoughtful discussions of the whole issue of nuclear weapons, and of the international questions attending upon this issue, that I have been privileged to take part in in the last three years.

Bruce Kent came back to spend that night with us in North Wales, and the next morning we walked down the mountain at mid-day to the pub. We had a radio with us and switched on the 1 o'clock news, when the first item was that the Liberal Party at Llandudno had, after full debate and by a firm majority, declared itself against cruise missiles. And I beheld the spectacle of Monsignor Kent, on a Welsh mountain-side, whooping and dancing a jig.

It seemed like a victory for democracy. The constituency workers had argued: they had done their research: they had selected their delegates: they had marshalled their forces: they had carried the ball down the field, and, POW! they had driven it directly into the goal. But what we had not allowed for was the cunning of Mr David Steel and the Parliamentary Liberal Party.

For these M.P.s (or the majority of them) simply strolled onto the field and carried the goal-posts away. I do not know where they put them, for they have not yet been found. (Last year's Liberal Party Conference was not even allowed to discuss 'Defence'). It turned out that the active Liberal Party workers, in their annual Conference, by no means had the right to determine such significant matters as party policy. This was, it transpired, a matter for their betters. Labour Party constituency workers will sympathise since they have themselves often been through this goal-post moving routine at the hands of the Parliamentary Labour Party in the past thirty years.

What was going on behind the scenes was this. The leaders of the Liberal Party, who have long been in the wilderness and who have long had a wholly unjust share of parliamentary representation in relation to their electoral support, were interested at that moment less in their own constituency activists than in a very large and somewhat tuneless cuckoo

which had just fallen out of the Labour Party nest, and which called itself the Social-Democratic Party. In short, they had scented a chance to get back into serious political business again and they were negotiating that odd two-headed political creature which is now beckoning us to the polls, under the name of the Dalliance.

Now the Liberal head of the Dalliance is against cruise missiles, or it ought to be if the decision of its own delegates is respected, but the other, SDP, head of the Dalliance is looking in the opposite direction. This makes it difficult to go anywhere in a straight line, rather like a two-legged race in which both parties are tied back-to-back. It therefore seemed advisable that, on the matter of cruise missiles, the Dalliance should have no policy at all and should just have a hole.

I do not explain all this out of disrespect for the Liberal Party, but simply out of disrespect for politics. I dare say that the Liberal Party's leaders have a good many second and third thoughts about cruise missiles, but they are obliged to keep these private to themselves for fear of being bitten by the other head of the Dalliance. It should be noted that our media, which have spent much of this election trying to get their fingers into a hairline crack between Mr Foot and Mr Healey, on the matter of Polaris, have left this huge fracture on defence policy within the Dalliance strictly alone.

A great many Liberal Party members have continued, with sadder hearts, to play a significant part in the work of the peace movement, including the work of CND. Many Liberal candidates remain true to the democratic decision of their own party conference and they deserve support accordingly. This is also true of some members and supporters of the SDP, who are more serious and well-informed upon international questions than one might suppose from the pronouncements of their leaders upon 'Defence'. It is probable that there are candidates of the SDP who are deserving of the peace movement's support—if they will answer its questions clearly and give the necessary assurances.

But I fear that I cannot offer the same references for Dr David Owen, whose statements on 'Defence in the

current election are intended to wean away the sucking Tory voter from the dugs of Mr Heseltine, and which fill me with dismay. One must add by the way—although the poor fellow cannot be held responsible for his image, since that is made up for him by his media advisors—that Dr Owen, when he pronounces frowningly on 'Defence' with all the pomp and pretentiousness of a self-assumed 'statesman', resembles nothing so much as that ferryman whom the ancient Roman poets said would carry us across the river of Lethe, a river which divides the world of the living from the underworld of the dead.

I have now conducted you on a brief tour of the British General Election of 1983, although I should add that there is another party offering itself at the polls. This is the Conservative Party. While some of its members, and more of its supporters, and perhaps even some of its M.P.s, are seriously concerned about matters of peace, the policy of its leaders on 'Defence' are ferocious and it has no policy at all on disarmament. It is not a party which can be returned to government without risk to our lives. I shall come back to this matter anon.

I must return now, however, to explaining a certain difficulty about this pamphlet. I left off at the point where I said that the conduct of this election, in its first week, was so disgraceful that the question of a pamphlet came back into my head once more.

The conduct of this election is disgraceful, not because the candidates or the party election workers are behaving disgracefully, but because the election has been confiscated by the media and is played according to its rules.

The first of these rules, with the television and radio, is that instantly an election is proclaimed the shutters are closed upon all opinions in the nation's head except those which are authorised by the Two Main Political Parties and the Dalliance. Nothing is allowed to be thought or said unless it is an authorised party-political thought, or unless it is said by some media Presenter like Sir Robin Day or Mr Brian Walden who have some special license to interfere with the national mind. Anything else which might be in our minds

is extinguished until the polls are declared.

The second rule is that the media themselves decide what are the 'election issues', and they do this by blowing up whatever is trivial, searching out 'colour' and 'Personalities', and by trying to stir up little episodes of dissension within the parties (but especially within the Labour Party) by picking at old scabs and inspecting the sores underneath.

The third rule is to bludgeon day after day with meaningless opinion-polls, shoddily put together, and based on illiterate or irrelevant 'yes/no' questions which refuse electors the chance to express alternatives, complexities, hesitations or doubts.

The result of all this is to side-track every serious issue into by-ways, and to present the nation's political life as if it was no more than a collection of comic actors slipping about on banana skins and hitting each other over the head with bags of flour. I do not know that any of the politicians are particularly responsible for this treatment, although at this moment the trivialisation is very much to the advantage of Mrs Thatcher who is handled with a special awe.

Mr Michael Foot is managing to survive this exercise remarkably well, and despite the worst efforts of the media he is coming through as a fallible human being, with sincere convictions, in the midst of a whole Tussaud's gallery of infallible self-important image-conscious 'talking heads'. Mr Foot does not come across as a 'strong' or cunning candidate for Prime Minister, but simply as a man whose appetite for power, for power's own sake, is now exhausted, and who is ready to act according to principle and according to his conscience—in short, in the view of the media, an unfit politician.

