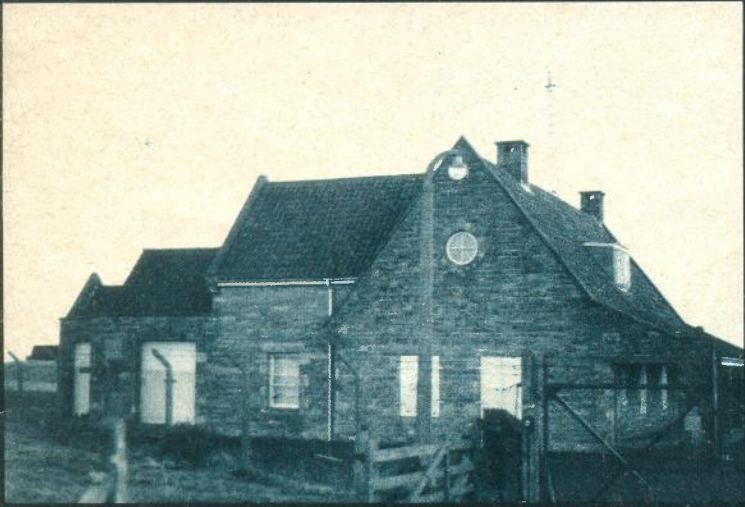


Time Out



Northern Zone Control, Fife.



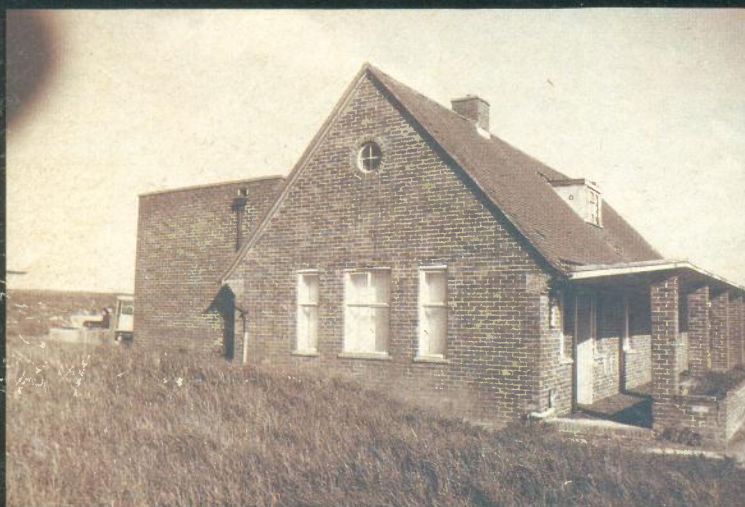
Sub Regional Headquarters 21, York.



Sub Regional Military Headquarters, Brentwood, Essex.



Home Office Radio Station, Brighton, Sussex.



RAF Wartling (now dismantled), Eastbourne, Sussex.



Beachy Head Coastguard Station, Eastbourne, Sussex.

The military's last outposts.

In the nuclear age civil defence is obsolete, survival of government is everything. Some of these innocent-looking bungalows hide the entrances to Britain's Regional Seats of Government.

THE READING REVELATIONS

The Spies for Peace original pamphlet of 1963 identified the general locations and telephone numbers of all the RSGs, and the exact locations of many were quickly announced thereafter. The Reading Papers confirm long held public suspicions that the system has not merely been maintained, but built up into a larger and military-dominated network. The telephone and telegraph lines the Papers describe have of course long since gone, following the closing of Warren Row seven or eight years ago. But the new information fills in vital gaps in history, since the spider's web they created reflected the structure of the emergency headquarters network. The new system—three times larger, and originating in 1964—included old buildings dating from the war, old RAF burrows, RSGs, and now, purpose-built centres.

One of the latter is **SRHQ42**, at **Sovereign House, Hales Road, Hertford**. It contains the local DHSS, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and employment offices. A modest, six-storey building, Sovereign House shelters a solid concrete central core, surmounted by huge, blast protected ventilators, and an unusual array of radio aerials. The ventilators don't provide Sovereign House's surface inhabitants with air conditioning. From the Reading Papers it is clear that SRHQ42 was ready for use in 1967.

