
BRITAIN

Carrington counters support for beams

by Mark Burdman

Hours before the British government began its propaganda war against American military action in Grenada, the Oct. 24 House of Lords defense debate was, ironically, the scene of the first-ever endorsement by a British official of the strategic doctrine enunciated by President Ronald Reagan on March 23, 1983, for development of directed-energy anti-ballistic missile systems.

Lord Neil Cameron, Marshal of the Royal Air Force and former Chief of the Defense Staff from 1977-79, stated: "The Air Force of this country, I am sure, has the financial resources and imagination to use new technologies. . . . I'm sure that the Lords will have read President Reagan's March 23 'Star Wars' speech." Cameron quoted from those portions of the President's March 23 speech outlining how ABM systems could in the future remove the threat of incoming nuclear missiles, and concluded: "President Reagan was talking about lasers and beam weapons. . . . Many distinguished scientists in this country express great cynicism about the ability to achieve such systems. Well, I have heard all that before. In my view, it is not too early to start thinking about what the achievement of such systems would do for international stability."

Although cautious in content, Cameron's statement could be read as an attempt to launch a public discussion about the beam weapons policy option for the Western Alliance and for the United Kingdom. In British society, ideas of a decisive strategic nature are generated from the top and are filtered down, and the fact that Cameron, for years a special air-defense adviser to the monarchy, would issue this statement has great significance.

But the obstacles to supporting a beam weapons strategy are shown by the fact that not one word of what Cameron said has appeared in any of the major British dailies. In the two weeks following Oct. 24, the policy-making momentum in the Establishment has consolidated in favor of the Foreign Office and its mentors in the circles of Henry Kissinger's

prestigious patron Lord Peter Carrington. The former Foreign Secretary's grouping, with its preciously guarded back-channel ties into the Soviet KGB and with its financial links to the hardcore pro-Nazi financial circles of continental Europe, fanatically opposes the content and implications of President Reagan's policy speech, and is doing everything in its power to stop it, including purging or demoting those "Churchillians" favorable to the beam-weapons perspective (see *EIR*, Nov. 8).

Carrington & Co. are determined to open a process of "dialogue" with their friends in Moscow behind Reagan's back. Mrs. Thatcher's extraordinary Nov. 7 attack against possible American moves to punish Syria for its terrorist actions in Lebanon is a clue to how far the Foreign Office is prepared to go in delivering its assets in the Middle East into an accommodation with Moscow, and, more generally, shows how determined these British are to prevent a reinvigoration of American strategic capabilities around the globe.

Financially, the British government's monetarist policy is having a complementary effect of effectively disengaging Britain from active defense of the West. In the first days of November, the British Treasury announced £1 billion defense budget cuts, which are anticipated not only to hit at British capabilities of maintaining and upgrading *conventional* forces, but to cut significantly into on-budget spending for R&D in frontier technologies for air-defense systems.

In the view of British supporters of beam weapons, this is compounded by decisions over the past few years to invest significant sums in Trident submarines, which are expected to be obsolete by the time of their deployment in the mid-1990s. "The problems hinge around this utterly inane decision to buy the Tridents," a British military official exclaimed Nov. 8. "Nine billion pounds for four bloody submarines! It's plumb crazy!"

The implications of beam-weapons development and its technological spin-offs into the civilian economy are also ideologically resisted by the British interests committed to the goal of a neo-feudalist "post-industrial society." In the U.K., there has grown up a cult-like mystique over the technologies of computers, progressing toward an Orwellian "Information Age" technocracy. Not surprisingly, those British architects of the "post-industrial" conception like the Tavistock Institute of London (privately) and British intelligence scientific adviser Lord Solly Zuckerman (publicly, in *The Spectator* magazine of summer 1983) have launched broadsides against President Reagan's new strategy.

The same biases against what one strategist derisively labeled "American technological optimism" are widely expressed in London policy think tanks like the International Institute for Strategic Studies and the Royal Institute for International Affairs. They have mobilized their American affiliates against the Reagan policy; if Britain itself resists developing new technologies, British power in the world is meaningless unless others are deprived of these technologies

at the same time.

Who is supporting beams?