Mr Foot apart—and one must thank him for his reminder that conscience and principle are the ground of any serious politics—one watches this nightly telly-carnival with astonishment. Some of the 'debate' is about 'Defence', and it was we, in the peace movement, who forced this upon the political agenda. Yet, in the very moment that the agenda is declared open, the arguments which we have rehearsed throughout the country for three years have been hidden from sight or forgotten; secondary issues are blown up to immense pro-

portions; false scent is laid across the track (how many jobs in 'defence' industries might be at risk?); and our case is presented to the people in a wholly distorted form like a grotesque cartoon.

Well, that is it. Three years of our labour is swilling away down the media drains. And there is no way, no way at all, in which the peace movement can get into this political 'debate'. For by these same media rules our voice is eliminated. Only 'party-political' spokespersons are allowed a place in the great revolving media wheel, and even then there may be only three spokes. Every other voice is excluded as marginal to the nation's political life.

What is strange about this is that (a few thousand devoted constituency workers of the various parties apart) the people who in the past three years have taken the most serious and committed part in the political life of the nation, and who have shown the deepest concern for the nation's destiny, are the members of the peace movement.

Week after week they have carried the argument to the people. They have held public meetings. They have discussed within chapels and churches and within political parties, trade unions and universities. They have gathered from every part of Britain to demonstrate in the streets. They have canvassed the housing-estates. They have raised money, in great part out of their own pockets, and they have conferred with fellow peace workers throughout Europe.

Some of them have done more than this. The women at the peace camp at Greenham Common, and the campers of both sexes at Molesworth, Upper Heyford, Faslane and other places, have testified to the seriousness of their political convictions in a way that makes the whole carnival of media politics look shoddy.

They endured, with caravans and makeshift shelters, one of the coldest winters of this century, in 1981-2, and although last winter was more kind, they have now been enduring the wettest spring in our records. And some of them have been willing to suffer for their convictions fines and imprisonments.

I know that some part of the public have been persuaded (by the media) that the 'Greenham Women' are an odd set of

people and a general pain. Maybe one or two odd things have been done, and maybe some of them have endured so much that they have got a bit bossy and have come to think of themselves as *the* only true peace movement, with the rest of the nation, who have not been out there in the frost camping with them, left nowhere.

But since (if we except a few Queens and Duchesses) men have bossed this nation about for nearly all of its history, and have stirred up a good many wars in the process, it may not be a bad thing that some of the women are getting uppish just now. And if the media are really anxious to go after a bossy woman, they do not have to make the long trek from the pubs of Fleet Street down to Greenham Common. They need only go to their own front pages, where they will find our Governess seated like Britannia on the backside of the old pee, a Trident in her hand and the helmet of Deterrence squashed upon her head.

It is true that one or two things that the 'women for life on earth' have done, with a multitude of supporters, have been so odd that, although I am by profession a historian of the social movements of our people, I cannot think of any actions quite like them. And most of all I think of that astonishing day, December 12th of last year, when, as if from nowhere, 40,000 women gathered quietly and without any sense that they were doing anything more dramatic than taking in the washing from the yard or popping out to the corner-shop, and formed that immense and life-affirming ring around the nine hostile miles of the fence of Greenham Common military base.

I have seen it said by an able feminist writer that the men in the peace movement felt 'threatened' by this action, and did not like it at all. There may be a few such arrogant clowns, but I have not met them, and I get about the country a good deal. On the contrary, I have found that many men were blown up with pride in the actions of their sisters, and were persuaded to view the whole matter of the rights of women with a new kind of gentleness and respect. There were even a few who were willing, for a month or two, to fall back into second place and serve the women's movement as friends and helpers. Which they had to do, in any case,

since the women had very clearly stepped forward into the front place, whether the men liked this or not.

I was fortunate in being an observer on December 12th, not because the women had any need of me but because a car was in need of a driver. And I walked half way around the perimeter fence as the women quietly assembled, and as flowers and children's drawings and photos and poems and baby-clothes were pinned upon the wire. It was an extraordinary sight, and it was also strangely down-beat and self-conscious in a characteristic British way. To tell the truth, the women did not do it with any great *éclat* or sense of theatre at all. No-one was quite sure exactly what was supposed to happen, nor even the exact moment when the miraculous linking was finally achieved. Some of the linked women were facing into the base, but at another part of the perimeter they had turned their backs upon the base and were looking outwards into the world. At one part there was a chant of 'Peace and Freedom!' and at another part some snatches of song.

It was a very untidy, low-key, British sort of do. Women had come from all parts of the country, and some had driven through the night. They came, they embraced the base and they greeted their sisters, they showed their presence, and then they drifted back home. (Some stayed, of course, to blockade the gates the next day.) But undoubtedly Other Nations would have done the whole thing better, and produced the whole drama with greater effect.

Yet the fact is that the women of Other Nations, who have done many ingenious and courageous things, have never mounted any action for peace with this particular quality of life-affirming symbolism nor on such a massive scale. It was an extraordinary event, which will very certainly be remembered in our history, and which carried a message outwards into the world which could not be misunderstood. It carried a quiet, unassertive, welcoming symbolism of a novel kind, unlike any other demonstration which I have ever witnessed. It did not only symbolise but it actually was, for a moment, an expression of international sisterhood, peace and love.

I have gone down a side-turning once again. I was explain-

ing the ways in which the media's rules confiscate to 'party-political' routines the most serious political voices in this country. The peace movement has conducted the major political argument in this country over the past three years. Yet now that an election has come—and 'election' means a process of *choosing*—it finds that it must wait anxiously in the margin of events, while others who understand the arguments only imperfectly rehearse the debate, and adjust or devalue our priorities to meet the contingencies of a party-political yes-you-did-no-I-didn't sort of campaign.