A short railway trip to **Basingstoke** will take you directly to another hide-away. Facing the station is a long row of office blocks between Alencon Link and Churchill way. One of these blocks, merely known as **Alencon Link** is the HQ of the Civil Service Commission, but also conceals **SRHQ62**. On its roof are the familiar aerials and ventilators. At the back of its basement car park there are other features, not on the plans the government filed with the Berkshire planning authority. A large part of the car park is missing, blocked off. Another corner is executed in reinforced concrete and entered by metal doors an inch thick. Concrete shields protect some small ventilators. These ornaments are missing from official plans.

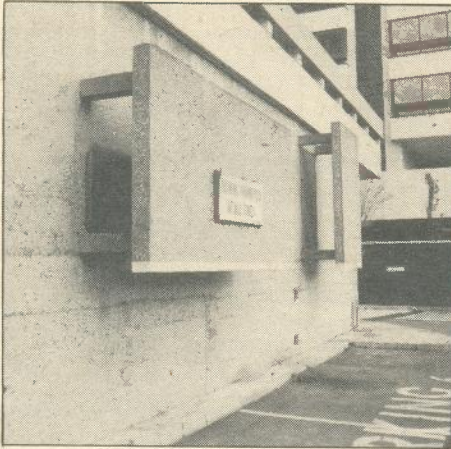
Details such as these enable centres like Basingstoke to be identified quite independently of any Post Office wiring diagrams. Indeed Basingstoke doesn't appear in the Reading Papers since it took over from Warren Row around 1972, as SRHQ62.

In the open country tall ventilation shafts and high radio masts would stick out like a sore thumb, but not so in Basingstoke. Its location may be even more important than is at first apparent. Along Churchill Way from Victory Roundabout (sic) to the M3 Motorway are a string of large offices, many of them populated by highly dispensable organisations like the AA. The town may be one of the chosen centres for a government driven out of Whitehall by war or strife.

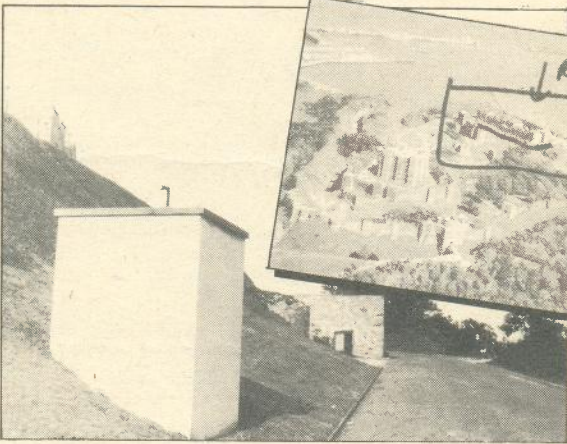
Another confirmed SRHQ is 102 at **Dukes House, Houghton Street, Soathport, Merseyside**. Its location has been well publicised by the local media, not least because the centre is now said to



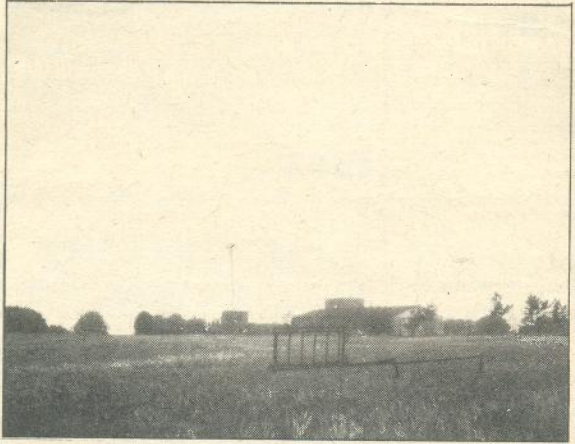
SRHQ, in a bunker below Sovereign House, Hertford; on top is the dole office. Right, emergency radio link to military aircraft.



SRHQ51, is below the Civil Service Commission in Basingstoke (above right) took over from Warren Row in the early 1970s. Neither the concrete blast shields (left) nor the steel door entrance (below right) are on the building's official plans.



Tourists to Dover Castle daily pass the entrance to the emergency HQ. Once RSG12, it now probably houses an AFHQ, no 6.



SRHQ71, at Ullenwood near Cheltenham.

