

BRITAIN DESPERATELY NEEDS ITS ENGINEERING INDUSTRY

Training in the British engineering industry was badly damaged in the early 80's by the government and the industry now faces an acute shortage of skilled people. Since the average age of skilled men in parts of the industry now is 55, a major crisis will develop over the next decade with Britain being unable to function in key areas of modern industry.

What Thatcher and Major did was to under-fund civilian manufacturing industry, in all its aspects, and the result was devastating for industry as a whole. The problems facing companies such as NEI

Parsons and Swan Hunters in the North East are a direct result of government policies towards industry and towards the defence industries.

The exception to this has been the arms industry, which used to have support from government for design, for development, for production and for exports. The arms industry now represents a vital pool of skilled people and is one of the few areas of industry which can function with modern materials and technology.

The fall of the Berlin Wall has meant the slow collapse of the world's arms

market, and an increase in the number of people selling weapons.

The engineering industry is an essential part of our economy, but it needs to be moved into producing other non-military goods, for which, given government support, there would be a market. This is essential for the future of Britain's economy and for the quality of life of its population.

As the President of the Honda Motor Company put it recently - "The money game is fine but industry is the only way a country can survive and I really don't know how the British will make a living in the future".

WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE FOR VICKERS

Vickers management have said there is no alternative to building tanks in Tyneside and in Leeds. This is not the case. Vickers are clearly contemplating producing other types of armoured vehicles in the two factories which means they could produce other types of equipment there also.

The difficulty is that, because of the strange and very damaging attitude towards manufacturing industry promoted by government since the late 1970's it is very difficult indeed for British companies to compete. Vickers would, for instance, have difficulty competing with Komatsu, the

Japanese owned earth moving equipment manufacturer, even though the companies have plants only a few miles apart on Tyneside. Komatsu produce machines designed in Japan where they receive government subsidies and tax relief for this research. Funding for similar research in Britain would be taxed at 25%.

But Vickers also pressure government to continue support for the arms industry. The chairman of Vickers lobbied to a Saudi Arabian dissident deported from Britain so that Saudi Arabia would consider buying Vickers tanks. Had the lobbying been successful and the dissident been deported to Saudi Arabia, he would have been

executed. This is an illustration of how immoral the arms trade has made the Vickers management.

What Vickers could be doing is campaigning for measures such as an industrial training policy, supported by Government, which forces all employers to train apprentices, for tax relief on the purchase of machine tools, tax relief and government support for research and development, support for exporting civilian equipment at the same level currently give to companies exporting weapons.

With measures such as this we could have a healthy vibrant economy, with high levels of skill and low unemployment.

ARMS CONVERSION - TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE

In the mid 1970's Lucas Aerospace Joint Shop Stewards Committee produced a plan to produce a range of products for the civilian market in the Lucas plants which were then making military equipment. Faced with threatened redundancies the shop stewards had asked their members what they thought the factories could produce instead of making people redundant. The response was remarkable and a number of products were developed up to the working prototype stage. The best known of these were the Road/Rail bus, which could travel on both railways and on the road and a Kidney Dialysis machine.

Vickers own workforce went through a similar exercise in the early 1980's.

These exercises proved firmly that it is

possible to make goods for a civilian market in arms factories. This happened after the first world war, after the second world war and, in the United States, after the Vietnam war.

The situation is now very different but, with government support and the right type of tax structure the facilities currently making arms could act as the springboard for the regeneration of the manufacturing industry throughout in Britain.

What is needed is a set of government measures aimed at supporting and expanding our civilian engineering base. Measures such as those outlined above, which all the successful and expanding economies in the world already have in place. The 'Tiger' economies in the Far East do this, the healthy economies in Europe do this and now the United States is moving in this direction.

Making and selling weapons does nothing for our own economy and has a devastating effect on the lives of people living in the countries we sell to. The bulk of the poverty and deprivation, the starvation and social collapse in the world today is related to military conflict and in many cases it is Britain who have supplied the arms.

Government policies have created this crisis in our society. Government policies control the environment in which industry and commerce takes place and can decide to nurture industry or to undermine it. While others nurture their industry and have healthy economies, Britain chose to undermine it. That needs to change. Supporting civilian manufacturing and a reduction in weapons manufacturing for export makes sense. Selling tanks to Turkey doesn't.

as the United States, Germany, France, and Russia.

For more information contact

Trade Union CND
162 Holloway Rd
London
N7 8DQ

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- 1) Write to your MP urging the Government to prevent the sale of tanks or technology to Turkey. Urge them also for a big change in attitude towards civilian manufacturing industry and away from support for arms exports, especially to repressive regimes. Ask to meet him or her so that you can discuss the problems associated with this order.
- 2) Write to the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook urging him to ban such a deal, and to press other governments to follow suit.
- 3) Raise motions in your local political party, your trade union or your local church.

- 4) Ask them to take speakers a speaker from TUCND about this issue.