And the rules of the electoral game are even odder than this. For it was decided some time ago, under the pressure of democratic opinion, that the amount of money permitted to be spent by any candidate in his or her constituency must be strictly limited and carefully accounted to the returning officer. And that any external intervention in election campaigning in a constituency which might be held to favour one particular candidate over another should be chargeable to the favoured candidate's expenses (which must come within the permitted limit); or, if such intervention can be shown to have been made without the candidate's authority, such actions may be found *illegal*, with dire and dreadful consequences to all concerned.

Those who know the American electoral system, where vast quantities of dollars are expended upon lobbying for votes, some of the money coming from hidden and disreputable sources (such as the arms industries) and most of it being spent on foul and libellous smear campaigns directed against progressive candidates, will appreciate the motives behind our own electoral rule.

Yet a gaping hole was left at the top of this law, by which the national expenditure of political parties is totally unlimited. Hence we have the position today, where the Conservative Party has raked in a huge quantity of money (most of it from businesses which will in due course pass the cost on to us by raising the price of their products), a sum which has been estimated in the press at various figures from four to twenty million pounds.

The Tories in fact have got so much money to spend upon buying the mind of the British people that they have

not the least idea what to do with it, but are swilling it around all over the place, like one of those car-washes with huge rotating brushes. For example, they have been buying double pages of adverts in the daily papers, printed in out-size type so large that the reader crawls around inside it like an ant. Since I have not yet been able to get hold of a reducing-glass powerful enough to bring down this display to a readable type-face I don't yet know what these spend-thrift advertisements say.

These are some of the reasons why I became angry and began to think once again of writing a pamphlet. It is too late, of course, to get it around the country. But at least the writing of it will relieve my spleen. The democracy of Britain finds itself once more, as it has done so often in the past, with a whole set of rules and laws like locked doors between it and full access to the democratic process, and with money like water-hoses playing with full force against its face. And CND finds itself, as George Cruickshank's 'Freeborn Englishman' found himself in 1820, with a padlock through its mouth.



I thought about this first on Sunday the 22nd of May. And I rang up my publisher, Martin Eve, to sound out his opinion. The project (he thought) was just feasible, although made more difficult by the fact that Monday May 30th has been styled as 'Whit-Monday' bank holiday, and is a day when not only bankers but also printers close down their whole premises and have a Revel. If I was to write it (he said) then I must write it at once, and complete it within three days. The whole thing would put all my friends to great inconvenience and exertions, and all for the purpose of easing a pain in my spleen. Yet as my publisher and friend of many years, he was willing to humour me in my dotage.

I have now almost completed my explanation of the difficulties attending the production of this pamphlet. As it happened I was unable to allocate the lavish space of three whole days to the writing of it, since on Monday May 23rd (as no doubt Mr Heseltine has been informed already), my wife and I had to make a very quick and private day-trip to Vienna to consult with Soviet friends. What with this and that, the writing could not commence until 4 p.m. on Tuesday May 24th and the copy is to be delivered in 36 hours' time.

The difficulty, then, is that this thing is being written a damned sight too fast, and through one day and two nights. This has in no way eased my spleen, and that is no doubt why the house has suddenly fallen empty of all inhabitants save the dog which is cowering in the hall and my cat, who normally sits on my shoulder to offer editorial advice, but who on this occasion has fled to the kitchen. And that is why this thing is coming out pell-mell and hugger-mugger out of my unconscious, with Greenham here and the Liberal Party at Llandudno there and the Isle of Wight somewhere else. I have no time whatsoever to ferret facts out of my files or to deploy quotations or take breath for meditation, as I had when writing, in thirty days rather than thirty hours, *Protest and Survive*.

I have now completed the introduction to this pamphlet and I believe that there are still a few pages left for the argument. Fortunately we shall not need much space for this, since the

major part of this argument has, in the past three years, already been conducted and won.

In *Protest and Survive*, three years ago, it was still necessary to explain with care what a nuclear war would entail, and to show why the proposed exercises in 'civil defence' were futile and could be interpreted only as efforts to tranquillise the public mind. That argument is settled now, and its settlement has been signalled by those numerous local authorities (as well as by the whole nation of Wales) which have declared themselves to be nuclear-free zones, and which have saved the ratepayers' money for more useful purposes.

Only last month there was published the report of the British Medical Association's Working Party on *The Medical Effects of Nuclear War*. With the publication of this report this part of the nation's debate has been concluded. In the unemotional language of professional physicians the state of this nation, if it should meet with the disaster of nuclear war, is made plain. I think it unlikely that even Mr Heseltine will be able to dismiss the BMA as a bunch of pro-Soviet Marxists.

Indeed, most people are now persuaded by our arguments that cruise missiles on our territory, owned and operated by United States' personnel, so far from contributing to this nation's 'defence' or 'security' will actually increase its insecurity, by making these bases targets for attack and by placing the finger of a United States President firmly upon our own trigger. And even most of those who cannot yet see why these missiles must be refused, would accept them in this island with the greatest reluctance.

The evidence of this can be seen in the growing concern among Conservative voters, and some Tory back-benchers, over the question of a 'double key'. In fact cruise missiles are not operated by a key at all, but by a code; but no doubt some double-code could be devised.

We have been assured repeatedly that we ought not to concern ourselves about this matter, since the missiles can never be fired without a 'joint decision' of the President and the Prime Minister, and that an agreement to this effect was worked out many years ago which has had the assent of successive governments of both major political parties.

The peculiar thing is that this agreement, which concerns the sovereignty of the British people, has never been published nor set before parliament. And recent research in the archives has suggested that Winston Churchill (that is, the *real* Winston Churchill, who was once a person of some note, as older people may remember) was gravely dissatisfied with it, because it laid down conditions, not for 'joint decision' but for 'joint consultation'. And I have little doubt that if the real Winston Churchill had ever authorised the basing of a fearful new generation of foreign-owned and foreign-operated weaponry upon our territory—and I have some doubts whether he would, once he had taken a steady look at President Reagan and his advisers and formed an opinion as to their stability—then he would very certainly have ordered a double key, and he would have worn that key on his own watch-chain.