New Parks, Sipton, Yorks; a leafy home for SRHQ21.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS DAVIES

be flooded and useless. Above it are the DHSS, tax, customs and employment offices, a county court and a technical college. Although ostensibly in sub-region 101 (covering Liverpool and Manchester) SRHQ102 would control the more Northern sub region 102 from Cumbria to Lancashire. Sub region 101 doesn't appear to have an SRHQ, according to a Home Office briefing to local council officials. Construction was due to commence last year.

Other popular sites are county police HQs. Surrey Constabulary's HQ at **Mount Browne** on the North Downs appears to be the site of **SRHQ61**, which is known to be near Guildford. It was originally connected up to Warren Row in 1967. The bunker is identified in the Reading Papers only by a standard wiring code which corresponds to the initials of the name of the police HQ. A direct radio link appears to connect the Mount Browne bunker at Guildford to SRHQ62 in Basingstoke.

Some older bunkers have also been used as SRHQs, including the 1950's War Rooms and the RSGs. The War Room locations were declassified during the late 1960s. Details are for example contained in the Official Civil Service list. But many of these sites still house key government installations.

Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge—originally the War Room for Region Four—became the communications centre for **RSG4**, which appears to have been located at RAF Alconbury, near Huntingdon. Like the **Kirknewton War Room**, near Edinburgh—which is now the Scottish Regional Central Control—its size has been at least quadrupled by the addition of fresh tons of concrete and steel. So Cambridge probably still has a role of equivalent importance. **Alconbury** was one of the most unusual RSGs. Because the area is flat fenland RSG4 was largely built on the surface, according to one of its staff. It was encased in double domes of massively thick concrete more than 60 feet high and 200 feet across the surface. It was camouflaged by covering with gorse and bracken.

A new wave of bunker construction by the RAF began in the 1950s with the ROTOR plan. Under this radars around the coast and their inland control centres were to be at least 150 feet underground. The Ministry of Works designed what might be whimsically called the Mark One bunker. entrance, a bungalow with a T-shaped floor plan. In the rear is a lift or entrance shaft, in front a guardroom. The houses and ventilator shafts were often hidden in woody copses. Their locations have almost all been published in books dealing with British air defences. Whether the site is now derelict, or whether it contains instead an underground emergency HQ is obvious from brief inspection. By 1960, many of the houses and their attendant bunkers were surplus to RAF requirements. Some have been demolished. But many others have been adapted for new roles as emergency HQs.

A few miles east of London is one of these centres—**Kelvedon Hatch** near Brentwood in Essex. This centre has been featured in recent programmes

on Home Defence, such as the **Panorama** programme last week. According to the Home Office, **Kelvedon Hatch** is the London **SRHQ 51**. It is tucked neatly into a wooded hillside, west of Kelvedon Hatch village. An unmarked and well surfaced road leads through a wooded copse to the standard bungalow. A fence blocks further passage; a sign offers 'admittance on official business only'. Kelvedon Hatch is officially claimed to be the civilian control centre for London, from which it is conveniently distant. But there is undoubtedly at least one more important centre for the London Region.

Bawburgh, another old RAF T-shaped house is **SRHQ41**, covering the

northern half of East Anglia. It is just one and a half miles from the University of East Anglia. The **Edinburgh, Preston and Kingsbridge RSGs** were all old RAF tracking stations.

A real veteran is **Dover Castle** which has remained a war fortress right up to the present. The current bunker was carved deep into the chalk during World War Two. The entrance is beside the public road to the castle car park.

Another old RAF site at **New Parks, Shipton-by-Beningborough, Yorkshire** is **SRHQ21**. The Turrif construction company has been working on the site for more than three years. The HQ itself is carefully situated inside a wood and is in the grounds of the former Royal

Hunting Lodge of James I. No sign betrays the modern owners of this parkland, or its subterranean facilities, but the Post Office's index to post-codes gives the game away once again. The New Parks entry omits the exact address but labels it 'Home Office'.

The **Cheltenham SRHQ 72** is at **Ullenwood**, an old army camp in a site high on the Cotswold Hills, looking north to Cheltenham. It is a weather-beaten concrete block framed between tall emergency radio masts. A rusting bus, old hangar and derelict army huts less than successfully disguise the purpose of the site. A helicopter pad completes the scene. It joined the network in July 1967.

YOU AND WHOSE ARMY?

Defence once had humanitarian pre-occupations. The first concerted campaign for effective defence for the civil population in war came from the Left as much as anywhere. At the start of the Second World War, the government took some of these concerns on board and welded them to the regional government system which had had more repressive origins.

