

Britain's defense aspirations founder on the rock of cost-accounting

by Mark Burdman

One of the paradoxes now under discussion among certain individuals close to the City of London is that the International Monetary Fund austerity policies which Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher so vociferously defends when applied to the countries of Ibero-America are in large part responsible for the growing number of problems confronting the United Kingdom's military capabilities, capabilities whose expansion and upgrading Mrs. Thatcher also vociferously supports.

As her London critics put it: Mrs. Thatcher may indeed not flinch in her intent to confront the expansionism of the Russian Bear, yet her Vienna School/University of Chicago economics is handing pieces on the chess board to the East!

Insofar as the United Kingdom as such is concerned, the central problem, sources indicate, begins with the momentous agreement reached in 1978 between then-Prime Minister James Callaghan and the International Monetary Fund for an IMF loan to the British economy in exchange for the imposition in the United Kingdom of decisive measures of austerity. Callaghan, as per the proclivities of his advisory circle at the time, ordered cuts in the defense-spending sector, to hit the "guns" component while preserving as much of the "but-ter" as possible.

The tendency of Mrs. Thatcher's Vienna School-taught advisers has been to go the Labour Fabians one step further, not in response to this or that stricture of the IMF, but in accepting the IMF principle of "cash limits" on overall spending allotments. "Cash limits" is the same kind of euphemism familiar to Americans in the hoopla around the "balanced budget." If carried to its ultimate logic, a London source told *EIR*, "it would suggest that we would be better off living on a desert island, spending and producing nothing, since as soon as you start spending and producing, you seem to always exceed what the accountants and the IMF like to call 'cash limits.' "

At present, the "cash limits" argument is being pushed vigorously by Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson, to the dismay of Minister of Defence Michael Heseltine and many of the traditional military strategists and military-hardware interests centered around Jane's Fighting Ships and other institutions. Working alongside of the "cash limits" true believers has reportedly led various otherwise forward-

minded military thinkers to set aside the question of the necessity of development of advanced laser and other frontier military-applicable technologies; since, if faced with the "either-or" choice of preserving traditional military porkbarrels or venturing forth into new realms, they will reflexively opt for the former.

London sources have stressed to *EIR* that the IMF's influence in this respect is not at all unrelated to certain problems in the British military performance over the past period.

Outside of ill-defined strategic considerations as such, the decision by the British government in the past days to pare down the army on the Rhine in West Germany was in substantial part reached in the parameters of the idiotic austerity premises of the IMF's 1978 guidelines.

Otherwise, there is the question of an honest evaluation of the problems that have surfaced in post mortems of what the British call the "Falklands campaign." Reviews of performance against the Argentine military in that cabinet-warfare setting demonstrate the following:

- Only 40 percent of Britain's Sidewinder missiles actually functioned during performance-testing for the crisis.
- British frigates were surprisingly vulnerable to Argentine shelling, which even penetrated to the basic structural level of the frigates involved.
- British torpedo capabilities were not at all up to the par anticipated.

Whether austerity measures as such were a contributing factor in these and other problems; certainly austerity measures will militate against improvement of the technological quality of the United Kingdom's military potential. Chills run down various British spines when it is imagined what would have happened if the Argentines had been more effective and daring at various crucial moments of the combats!

The paradox involved here is of a crucial nature not only at the level of the Thatcher cabinet as such, but also at the highest levels of the British oligarchy, including within the monarchy itself. In June of this year, Prince Philip made a speech which reflected on the experiences of Charlemagne, Frederick Hohenstaufen, Alexander the Great, George Washington, and others, and called for the United Kingdom to create a new military academy to train military men in the arts of geometry and the sciences. According to informed

sources, the speech reflected a concern that in-depth British military capabilities are (proportionately speaking) vastly weaker than those of either the United States or France, and that the United Kingdom would have to study the experience of France's Ecole Polytechnique and America's West Point if it wanted to correct this problem.