A few months ago Mrs Thatcher chose a new Defence Minister to succeed Sir John Nott; and she chose him with delay and care, not to defend Britain against the Russians but to defend her administration against CND. Mr Heseltine is a good sort of knockabout party-political busker, who cannot read deeply into things, who enjoys stamping about on the hustings, and who does not care very much what he says, nor whether it is true or not.

One of his first one-acters was to put on a contractor's helmet, invite the media into Greenham base, and show them around. It was clear that the bad press the government was getting about the 'double key' was bothering him, and, with the telly cameras whirring, he was asked a planted question by a deferential journalist. 'Aha!' came back Mr Heseltine's comforting response. The matter of the double key was no problem, no problem at all. In fact no key was needed. For we British had a recourse already. Every time a cruise launch-convoy sallies out of Greenham, it will be accompanied by a sturdy platoon of the R.A.F. regiment. And if our lads should notice that the Yanks were up to any unauthorised hanky-panky, then they would simply bonk them on their heads and place the whole convoy in jankers.

This tale was strictly for the British viewer and no efforts

were made to convey it to America. In March I was invited to address the Washington Press Club on the question of Euromissiles, and the members received me with courtesy and straight faces. But when I told them this story about Heseltine I had them rolling in the aisles. And again and again, in the United States, it was made clear to me that many Americans cannot understand what has come over the British and why we put up with it. I am not referring to members of the huge and growing American peace movement, but to the professional reporters of the Fourth Estate. They do, after all, remember a time when it became necessary for their own people to make a Declaration of Independence.

I am now going to make a prediction, and by the time that this pamphlet is off the press you will know whether it is true. When Mrs Thatcher returns from the Williamsburg Summit she will bring back with her a 'key', a key specially presented to her by President Reagan himself, large enough to unlock the door to her second term of office.

It may not be a *real* key, of course. It may be a great big fulsome Presidential Promise, cut out in the shape of a key: that never, ever, will he blow this place up without telling her about it first. Mrs Thatcher will have this key placed in her hand, like one of those huge 21-year-old birthday cards, and she will be told that Britain has at last attained to its nuclear majority. And she will come tripping down out of the Concorde, waving the key in the air like Neville Chamberlain just back from Munich, and singing to the electorate in its last somnolent week—

I've got the key of the door,
Never been twenty-one before!

Enough of this show-biz. For if that is to happen, it will only be the beginning of it. The British public will then have to start puzzling out how to get a double-key to Mrs Thatcher, and to whoever might follow her (Good Gracious, perhaps Mr Heseltine!).

It would be better, of course, if cruise missiles were never to come at all. The majority of the British people have

realised this. But some are still held back by real objections. And of these we will look at two. First, there are those who are distrustful of any act of 'one-sided disarmament', since they suppose that this would make it easier for the other side to go on arming without restraint. Second, there are those (often the same persons) who deeply fear and distrust 'the Russians'. We will discuss these two questions in order.

The first argument treats of missiles ('which of course we would never use') as if they were negotiating chips. They are—well, er, yes, they *are* missiles, but what they are *really* is a means of getting back at a new level into the balance game so as to get a position of purchase from which to negotiate downwards, multilaterally, with the Russians.

One trouble with this argument is that exactly the same argument is being used by the armourers on the other side. Their weapons, also, are only for 'defence', and *they* would never use them. They have to hang onto their SS-20s because they are negotiating chips. Another trouble—but I am bored out of my mind with this—is that all the counting of numbers and of balance, on both sides, is partisan and is skewed.

But Mrs Thatcher has some special troubles of her own. It is possible to argue, with honesty, that NATO should go on threatening to bring in cruise, as a bargaining-chip, provided that at the same time one is working earnestly and with goodwill to find some urgent and fair settlement at Geneva. I think it is a bad argument, but it is not dishonest, and there are glimpses of honesty of this kind in the SDP's policies on the question.

This is sometimes called (with much self-congratulation) 'the multilateral approach'. It is a difficult approach to sustain, since its British advocates have got no-one to be multilateral with. The British have not been invited to the Geneva negotiations, so that all that they can do is to wait anxiously outside the door. Since it is becoming abundantly clear that neither the Americans nor the Russians are going to give enough ground for an agreement, the waiting British multilateralists will at length have to lie down and die, with a good conscience, in a multilateral ditch.

But Mrs Thatcher just possibly could not only *sound* multilateral but *be* multilateral. For she has been offered a

multilateral partner. Mr Andropov in some recent proposals suggested that he might bring down the number of SS-20s targeted upon Europe until they matched the sum of the British and French 'independent deterrents'. At that stage (he proposed) the Russian and Western missiles could be negotiated downwards and perhaps phased out together. He was offering Mrs Thatcher his arm, for a waltz on the multilateral ballroom floor.

One would have supposed that Mrs Thatcher would have accepted Mr Andropov's proposal with squeals of delight. For here she has been, throughout all her term in office, pining like a wallflower and dreaming of the day when she might find a partner to be multilateral with. And now that *handsome* Mr Andropov glides over the floor and selects her as his chosen partner!

But this was not her reaction. When it comes to questions of disarmament Mrs Thatcher is *very* hard to suit. She is most particular. Mr Andropov had suggested that he might introduce his SS-20s to her Polaris. This did not accord at all with Mrs Thatcher's strict sense of Victorian propriety. The Polaris, she said, was only a weapon 'of last resort', whereas the SS-20 (one supposes) is an ill-bred sort of weapon which might resort at any time and place.

For crying out loud, *what* does the woman mean? What is a 'last resort'? God preserve us, in that event, from the first and second resorts! Are we to shell out cruise missiles, and are the Russians to shell out SS-20s, as the small coinage of a nuclear war? And is Polaris to be preserved, deep on the sea-bed, only for the ultimate dark deed, the final passage of this island across Lethe's river, where those scowling ferry-men (all of Mr Brian Walden's 'experts') are patiently waiting? Or—yes, is this it?—has she worked out some secret suicide pact with Ronald Reagan, so that when, in 'the last resort', it is time to go she may go with him?