Eventually it became more convenient to write off the cities altogether. An unclassified Home Office circular in 1973 on the 'Machinery of Government in War' explained that the staff of the SRHQs would be concerned not with 'immediate short term aid to the hardest hit areas' where the injured and dying could fend for themselves, but with: 'the maintenance by the police of law and order, and with the general behaviour and morale of the survivors'.

Even in open circulars, the planners offer only the vision of authoritarian embunkered rulers preserving government while the rest of us die as neatly and enthusiastically as possible.

Some council emergency planning officers and Home Office scientific advisers saw things differently. Three years ago, the Home Office first silenced and then sacked the regional scientific advisers who had provided civil defence advice for almost 30 years. Their logical appraisal of problems the government didn't want to talk about led to the Home Office refusing to fund the meetings of its own Standing Advisory Conference on Home Defence 'because of the need for financial economies'. One group questioned the plans for controlling dissension in the community if war was imminent. Their meetings were immediately banned. Other advisers pointed out the fatuity of government plans if, say just one or two cities were attacked or damaged in a limited war. Although rescuers and supplies might then be available, there were no plans for rescue. Even a Conservative pamphlet on the subject called the Home Defence plans a 'shambles'.

In an emergency, the military would now be in almost complete control. The new regional Armed Forces Headquarters (AFHQs) have taken over the role once performed by the largely civilian RSGs of controlling what remains of society.

How did this long military march

through the civil institutions succeed? At the top, Civil Defence planning has always been as much concerned with resisting rebellion, insurgency or political dissent as with protecting the population from external attack. Now, the system is *primarily* concerned with controlling dissent in peace or war. This is stated quite plainly in an often quoted Home Office circular to local authorities (no 3/1973). 'The aims of Home Defence are defined as those defensive measures necessary in the United Kingdom:— a) To secure the United Kingdom against any internal threat . . .'

Local authorities were told only to concern themselves with the other three objectives, which were mitigating and surviving a nuclear, biological or chemical attack. The circular makes it quite clear that, although the networks of emergency headquarters is equipped and designed for nuclear attacks, their primary purpose is to resist and suppress 'any internal threat'.

The H-Bomb provided the second reason for centrally involving the military. The scale of rescue required after an H-Bomb attack was thought to be beyond what civilians could achieve.

Today, the military's involvement in the Civil Defence system is co-ordinated by the UK Commanders-in-Chief Committee, with senior representatives of all three armed services attached to the Army headquarters at Wilton near Salisbury. In a war it would provide the nucleus for an emergency administration. A new Army group—Field Force Eight, based on Bulford in Wiltshire—was set up in 1977 with specific responsibility for the 'protection of vital NATO and national installations and bases' in the UK.

In 1963, it was clear who was in charge of each RSG and its Region; the Regional Commissioner, a minister specially appointed before the attack. When the Regions split up into Sub-Regions during 1964 the picture grew a little dim. It has been maintained until very recently at maximum dimness.

From 1965 onwards there is no explanation of how central government will operate. Since the revival of Home Defence planning initiated by Heath in 1971, there has been no mention at all of the top level of regional or national government. In every sense, the Regional Commissioners and their staffs

went 'underground'.

In their place, running the new SRHQs, were Sub Regional Commissioners, who will not be elected ministers, but senior civil servants. There are few clues in the multitude of Home Office circulars since 1972 as to the whereabouts and powers of the Regional Commissioners—by this stage the only elected officials left in the system. Indeed, the circulars we have seen try to put over a wholly absurd story.

They say, generally, that the SRHQs will provide the 'highest level' of 'internal' or 'effective' government. What they mean is that it will be the highest level of *civilian* government. Similarly, Home Office circular 7/1973 which purports to explain the 'Machinery of Government in War' suggests that 'regional government could not, in general, be effective for some weeks after an attack' when it would be formed at some suitable undamaged town after staff had emerged from the bunkers. What they mean is that a civilian run government would not be set up for some weeks after an attack.

Meanwhile the Regional Commissioner, appointed by Royal Warrant before the attack, is supposed to be sitting around somewhere in his region, away from the war headquarters, kicking his (increasingly radio-active) heels until the day comes for regional government to begin. All that circular 7/1973 says about him and his staff is that 'the senior staff for regional government would have assembled in the region prior to attack'. Where?