There are nonetheless signs that much is stirring in the United Kingdom on the beam-weapons question. Whatever utopian fanaticisms may prevail in the Carrington crowd about a neo-feudalist world empire, certain Establishment circles are realistic enough to comprehend that if the United States and the Soviet Union are each committing tens of billions of dollars in beam weapons research over the next years, Britain simply cannot be left out of the act.

Hence the *Financial Times* of London's science editor David Fishlock has twice in the past weeks, most recently on Nov. 2, written detailed features on the technologies of laser and directed-energy weapons systems, including technical fine points that have appeared almost nowhere else in the international press. British Broadcasting Corporation's widely viewed "Panorama" show telecast on Sept. 5 a feature on the debate around "Star Wars." While leaning toward scare-mongering about the new American strategic doctrine, the show nonetheless broke the wall of silence on the beam-weapons question that had existed up to that point on British television.

EIR is not privy to secret off-budget allotments being made by the British for R&D into laser and beam-weapons-related research, but the laser work being done in laboratories like Rutherford, with the aid of French technologies, is known to be some of the best in the world. In September of this year, between 200 and 300 U.K. laser physicists congregated at the University of Sussex to receive a special briefing from University of Birmingham political scientist Neville Brown "to familiarize British laser physicists with directed-energy weapons systems."

British scientific circles are undoubtedly aware that a workable x-ray laser "pop-up" system developed by the United States would require British participation, in view of Britain's strategic location in the overall context of Western defense capabilities.

The better traditions of British scientific efforts as applied to military-defense technologies involve a bias in favor of "new frontier" thinking about air defense in particular. These are the traditions that Lord Carrington would prefer to see purged from British life and which, as typified by the cases of Churchill-circle scientists R. V. Jones and Frederick Lindemann during World War II, met with enormous resistance at that time from an Establishment prejudiced against new ideas. But Britain could not have prevailed against the Nazis without individuals like this; the tenacity of this impulse, especially under conditions where British survival is itself at stake, cannot be underestimated as a reserve that could be tapped under conditions of strategic crisis.

The impulse is exemplified in a famous Aug. 8, 1938, letter to the *Times* of London by Churchill's scientific advisor Lindemann, which is relevant to the issue of beam defense

today. It read in part:

It seemed to be taken for granted on all sides that there is, and can be, no defense against bombing aeroplanes and that we must rely entirely upon counter-attack and reprisals. . . . If no protective contrivance can be found and we are reduced to a policy of reprisals, the temptation to be 'quickest on the draw' will be tremendous. It seems not too much to say that bombing aeroplanes in the hands of gangster governments might jeopardize the whole future of our Western civilization. To adopt a defeatist attitude in the face of such a threat is inexcusable until it has been definitely shown that all the resources of science and invention have been exhausted. . . . The whole weight and influence of government should be thrown into the scale to endeavor to find such a solution. All decent men and honorable governments are equally concerned to obtain security against attacks from the air and to achieve it no effort and no sacrifice is too great.

Adherents to this outlook, while small in number, have in certain cases—most notably that of Air Vice-Marshal Stewart Menaul—been vocal in asserting the need for Britain to embark on an ambitious program around beam-weapons, in terms both of British research efforts and support for President Reagan's March 23 policy. Sources in this circle, who form a science/defense-policy advisory group with inputs into 10 Downing Street, indicate that organizing efforts to expand support for beam weapons development in the U.K. will become more concrete in early 1984, as more preparatory groundwork is laid in relevant scientific, military, and strategic circles.

While the policy commitment here is admirable, the intensity of the Carrington deployment in the U.K. requires an immediate political counter attack even for the early-1984 schedule to work. And the rapid worsening of the strategic situation globally would also dictate something more resolute, like the kind of actions that Churchill and his scientific advisers were prepared to take in the portentous days of 1940 against the Nazi air-power threat.

Such a "Churchillian" action would in turn have important reverberations in the United States. Physicist Dr. Edward Teller, one of the key architects of President Reagan's March 23 speech, noted in his recent speech in Texas that he was confident that Britain would be the first among the Western allies to support an American commitment for a "Manhattan Project" approach to beam weapon development should the United States itself resolve on such a course.

Teller's statement points to the kind of American-British back-and-forth that is needed to outflank the dangerous strategic games of Lord Carrington and to meet the Soviet strategic threat in a serious way.

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