I cannot stand the multilateral homilies which come out of that woman's lips. When she croons in her husky way: 'We are the *trooo* disarmers' I cannot even admire her gall. Prime Minister, when have you ever made *any* proposal, in good faith, to disarm *anything* (except, of course, the Russians)? You have ordered every weapon that has come

your way. You have without hesitation welcomed into our island the cruise missiles. You have been willing to beggar the country to buy Trident. You have ordered the Tornado fighter-bomber. You have turned down each and every proposal from the other side, sometimes before it was even received and read. Your administration has, in the United Nations, voted against a resolution for a bi-lateral nuclear weapons freeze. You have opposed 'no first use'. You have fought, with unseemly gusto and with an eye for political self-advertisement, the unhappy Falklands War—or, rather, you have sent out your subjects to fight it, for your own fighting, which was always in the public eye, was done on the Jimmy Young Show and the Scottish Tory Party Conference.

I said, many pages back, that the Conservative Party has no policy for disarmament. Mrs Thatcher certainly has none. She is, quite simply, a one-sided armer. It has never been clear to me why it is supposed that it is always right for every nation to *add* to its armaments by unilateral measures. Yet if any unilateral measure of *disarmament*—any initiative to get the log-jam on the move—is brought into public discussion there are at once cries of 'foul!' and even of 'treason!'

It is the use of the word 'multilateralism' by such persons as our Prime Minister which has brought it into disrepute. For it has become, with her sort of person, nothing but a hypocritical cover underneath which one-sided arming can go on. As for effective measures of multilateral—and reciprocal disarmament, this has always been the objective of the peace movement. Unilateral measures by this country are, exactly, what may at last get this whole multilateral process going. We have said this again and again and I will not waste any more time on the point.

But how do we know (for this is the second question of our honest objector) that if we do anything the Russians are going to respond? The plain fact is that we do *not* know that the Russians will do so, and we do not know that the Americans or the French or the Israelis or (perhaps next year) the Argentinians will respond either. How on earth can we be expected to make such a promise?

If one looks at that list, it seems just a little more likely that the Russians might respond than anyone else. For our weapons are pointed at them, and Mr Andropov is already there, on the ballroom floor, inviting our multilateral partnership. The Soviet Union, in the past year or two, has made quite a number of multilateral proposals—they have said they are in favour of a nuclear weapons 'freeze' and of 'no first use'—and while no doubt their statesmen will (just like the statesmen of the West) try to twist any agreement to their own advantage, at the moment they look a good deal more likely to be willing to come to some sort of agreement than does President Reagan, who has a quite insatiable appetite for new armaments and whose eyes are fixed now upon the star wars of the twenty-first century. In any case, looked at in terms of mere political calculation, Soviet statesmen would be incredibly foolish—and would lose the propaganda battle of the century—if Britain were to commence to disarm and if they were to find no way to respond.

I am not, now, in this pamphlet going to take in the whole 'Russian Question', since the pages are running out and since I must take this copy to be set into print in some three hours time. I have already written a good deal about this matter, as have other people in the peace movement who are more expert than myself. And there would be no harm if some of our opponents actually *read* some of the things which we have written before they started libelling us as being 'soft on Russia' and the rest.

For example, in my Not-the Dimpleby Lecture, 'Beyond the Cold War', I sketched out a process, which has now been going on for more than thirty years, by which the hawks of the West and East keep on strengthening and feeding each other.

Every upward movement in arms on one side meets with an upward movement on the other, and this is true not only of arms but also of ideological hostilities. When President Reagan, speaking at Orlando, Florida, rants on about the Soviet Union being 'an evil empire' he is actually helping it on in that direction, since the Soviet rulers respond by tightening up their security system and by putting their

military preparations into repair.

It is true that I do not regard the Soviet Union as an aggressive, expansionist empire but as a vast sprawling empire, perhaps already in decline, facing all kinds of internal stress and economic difficulty, unable to feed its own people with grain, and over-ripe for modernisation and (if things should go well) democratic changes.

If it is an expansionist power, then it is not doing well. Since the end of World War II it has lost its hegemony over Yugoslavia; suffered a disastrous breach with China; and its hegemony today over several East European states (Czechoslovakia and Poland) is maintained in some part by military threat. Its adventure in support of a failing client regime in Afghanistan is going on as badly as did several British adventures in that country in the last century.

In short, I see no evidence that the Soviet Union (which has an acute headache over Poland) has an appetite to gobble up more unruly nations in the West. Nor does it have, at this time, the economic or political influence to turn Western Europe into some kind of 'Finland'. On the contrary, the Soviet rulers are more anxious about the penetration of 'Western' influence into the East, and, if the cold war were to come to an end, we might expect to see some 'Finlandisation' in reverse in Eastern Europe.

The panic scenarios which we are always being given, of hordes of Soviet tanks rolling towards the Channel ports, do not come out of reality but out of the cold war textbooks of the past. What is needed now is the commencement of some healing-process between the two blocs—a diminution of the mutual sense of threat—which will, in due course, enable the Soviet and East European peoples to make whatever changes they wish in their own societies and in their own way. As for 'human rights', every time Mrs Thatcher or President Reagan rant about these (while at the same time hurrying forward new generations of threatening missiles) they are making the situation over on the other side *worse*. The cold warriors of the West are actually feeding and strengthening those very forces in the East which are holding back democratic change.

I have been watching this process very closely for a year,

since we Western peace workers are in touch with independent-minded persons in the East, who are working in their own way and in the face of great difficulties for peace and for change. I have observed with sorrow the way, every time our Western cold warriors open their loud mouths, it makes the position of our friends on the other side worse. When Mr Heseltine does his show-biz at the Berlin wall one can actually hear the prison-doors closing on the other side.

I said, some pages back, that I was unable to commence writing this pamphlet on Monday, May 23rd, because I had to make a quick day-trip for a private consultation with some Soviet friends in Vienna. These friends (whom I had never before met) were a young Soviet artist, called Sergei Batovrin, and his wife, Natasha. They are members of a small independent Soviet peace group which was set up, some eleven months ago, with the aim of promoting direct communication and exchanges between the citizens of the East and West, and, in particular, of Establishing Trust between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.