Yet, in the ensuing period, *EIR* has reviewed various policy statements from Prince Philip's World Wildlife Fund decrying overambitious economic growth policies for undermining the equilibrium of nature. The World Wildlife Fund's Malthusian premises, as exposés by *EIR* have documented, are among the determining influences over the IMF's policy approach at the highest levels. Since the core of the Ecole Polytechnique and West Point traditions are an emphatic rejection of everything the WWF and IMF stand for, the laws of cause and effect dictate that the British influentials will have to give up some of the fondest premises of their past centuries' world outlook if they don't wish to play a subordinate role as a satrapy of the Imperial Russian "Third Roman Empire." Will the Sept. 1 events over the Sea of Japan and their aftermath give British leaders a sufficient jolt?

What Prince Philip said

On June 2, Britain's Prince Philip, who is a former naval officer, gave a policy address to the London-based Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) on the importance of the creation of a new military science academy. Excerpts follow. Emphasis has been added.

. . . . It seems to me that it is about time the services recognised that even officers in non-technical military services should be treated as fully-fledged professionals comparable in every way with those in the law, engineering, medicine, or religion. . . . Reinforcing resistance to change in the purely military aspects of the service is the presence of a very large number of civil servants within the service ministries. Now, I am not suggesting, looking round here, that civil servants are naturally reactionary in any way. But their job is to administer the system within cash limits. And their inevitable resistance to any change to an existing system—except one which is demonstrably cheaper—therefore tends to affect the efforts of ardent reformers in the services. . . .

The fact is that universities have seldom concerned themselves overmuch with military matters except King's College, London, which had a Military Science Department as early as 1848, and Cambridge, which had one up until the last war. . . . Then why not a school of military science? In my opinion, company management is relatively simple compared to the complexities of a military regime. . . . [Lieutenant Colonel Peter] Harvey quotes a letter from Prof. Michael Howard in which he says. . . . "There is no core of purely military studies that can be taught in a university. So even an ideal university syllabus for the needs of the profession of

arms would not have the kind of coherent identity that one can identify in degrees leading to careers in the other professions." I think what the Americans might say, we sure slobbered a bibful! . . .

However undesirable war may be, the fact remains that wars and the consequence of wars have probably had a greater influence on the destiny of mankind than any other human activity. . . . Afghanistan may be a long way away but I for one would hate to risk the chance of a similar situation developing in Europe. . . .

I think we should also bear in mind that some of the most influential men who have ever lived were originally or primarily military geniuses; men such as Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, William the Conqueror, Charlemagne, Frederick the Great, Wellington, Washington, Mountbatten, and, although not a career officer, I'd include Churchill. . . .

Even a cursory glance at the careers of the most influential military leaders shows that they all gave a lot of their time to the study of their profession in great depth. The evidence also suggests that they possessed formidable intellectual and personal qualities. The idea that their profession . . . should rank below Anglo-Saxon poetry, business studies, or the obscure sociological subjects so popular in most universities strikes me as entirely ludicrous.

Now, I believe that we should ask the question: what does a young officer need to know to understand the purpose of the armed services as a whole and to be a useful member of his particular service? And I would suggest that what he needs to know comes under four broad headings. First of all, *organisation of war*. Under this heading I would place the history of warfare and the influence of decisive battles, the evolution of strategic principles and the development of units, staff command, and administrative structures to meet strategic and tactical requirements. . . .

Secondly, *defence policy*: this is important because it is very easy for officers to become so dedicated to their own particular service that they can no longer see it in the context of the whole defence system. And this section would, I suggest, include the formulation of a defence philosophy, evaluation of priorities and options, the allocation of responsibilities and resources between the services, and the assessment of nuclear and other nasty weapons, policies, and the concept of deterrence. I would also include the study of treaty organisations, allies, the purchase and sale of military equipment, subversion, and terrorism.

And thirdly, *logistics*: in this section I would include the whole infrastructure of weapons, research, development, and procurement, the defence industries, the organisation of transport, communications, supplies, intelligence, security, maintenance, and repair, to which I would add: the philosophy of selection entry, training, and promotion for all services at all levels.

And fourthly, *deployment*: by this I mean the composition, equipment, and use of military force to achieve an agreed strategy for a particular object in a peacekeeping task or in a limited or general war situation. . . .