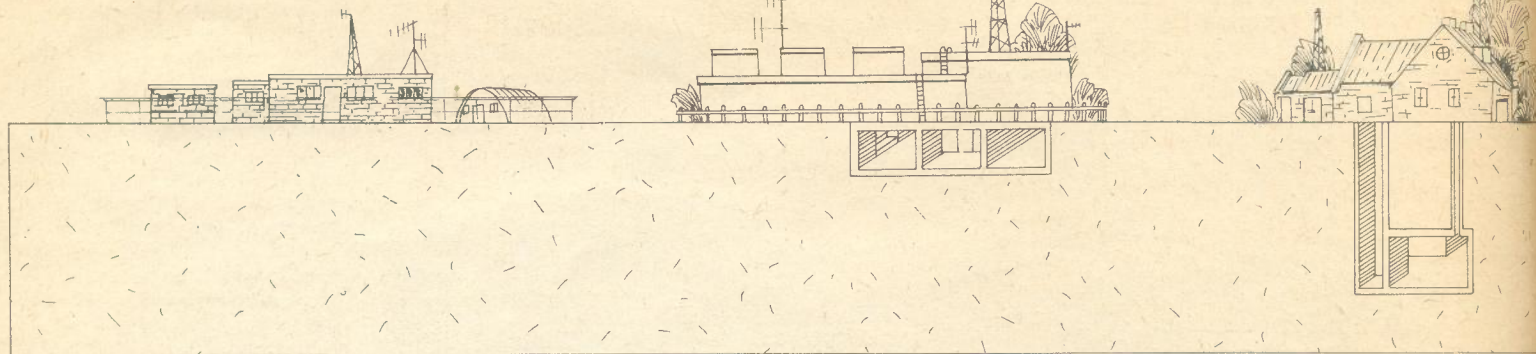
The Regional Commissioners will in fact be housed in a completely new chain of regional military controls, the AFHQs. There is an AFHQ in each Home Defence Region; in charge is the Regional Military Commander, normally the Army General in charge of the corresponding Army district.

This arrangement is clear from a careful reading of the circulars and other, relevant material. The Regional Commissioner will also be accompanied by the Regional Police Commander, who with the Regional Military Commander will complete the ruling triumvirate. With only a skeleton staff at a primarily military HQ, the Regional Commissioner will lose much of his power to the police and military. This type of arrangement has long been sought by

1945: regional emergency HQs at huddled government offices.

1952: the 'War Rooms' erected in each region.

1953: 'Rotor'; the RAF build too many bunkers to a standard design. Soon some are converted to RSGs.



BARRY JACKSON

Diggers' Progress . . . (above). Five successive generations of emergency accommodation have provided ever more lavish quarters for 'civil' defence:

the Army; their Land Operations Manual on 'Counter-Revolutionary Operations' (Vol III) spelt out their ideal of the ruling triumvirate—with military representation at every level in the civil structure, and parallel civil and military headquarters. It is apparent that this goal has been achieved. The 'enemy' in such operations include 'subversives' who are willing to take action:— 'to undermine the military, economic, psychological morale or political strength of the nation'.

There are 10 AFHQs in England and Wales, one for each region. Although many of the sites now used are not new the introduction of the AFHQs appears to date from the 1972 reforms, which gave the military a greater role in Civil Defence. Civilian positions were reduced or downgraded; for example, the sacking of most of the scientific advisers originally appears to stem from a decision in May, 1975, that only one outside scientific adviser would, at most, be needed at each AFHQ.

Only one AFHQ has apparently been positively identified at Ouston, north-west of Newcastle. It was active during the 1978 Home Defence exercise, codenamed 'Scrum Half'.

A variety of odd notes in official circulars make clear the predominant role now given to the military. County council and other local controllers may make requests of the military but they must 'remain under the command of their own officers or NCOs' and may only 'support the work' of local authorities if it doesn't prejudice their prime role; predictably this is the 'maintenance of law and order'.

Civilian regional governments will only be established when it is safe to emerge from the AFHQs; this could easily take three months. Democracy will by then have been purged from the system, even at local level. Under new orders issued by the Home Office, local councils must nominate a single wartime Controller for official approval, normally their chief executive or clerk. In appropriate circumstances, the Controller would have the power of life and death. The country, in an emergency, will be run by a clutch of Major Generals and a larger bevy of district officials.