This initiative was not liked by the Soviet authorities at all, partly because they dislike any private initiatives by their own citizens (unlicensed by State or Party) and particularly dislike direct communications between their citizens and the West (which they suspect as being channels for 'Western intelligence'), and especially, on this occasion, because working for peace in the Soviet Union is preserved as a State monopoly and is directed at opposing the aggressive and expansionist plans of the capitalist West.

In short, the Soviet authorities view the whole cold war scene *exactly* as does Mr Heseltine, only upside-down; but since the Soviet Union is a tightly-controlled authoritarian state, the Soviet authorities are in the happy position of being able to hold down and control independent peace initiatives more effectively than Mr Heseltine can do. And instead of sending around libels on peace workers to Tory parties and to the popular press (as Mr Heseltine was reduced to doing), the Soviet authorities were able to send around to Sergei and Natasha's apartment—again and again and again—the officers of the KGB.

It has been an appalling scene, and if you get hold of

END's publications you can read about it there. The Moscow Group, which has not given up and which does not intend to give up, and whose support, not only in Moscow but in other cities is actually growing, has been given a very rough passage. All of Sergei's paintings have been confiscated, Natasha has had to put up with KGB men pushing around her apartment and upsetting the baby, Sergei was put for a month into confinement in a psychiatric hospital, and, finally, he was given, for the third time, the choice between imprisonment and exile. After consultation with his friends he decided that he must go. And he and Natasha, their baby and Sergei's mother arrived, quite suddenly, in Vienna on May 19th.

There has not been a great hullabaloo about this in our media, although one might have thought that the story was good cold war 'copy' and could have been used to beat up the Western peace movement. This is perhaps because when Sergei arrived at Vienna airport, and the microphones and cameras were thrust before him, he simply said that he and his friends were working for peace, and for 'trust' between East and West, and he meant to continue with the work.

He did not call upon the West to build even bigger weapons, nor did he ask for boycotts, nor did he accuse Western peace workers of being useful dupes of the Kremlin, and he did not even ask us to help his people by ordering cruise missiles. In short, the Western media found him to be a flop—an ordinary sort of person, rather like those people camping at Upper Heyford or Greenham Common—and not even good copy for a sensational general election speech.

When Dorothy and I heard of the Batovrins' arrival we got ourselves tickets to Vienna. It was a daft thing to do, and the most expensive day-trip of our lives, but it was a matter of impulse and not of thought at all. Our purpose was simply to take Natasha a bunch of English flowers. When your brothers and your sisters have been suffering in that way, and for the same cause, it seemed right that someone from our own peace movement should go and say thank you and hello.

Sergei will be writing himself about his experiences and his Group's ideas. I will leave this to him. What he said to us,

again and again, was that the work of peace was not only about halting missiles but also about dialogue between peoples, communication, and establishing 'trust'. Somehow or other, we must establish a new kind of relationship between the peoples of East and West. And we must do this soon. Over there, on that side, things are getting worse and the West is *making* it worse. Western cold war postures, and in particular the speeches of American and British leaders in the past year, have led to a tightening of controls on the other side. Somehow or other direct messages of peace, between both sides, must get through. As for the Soviet people, they very certainly feared and hated any thought of war. If they supported their own rulers, it was because they supposed that they offered them 'Defence'. Just like us.

I put to Sergei the question raised by our objector. If Britain were to initiate disarmament, would there be a Soviet response? He did not know. He could give no certain assurance. But if Britain were to halt cruise missile deployment, the Soviet people would see that as 'an act of peace'. It might make more possible the real work, the work of establishing trust.

I regard this election, or *choice*, now before the British people as the most important in our time, not because I am an optimist but because I grow, with each month, more pessimistic as to civilisation's future.

The Soviet state is certainly a threat to liberty. But it is a threat, not to our liberties, but to the liberties of the Soviet and East European peoples—to people like Sergei and Natasha. We have, very urgently, to reverse this process and to create the conditions in which the cause of trust can grow.

The whole matter of cruise missiles seems to me now to be very simple. After all the numbers have been counted, and the balances have been struck, it is simply a case of leapfrog. If the arms race is to be frozen, or halted, it is inevitable that at the point of freeze either one side or the other will be ahead in this or that category of missiles.

It may be true that at the present moment the Soviet Union is ahead in certain categories of Euromissiles (if they

are counted in certain ways), just as it is probably true that the United States is ahead, in the number of warheads and in refined technology, over the global scene. In any case, there is so much surplus of killing power around on both sides that all the arguments of balance have lost any sense at all.

The second simple point is that if NATO puts down cruise missiles then the Soviet Union will put down its own cruise missiles in reply. Marshal Ogarkov has already promised as much. So that everything will have got a great deal worse, and we may even be into launch-on-warning systems, and on our way, on both sides of the world, to becoming permanent cave-dwellers or troglodytes.

But there is a third simple point, which even those candidates in this election who have admirable policies for peace are not yet succeeding in getting across. And this is that we may, truly, be coming to a point of final choice. If we miss the bus this time around, there may not be another. And that what we are making a choice between is also between two kinds of Britain: a Britain which is independent and which still has some influence and respect in the world, and a Britain which is becoming little more than a servile NATO security state.

When I was in the United States recently I noticed a curious assumption which was coming, increasingly, from the White House and its captive media. It was that the question of cruise missiles was a matter which, in the last analysis, would be decided by President Reagan. Either the President would come to some bargain with Mr Andropov or he will 'decide' to deploy cruise missiles in Europe.

But there is something a little strange in that assumption. The cruise missiles may belong to the President, but we had always supposed that the territory of Europe still belongs to us. There may of course be some other secret agreement, worked out many years ago and assented to by successive administrations—but never published nor brought before our parliament—under which we ceded our sovereignty to the United States. If so, then well and good, and we can dispense with the comedy of elections.