- 5) Write to the local press expressing concern over the sale of weapons to Turkey.

- 6) If any of the organisations you are associated with run Holiday clubs (many trade unions do this) - make sure Turkey is not on the list of places they organise holidays to.

- 7) Make sure that your Union Branch is affiliated to TUCND, that you are on TUCND's mailing list as an individual

- 8) Write to Embassy's of other potential suppliers of tank technology to Turkey, such

NO TANKS TO TURKEY

PREVENT THE SALE OF TANKS OR TECHNOLOGY TO THE REPRESSIVE REGIME IN TURKEY

A TUCND PAMPHLET

P&P By TUCND
162 Holloway Rd
London
N7 8DQ

NO TANKS TO TURKEY

Turkey's appalling human rights record is putting a number of countries off selling them weapons, but Britain, the second largest exporter of weapons in the world, is keen to fill the gap. Vickers are tendering for a contract to help build the Challenger Main Battle Tank in Turkey and to help develop a whole new generation of tanks for their military.

There will be very little work for the British workforce resulting from this contract. The Turkish government appear to be looking initially for a reasonably modern design to build under licence in Turkey and for help in setting up a tank factory. They also want access to some modern technologies. They will import some of the materials, such as the armour plate, and some of the high tech parts, such as the equipment used for targeting and controlling the firing of the gun, but this will not produce significant numbers of jobs in Britain. In the long term Turkey would want to be an

exporter of tanks, which will set them up as a competitor to the Vickers tank factories in Leeds and Newcastle.

After the Gulf war Turkey reached an agreement with the United States to produce F16 fighters in Turkey and to buy other US designed military hardware produced under licence elsewhere. However protests by a number of organisations in the United States over the supply of weapons to such an ugly repressive regime stopped the establishment of the aircraft factory and prevented Turkey buying the other US designed equipment. Turkey had intended to sell aircraft to Egypt in exchange for US Designed tanks made there, under licence. All that fell through because of the American disquiet.

The failure of that project has left Turkey casting around to find other sources of some of this equipment.

Turkey has also now announced that

they are looking for a partner to help produce a new generation of tanks and they may well do this with Vickers, if our government allows it.

Britain may well not produce the best military hardware in the world, but we are prepared to sell it to some of the most repressive regimes in the world.

We should not be selling this type of equipment to countries such as Turkey, but, because of the industrial and economic policies pursued by the previous government, our economy is now dependent on the sale of weapons. This has to change. Not only do these weapons kill, maim and impoverish millions of people, but Britain will not be able to sustain our economy, as we currently do, by selling weapons in the future. Britain needs a government strategy for rebuilding our civilian manufacturing industry and getting off the dependency on arms sales.

TURKEY IS AN UGLY REPRESSIVE REGIME

Near the end of 1996 a group of Kurdish men made their way to Turkey, via Iran, to look for work in Turkey. They were picked up by the police

comes from Turkey. It is clear that senior police and army figures are heavily involved in the drugs trade. There is also strong evidence to suggest that at least one



who gouged out their eyes, tortured them to death and sent their corpses back to their relatives, in pieces. This was not an isolated incident.

A small scale war is under way against the Kurdish separatists in the South.

Political opponents of the right-wing and Islamic Fundamentalist government are arrested and 'disappear' while in police custody. Sometimes their bodies are found in a similar state to the Kurds referred to above.

Trade Unionists have had their leaders arrested. Activists are arrested on a routine basis - sometimes tortured. Yet they continue to work for their members' interests and oppose government policies.

The economic policies of the Turkish Government mirror those of Thatcher's Britain and, as they did in Britain, have devastated the economy. The currency had to be devalued recently, by 70% - and even that didn't solve their economic problems.

Also, it was recently proven that 70% of the Heroin coming illegally into Britain

of the parties involved in the coalition government, the Islamic Fundamentalist party, draws a significant amount of its income from drugs trafficking.

Turkey invaded Cyprus and cut the island in half, creating a separate Turkish state on the island. They have ignored all the United Nations motions calling for it to withdraw and they allow the statelet to act as a haven for large numbers of wanted criminals.

Turkey has fought a number of border wars with Greece and sends troops into the Kurdish controlled area of Iraq to fight the Kurdish separatists there. They have killed thousands of people in the process.

And yet our government are contemplating selling Turkey the capacity to produce tanks. The government there is unstable and unpopular. It can sustain itself in power only by the use of force.

Rather than selling them tanks, Britain should be treating that government as a pariah - in the same way the United States did over the sale of F16 aircraft.

The demonstration opposite is of the children of people who have "disappeared" while in police custody. The photograph below is of the riot police who attacked the demonstration moments after this was taken.



DON'T GO ON HOLIDAY TO TURKEY

On the whole the repression is kept well out of the sight of tourists and it is unlikely that visitors would get much of a sense of just how corrupt or repressive the Turkish regime

really is.