LONDON'S BUNKERS

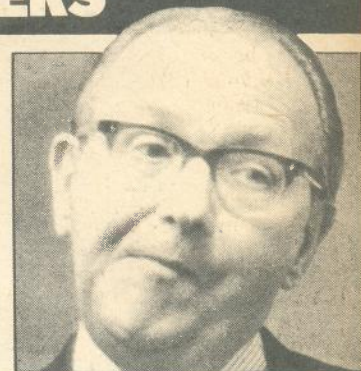
Until June 1971, London was effectively written off. The London area was divided up between five neighbouring sub regions which would deal with what was left of the capital. From 1971 London was, however, reconstituted as part of the Heath government's resurrection of Civil Defence (with an increasingly close eye on counter insurgency). London should now have its own SRHQ, no 51, and an AFHQ, no 5. The London region SRHQ is at Kelvedon Hatch, near Brentwood. Soon after London became a separate region again for the first time in more than a decade the Home Office created a radio centre to deal with the new region's communications requirements. It was based at Harrow, more than co-incidentally.

But London boroughs would not be ruled directly from the SRHQ. Instead the government divided London into five Groups; north east, north, north west, south east and south west. Each Group headquarters controls the boroughs in its area, and is their link with the SRHQ. The Group HQs—whose location is, according to the GLC, also a secret—each hold 120

people or more, and are protected against blast and radiation. We have established that four of the HQs have been completed, in Wanstead, Southall, Cheam, and West Norwood. A fifth HQ, for the North group is still being planned.

One of the London Group controls—no doubt typical of the rest—is the South West Group Control at Church Hill, North Cheam. It is a stark block of concrete a few yards from the main A24 road, as usual topped by extensive radio masts.

Top GLC officials, not Borough or GLC councillors, will run each Group; North West is for example, in the hands of the GLC Solicitor, J R Fitzpatrick. Each Group has its own Guards infantry regiment assigned to it to 'maintain law and order' in an emergency. In this military carve-up of the city, the North West Group will be in the care of the Welsh Guards; the Irish Guards (SW) and the Coldstream Guards (SE) are responsible for south London, while the Household Cavalry in armoured vehicles will deal with London as a whole, and would be attached to the SRHQ.



Frank Raine-Allen, GLC planner.

The GLC's chief executive and the top emergency planner, Frank Raine-Allen would join central government staff at the SRHQ. Until the '71 reform, each London borough was linked separately to the appropriate SRHQ outside London. Few boroughs, it seems, thought such arrangements worthwhile. One that did was Westminster City Council, whose control centre at St Johns Wood, no 61J, was connected to Warren Row throughout the '60s.

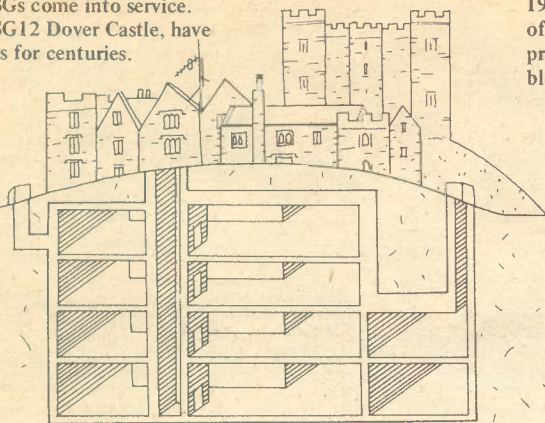
The Metropolitan Police have their own 'Alternative Control Centres' well out of London for emergency use. They too expect to split London up, between north and south. The northern control centre is at Lippitts Hill in Epping Forest. The southern control centre, another blockhouse, nestles close to the junction of the M23 and M25 Motorways, near Merstham.

In the event of imminent war or civil disturbance the police and military will implement a plan for 'essential service routes' to be kept free of civilian traffic. The 1971 Home Office circular describing this plan has now been declassified; accompanying detailed maps showing the protected routes remain 'Restricted' however. Under the plan most major roads out of London will be Essential Service Routes, together with two Ring Roads, 'A' and 'B'. Ring Road A is similar to the North and South Circulars; Ring Road B is further out. The military have also prepared plans for 'Priority Routes' from which non-essential traffic might also be prohibited. Priority Route 31, for example, includes Fulham Palace Road and Putney Bridge; Route 32 is Shepherds Bush Road.