But until some Ministry of Defence spokesman can show us this agreement, we must assume that we still own our

own territory. And since the matter of cruise missiles is being negotiated behind closed doors at Geneva, where no European nations are present, we have ourselves only one point at which we are able to enter the negotiations. And this is to refuse our territory for their use. That is the only way in which we can get into the negotiations at all.

The matter in Europe now stands like this. Holland will almost certainly refuse cruise missiles, because the Dutch people won't have them. That being so, the Belgians will probably refuse also. That is two down, with three still to go: Italy, West Germany and Britain. Meanwhile it is pretty clear that there will be no agreement at Geneva, and that, if we lose this election, the cruise missiles will start to come.

But if the British were to refuse cruise, then the entire situation in Europe would change. It would then become impossible to put the things down in Italy or Germany. There would *have* to be a whole new negotiation, and the European nations themselves would have to be parties to it. The Americans would have to be less pushy, and to regard the Europeans with a new respect. The Soviet Union would have, out of plain self-interest, to make some kind of response.

For the first time, in clear daylight, the whole logic which is carrying us to nuclear war would be checked and reversed by the conscious choice of a free people. No-one can say what this might lead on to. But if the peace movement of the world, which is now a powerful force, responded to the British choice and worked with effect, we might even move forward to Sergei's agenda: the making of a new relationship between East and West, the establishment of trust.

The British people have therefore had thrust into their hands a most awesome choice, which could, in a visible way, affect the future of the whole world: which might decide, indeed, whether that world, as a civilised place, goes on at all.

Behind this choice (it is becoming daily more clear) there is also another choice: a choice between two Britains. We have long been a declining power, and some good may come of that. In those old Victorian days, which Mrs Thatcher so loves, when we splashed red paint across the five continents,

we were feared but we were not greatly loved. We still owe human debts to the peoples in Asia and Africa whom we pushed about and exploited which it will take a century or two to repay.

This is a time, however (when all our old imperial self-images have been shattered) to reconsider what kind of a nation we are. If we accept that we are now a second-class power, it does not have to follow that we have to be client state of the U.S.A. (nor of a fiction called 'NATO'). Nor do we have to be second-rate. Nor do we have to maintain the inclination and the airs of a bully when we have long lost the power.

It is this which bothers me most about Mrs Thatcher and her chosen circle: Mr Heseltine, Mr Cecil Parkinson, Mr Norman Tebbit and the rest. They have an appetite for our liberties. Since they have lost the power to rule over half the world, they would like to recapture the buzz by ruling over us.

The media these days has a great line in hunting 'extremists'. When they dislike anyone's ideas, then they set them up as extremists and pelt them day after day. They did this with Mr Benn, and with Mr Livingstone, and now they are doing it with Bruce Kent and the peace campers at Greenham Common.

Yet if I look around this country the most extreme people in our public life are Mrs Thatcher and her circle. I do not refer only to their policies on 'Defence', although there could not be any policy more extreme than perfecting and modernising the means to exterminate our human neighbours a few thousand miles away. They are extremist in their social and economic policies as well.

They are bent (under cover of the cry of 'freedom') to strengthen all the powers of the overmighty central State: to increase the powers of the police and the surveillance of citizens: to enlarge the Official Secrets Act (which already make our press a laughing-stock on the other side of the Atlantic): to sell off the nation's assets: to interfere with our university autonomy: to interfere with our trade unions: to weaken the powers of our local authorities: to employ the resources of the civil service and of the public revenue in

order to libel private citizens and to engage in party-political exercises (as Mr Heseltine has recently been doing).

In short, if the Soviet rulers are a threat to liberty—but to the liberty of the Soviet people—then we must also say that our rulers in Britain are a threat to liberty, but to our liberties at home.

There has taken place, quietly and little observed, a take-over of the old Conservative Party (I am thinking of the party of Harold Macmillan, of Butler, Mr Heath and Lord Carrington) by a Tory Militant Faction. These rulers are now becoming deeply impatient with our democratic forms. They regard the rest of us, not as their fellow-citizens, but as their subjects.

The crisis of this came when the British people's attention was diverted to the South Atlantic last year. Differing views can be held about that whole sad episode, which is very far from finished and which Mrs Thatcher means to keep going as long as she can. But there can be little dispute that this was the time at which, from the courage and the bloodshed of other people at the other end of the earth, Mrs Thatcher took on a new 'resolute' image. And there was then annointed by the media, and appointed to service as her Lieutenant upon all public occasions, a new officer in our life, 'The Falklands Factor'.

This 'Falklands Factor' has nothing to do with the Falkland Islanders, who seem to be a taciturn and slow set of people, and many of whom now want to leave their islands. It has everything to do with Mrs Thatcher's 'image' and the Central Office of the Conservative Party's projection of it. In this image, every act of heroism and endurance, by 2 Para or by helicopter pilots, are to be ascribed to Mrs Thatcher and to Mrs Thatcher alone.

In short, the Falklands War, coming at a time when our economy and our social life were visibly falling apart, was the greatest and most undeserved bonus which the Militant Faction of the Tory Party could get. And it made them more Militant, more factional, and more extreme.

The question is: is this really the kind of nation which we wish to be, and is this how we wish to be seen in the world? For I have travelled a bit since then, and have found that the



The Archmedia of Mass Anointing the Falklands Factor

Falklands War was regarded by most other nations in a very different light. It was seen as a bizarre episode, a sudden flush of imperial nostalgia, as if Britain had suddenly fallen through a time-warp into the 18th or 19th century. It made other peoples recall that Britain was still a nation to be *feared*. But fear is not the same thing as respect.

The Falklands War was the last episode of our old imperial past. It summoned up the nostalgias and the resentments of a nation in decline. It was played through by Mrs Thatcher with calculated gestures of Churchillian reminiscence. And there were times when this reminiscence caught the whole nation's breath—centuries of sea-born empire and piracy, and now once again the fleet putting out from Portsmouth,

with the waving of flags and the watching crowds, on a mission to rescue our kith and kin from oppression at the uttermost ends of the earth. . .

Yet there is no way forward for any nation down the paths of nostalgia and reminiscence. That will become the rhetoric of rogues, and we will be screwed as their subjects. To become lost in the rehearsal of past grandeur (as Spain once did) is the path towards true decline.