Turkey is underdeveloped, in that it does not have a strong manufacturing base and its agriculture is largely peasant based. The income from Tourism is therefore, essential

to pay for the weapons which its government need to keep the lid on their population.

By going on Holiday to Turkey you will be helping to maintain a ugly and repressive regime.

TANKS - A PROBLEMATIC FUTURE

The trouble is that Main Battle Tanks (MBTs), such as the Challenger, relate to large scale set piece battles of the sort our government thought we might be involved

in should we end at war with the Soviet Union. In other types of warfare they are not that useful of relevant.

There are now lots of different ways of



doing the types of things which big tanks can do - with artillery, helicopters, aircraft infantry held and other types of missiles.

At £4 million each they are not cost effective, compared to the alternative methods of achieving the task they were designed for.

As time progresses more sophisticated ways of destroying tanks are being developed which means they are becoming more vulnerable.

The demand for MBTs such as the Challenger, is shrinking, you could even argue they are obsolete. Except that is for using against a poorly armed enemy, such as the Kurdish separatists fighting for their own state in the South, and your own population.

WHY BRITAIN DEPENDS ON WEAPONS EXPORTS

There is a limit to the number of tanks the British army can use - partly because of the treaties limiting the number weapons systems in Europe. But to make them cheap enough you have to spread the cost of research and development by producing far larger number than Britain would want. That means we have to export.

Were we to import significant amounts of military equipment, we would risk wrecking our economy though the balance of trade deficit this would create. So we have to manufacture the weapons in this country - unless we reduced the scale of our armed forces dramatically.

Again because of the Tory government policies towards industry the only area which did not suffer chronic under-funding was the arms industry. The net result is that over the years Britain has become terribly dependent on the sale of weapons abroad. The arms trade has become both a tool and an aim of foreign policy and it is now our only successful export industry.

The problem with depending on exports is that there are a number of other countries keen to export and a number who produce tanks. The USA are keen to export the

Abrams M1, France and Germany both have top class tanks they want to sell and the Challenger does not perform well compared to some of these other models. Italy has a less successful model. There are five major MBT designs in NATO while the market could probably sustain a couple. Britain is one of the weakest designs and has a government least likely to fight to preserve the industry.

India, Brazil, Egypt, Israel, South Korea and South Africa all have tank industries and are keen to export. The former Soviet Pact countries all have major tank production facilities.

At the end of the cold war both the USA and the Russia both had large stocks of surplus equipment available at knock down prices. For instance the USA gave Egypt 700 M60 tanks, a few years ago, but in doing so, cornered a large and lucrative market for spares and ammunition. Also the United States produces 50 times the amount of tank ammunition compared to Britain. Government cutbacks in the early 1990's in the US meant a substantial overcapacity in their industry, and industry more modern in both design and production facilities. It is issues like this which will mean Britain

is finding it steadily more and more difficult to find orders for military equipment.

Much of weaponry this country produces now is inferior to other manufacturers and Britain compensated by selling to countries who had difficulty getting equipment elsewhere. There used to be a market for Britain in the Middle East where the USA was reluctant to sell to Arab countries because of a commitment to Israel. That changed with the Gulf war and Britain has all but lost that market altogether.

We are left with the nasty, repressive regimes such as Turkey and Nigeria. Other producers have refused to sell to these because of their appalling human rights record.

Even still, there's no real future for Britain in this trade and other ways of sustaining our economy have to be found - NOW.

Britain is the second largest exporter of weapons in the world but we have the 18th largest economy. That means we have a much greater dependency on weapons exports than any other country in the world and have a very badly distorted economy. This has to change.

WHAT HAPPENS TO VICKERS?

Vickers management have said that if there isn't a market for tanks they will close the factories in Leeds and in Newcastle. The company did 'diversify', in that it now doesn't depend solely on the production of tanks. It's done this by buying a number of other companies so the company itself won't go bust if tank production fails.

The company are, in effect, using the threat to jobs in Leeds and Newcastle as a way of pressuring the government to continue buying their tanks - even if they are not the best and if the army doesn't need them.

The Leeds and Newcastle factories could

be re-tooled to do other engineering work. Currently they are run in a highly specialised way because the management there chose to do it this way. Tank factories elsewhere in the world product other equipment in the same factories alongside tank production, using the same skilled workforce and the same machine tools. In Germany, for instance, in one plant Locomotives are produced in the same factory. Elsewhere a variety of other vehicles are produced alongside tanks and, in one place, gantry cranes are produced in the same factory.

In these factories, if tank production were to disappear the factories wouldn't close and the communities which depend on them

wouldn't be devastated.

So when Vickers say they can only make MBT's, this is because the management chose it to be so, not because it is technically difficult to do it any other way. Other companies tried the same tactics of using the threat to jobs to pressure governments to buy unwanted and unnecessary equipment, the most notable being General Dynamics in the USA. They threatened to close their plants in they didn't get more orders - but their government called their bluff. Given all the problems facing tanks and tank production in Britain, if this tactic works at all it isn't going to work for long.