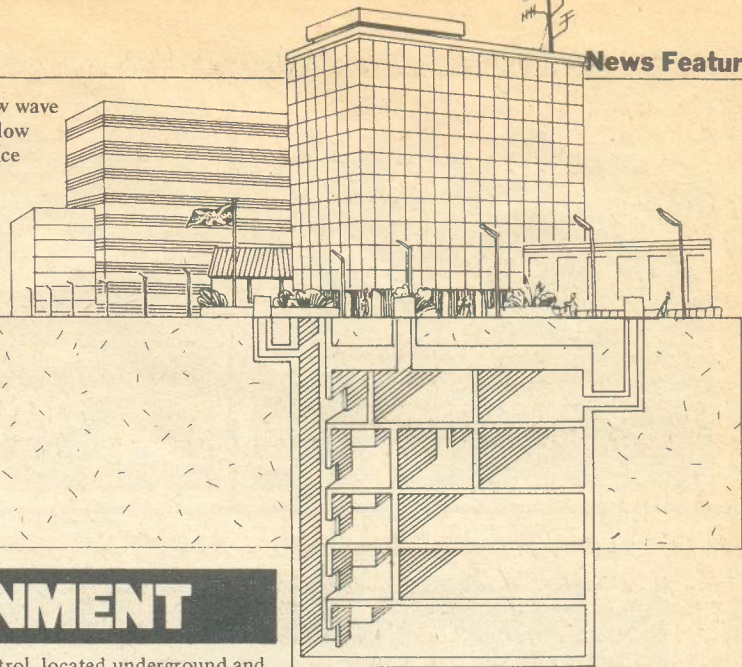


'Station Z': This wartime office block conceals a bomb shelter for central government in Harrow.

1962: The RSGs come into service. Some, like RSG12 Dover Castle, have been fortresses for centuries.



1968: The new wave of bunkers below provincial office blocks.



THE VANISHING GOVERNMENT

The biggest bunkers of all, naturally, are reserved for central government use. During the 1950s, as during the Second World War, most of these were in or near London—with a second network in the West, in case of invasion. The Reading Papers provide some clues to the whereabouts of the superbunkers.

In July 1964, the Post Office was ordered to wire up four direct links from RSG6's communications centre at Whiteknights Park to an establishment identified in the Reading Papers only as the 'Home Office, Harrow'. This is the Home Office's Central Communications Establishment, which is hidden behind the HMSO factory in Headstone Drive, Wealdstone. Bounded by the mainline railway, HMSO and a Kodak factory, it looks innocuous enough although sporting the usual aerials. But the openness of the 1940s office block is deceptive. The office block sits on top of an underground 'citadel' built at the start of 1939 for the Air Ministry, and possibly considerably extended since. Under the remarkable codename of 'Station Z', Harrow was to have been the Air Ministry's refuge if it was bombed out of central London. Details of the construction of the 'Station Z' fortress are now in the Public Records Office.

The four circuits linking Warren Row to Harrow split two ways; one set of lines going directly while the other pair detoured 90 miles away round Oxford, Aylesbury and Stanmore. Moreover, each telephone line was backed up by an equivalent radio connection. The scale of these communications was impressive. No other centre, even neighbouring RSGs, merited more than two lines. The Reading Papers leave little doubt that, from 1964 on, at least, Harrow must have been the government's main war base.

The move to Harrow took officials out of the immediate danger of an attack on central London, and also put them close to the major military control centres and communications facilities all grouped together, in a curious small arc around North West London.

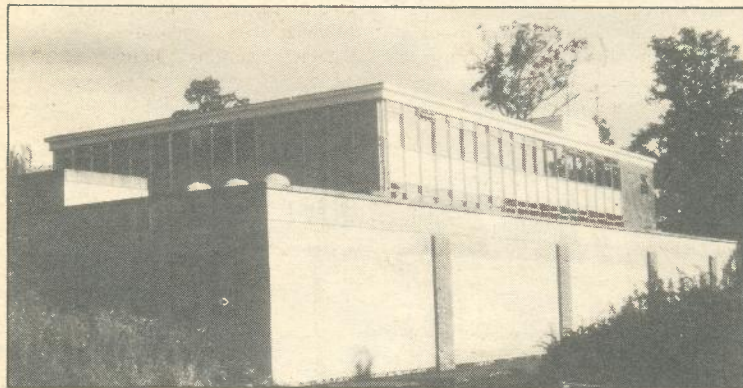
There have been repeated stories that the government's main war headquarters has now moved out of London altogether and settled well to the west. Up to 1972, the Reading documents show one very likely centre of this kind—the Army's bunker at Warminster,