That then is one kind of Britain we can choose: a security state, with a subjected people—a client state which still struts and postures in the world as a bully, which lets its staple industries decline while it exhausts its revenue upon an absurd and obscene great-power-symbol (the 'independent deterrent'), and whose written culture oscillates between cynicism and self-deluding nostalgia.

There has, however, always been an alternative Britain in these islands; and still, at this late day, it might make it through at last. I am told by my friends in Wales and in Scotland that I have got it wrong. They say that the trouble with Britain has always been one thing: the English. And it is true that if the matter had been left to the choice of the Welsh and Scottish nations, we would long ago have had a non-nuclear island and some other democratic improvements beside.

But my friends have got it wrong. They have overlooked a small episode that took place some nine hundred years ago at Hastings. In the words of Thomas Paine 'a Norman bastard and his armed banditti' came across the English Channel. They subjected the English people to the Norman Yoke, and they and their successors have held us subjects ever since. They have had their difficulties from time to time, and every now and then the English have had a brief spell of self-government. But the Normans, who have their own private schools and their own network of influence within all our organs of state, do not regard the English as yet ready for self-rule. It was, of course, the Normans who put together the Tory Militant Faction, and it is no accident that the man who has been given the job of busting up the English trade unions is called Norman Tebbit.

The alternative Britain, however, is still there, and I

suppose that my pamphlet may get through to some of them. And, to be serious, I know all the dangers of national feeling, and I know more than most (since I am an historian) about Britain's imperial sins. Yet I cannot agree that the history of this island has been, in every way, a disgraceful one; nor that there is nothing in it that it is worth defending.

This has not only been a nation of bullies. It has also been a nation of poets and of inventors, of thinkers and of scientists, held in some regard in the world. It has been, for a time, no less than ancient Greece before us, a place of innovation in human culture. Here were worked out certain laws and democratic forms which have influenced the forms of States in every continent; here there were conducted, over centuries, great arguments of religious faith which were then carried across the Atlantic; here some of the first trade unions and co-operatives were formed, without whose example multitudes over the whole earth might still suffer extremities of exploitation; here, and in our neighbour, France, we worked out some of the clearest claims to human rights.

Therefore I say that the alternative Britain must stand to those rights now, and exercise them with the very greatest vigour. And in doing this we may be fortified by the knowledge that in defending ourselves, we may also be defending the future of the world.

Which Britain do we wish to be seen as in the eyes of international opinion? The Britain of the 'Falklands Factor', the strutting bully which made the world aghast by sinking the *General Belgrano*, an old battleship with a complement of more than one thousand souls, without warning and outside the exclusion zone which we ourselves had imposed and while it was steaming *away* from our fleet? Or the alternative Britain, of citizens and not subjects which, in civilisation's eleventh hour, summoned up all the strengths of its long democratic past and cut through the world's nuclear weapons jungle?

If we could only do that, then we could happily resign ourselves to leaving behind for ever the pretensions of a great power, leaving the world to say of our imperial past, as Malcolm said of the old Thane of Cawdor, 'nothing in his life

became him like the leaving of it'.

You will recall that I have a padlock through my lips in the matter of the general election. I am not allowed to advise you as to how you should actually *vote*. I would advise you, of course, to vote for those candidates, of whatever party, which have the best policies for defending the lives and liberties of the British people.

These will best be defended by refusing cruise missiles and also by refusing a second term to Mrs Thatcher. Indeed, I would advise you to make your own judgments in every constituency, guided by two considerations only: the best way to refuse nuclear weapons, and the best way to ensure that Mrs Thatcher's administration is not returned.

I have a little difficulty with this last matter. It appears that if Mrs Thatcher is defeated, as a result of this pamphlet, which is not an authorised party-political production, then a breach of electoral law may be caused thereby. In which case it will be necessary to cancel the results of the entire general election and to play it through once again. But we have taken the advice of an eminent barrister, and, while it is a nice point and has not yet been argued in the higher courts, he thinks that the election might stand provided that I became a fugitive from the kingdom. He was very attentive to us, and gave us a full seven minutes of his advice, and he charged for his counsel only £800.

I have advised you what to vote *against*. As to what to vote for (apart from our defence) I can claim no clarity at all. I do not expect any alternative administration to work great wonders. I do not expect Mr Foot to be a 'strong' Prime Minister, but I expect him to be an honest and humane one which is something we presently stand greatly in need of. He is also a reading man, who knows something of our history and our democratic traditions; and to have such qualities in a Prime Minister would be a great novelty.

As for the other issues, and the issue of our employment most of all, it is not that I regard any one of them as unimportant. But all of them, become trivial when set beside the defence of our liberties and our lives. And if these are not defended, then nothing can be solved. For we will move,

with all our human neighbours, towards civilisation's 'final solution'.

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DANGER! DETERRENT AT LARGE!



A number of these ferocious deterrents have been kept as pets by Ill-advised and Unauthorised Persons (styling themselves as 'TRUE PEACE-KEEPERS') in both the Western and the Eastern parts of our Globe. When kept in Captivity they do little Harm, provided that they are fed each day with Large Quantities of the Peoples' Taxes, Jobs, Hospitals and Schools. Yet after a little while they grow weary of Captivity, and sting themselves into a Fury with the Poisonous Venom in their own Tails.

It is feared that one such DETERRENT has now escaped and is already ravaging the Western Parts of this Country. Farmers have already found the HALF-EATEN REMAINS of SEVENTY SHEEP and also (a lesser matter) the rotting carcasses of more than half the councillors of NEWBURY TOWN, in the vicinity of GREENHAM COMMON. It is to be feared that the ENTIRE HOUSE OF COMMONS will be eaten alive by THE DETERRENT next week (unless it should prove to be inedible). There is no remedy, unless the entire Electorate doth, like one St. George, ride together to the polls, armed with the lance of its free votes, to slay this VENOMOUS BEAST.

REWARD—A FREE AND PEACEFUL ISLAND