which appears to be entered from an Army engineering depot beside railway lines just east of the town. There are two links from Reading to Warminster—identified again only by a vague title, 'War Department Establishment, Warminster'. Warminster appears to have been the war emergency headquarters of the national Army command based near Salisbury, at one time 'Strategic Command', but now called United Kingdom Land Forces—the same title as was used when the military first became closely involved in Civil Defence. The key role of UKLF's war HQ in emergency control is described in a recent book by military specialists describing a fictional future nuclear war in a highly factual way—'The Third

control, located underground and well protected, with subordinate sub-regional centres . . .' These are the AFHQs.

The UKLF was set up at Wilton in 1972. The main government war control centre may have moved out of London at that time, and become, as Hackett describes, the war HQ of UKLF. There would of course be other centres for the dispersal of central government, UKLF simply being the main one.

In that case, Warminster must be the emergency centre described in Hackett's book. There are convenient railway lines from sidings at Wilton, the peacetime HQ, directly to other sidings at the Warminster 'Establishment'. Quite recently, *Railway World* magazine reported that UKLF were buying under-



Broadcasting Bunker, the BBC wartime emergency control centre at Wood Norton, near Evesham. A relic of World War 2, TV studios 5 storeys below ground have been added for the run-up to World War 3.

World War', by General Sir John Hackett and others. They explain UKLF's central role in organising to deal with the first attack, a hydrogen bomb on Birmingham. The emergency system became fully operational and:

'Delegation of power over military and civil defence resources became the responsibility of the Headquarters of the UK Land Forces. Representatives of the Prime Minister, the naval, air and military commands and civil agencies controlling essential services were assembled there, in well defended underground bunkers, hardened against attack or interference to communications, containing all necessary equipment.'

Hackett's book confirms that, as described above, there are 'regional centres for joint civil and military con-

ground trains for an unspecified use. It might be guessed that the sidings at Warminster go some way into the side of Salisbury Plain, just to the west. A military road can be seen going straight into the far side of Battlebury Hill, which overlooks the Army site.

A further curiosity, again suggesting that Warminster is a major underground HQ is an onshore oil exploration licence issued by the Department of Energy last summer. Normally these licences allow prospecting by drilling or seismic testing with explosives across large rectangular areas of the country. Previous licences allow oil companies to explore in built-up areas, beauty spots, even military ranges. But licence XL109, covering much of Salisbury plain, and territory north, east and west of Warminster, specifically excludes the

town itself and its military sites by an untidy jagged line. Another 'forbidden' area near Bath, also includes many underground sites. The vagaries of licence XL109 suggests that something important and untouchable—above all, undrillable—lies in the chalk below Salisbury Plain.

WAR MEASURES

The Home Defence network, its regional HQs and secure communications, forms the backbone of the plans prepared by the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Unit for dealing with strikes or other disturbances. The Unit was formed because of the fright the government had when miners and police battled at the Saltley coke depot in the strike of 1972, and the miners won the day. The CCU now has extensive plans for every form of disruption officially envisaged. When the chips start going down, the AFHQs, SRHQs and the rest will be alerted. Ted Heath started such an alert in 1974, and preliminary instructions on emergency arrangements were distributed to senior civil servants.

When the plans are fully activated, the first task of the police is to: 'control the movements of subversive or potentially subversive persons', a clear warrant to lock up, shoot or starve political dissenters. Similar ethics are likely to prevail in later stages of a crisis, when life or death may be determined by which sections of the population are allocated food by the government.

The new network of bunkers—SRHQs and AFHQs—initially revealed by the Reading Papers, presupposes two kinds of 'enemy'. The Thatcher government, with its massive rearmament programme, seems increasingly bent on confrontation with one kind, the East. In the event of nuclear war the new military command of the network has no interest in the survival either of the population or of democracy. But the disappearance of the latter no longer has to wait for atom bombs. The primary function of the new HQs is to streamline and intensify central control of 'civil disorder'—primarily by use of the military. The remarks quoted above and the origins of most of it in response to the 1972 miners' strike, shows just what kind of disorder they have in mind.