

# **The Misuse of the High-minded: The British Government's First Campaign Against CND**

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On March 24, 1958, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan sent a remarkable memo to a member of his Cabinet, Dr Charles Hill, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The memo read:

It is most important that we should find some way of organising and directing an effective campaign to counter the current agitation against this country's possession of nuclear weapons. This is a question on which the natural emotions of ordinary people would lead them to be critical of the Government's policy, and to accept without question or reason the arguments which our opponents use... .

The question is how to ... exploit the differences between those who oppose our policy.

Mr. (R.A.) Butler has been asked by the B.B.C. to take part in a discussion on this in *Panorama* in a week's time, and I have asked him to accept... . Could we not get the I.T.A to take the initiative, but perhaps in a more positive way, by finding suitable people who would speak in support of the U.K.'s possession of nuclear arms? ...

There are no doubt many other ways in which we could press the campaign... . Can we persuade some influential publicists to write articles? Are there any reliable scientists? Or Church of England Bishops? What about Sir John Slessor, or Professor Bullock? Mr. Aiden Crawley would probably help.

Will you please look into this question, in consultation with the Conservative Central Office, and let me have a report as soon as possible.

The Macmillan memo and other documents outlining the British government's initiation of a campaign against nuclear disarmament appear in newly-opened government files, available at the Public Record office.

The Macmillan government's campaign emerged in the context of growing public criticism of the hydrogen bomb. On February 17, 1958, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament had been publicly launched at a large indoor rally in London, addressed by Bertrand Russell, J.B. Priestley, A.J.P. Taylor, Canon John Collins, and other prominent individuals. Meanwhile, plans were moving forward for the first Aldermaston march, designed to proceed from London to the nuclear weapons facility.

These events set off a tremor that quickly reached the highest levels of the British government. On February 26, Macmillan met with Butler (the Home Secretary), and Sir Edwin Plowden (a top official in the H-bomb programme), to develop a strategy for dealing with the Aldermaston march. According to the record of the meeting, Butler argued that the demonstrators did not have a legal right to engage in peaceful picketing, while Macmillan 'considered whether he might write to the Archbishop of Canterbury asking him to warn the local clergy not to help the demonstrators.' Although it 'was generally agreed that this course would not be very helpful,' Plowden did inform the police officials that the demonstrators had no right to picket, government officials did keep the demonstration far away from the facility, and Macmillan himself wrote the statement distributed to the Aldermaston staff, warning them of the alleged dangers posed by the marchers. Along the way, Sir Norman Brook was brought in for meetings with Macmillan, for, as Butler noted, Brook wanted 'to consider how we can better organize the anti-antinuclear campaign.'

Meanwhile, other government officials joined the call for an aggressive programme against nuclear critics. Ian Harvey, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, submitted a memo to the Foreign Office warning that the campaign against the H-bomb 'could prove most damaging' to Britain's foreign and defence policies 'if they were to gain sufficient momentum.' He added that it would be 'necessary to discuss the appropriate measures for dealing with this development at the highest level this week,' for it was a matter of 'great urgency.' At the Foreign Office, one worried official remarked that 'the Ministry of Defence are themselves considering what more can be done, but it may be that the Foreign Office also should press for more action... . Probably what is needed is not more statements by Ministers, but by independent scientists and military commentators.' Another recommended 'briefing a few "trusty" correspondents' and 'getting them something like an equal opportunity on the B.B.C.' It was necessary to have 'the government's position ... stated as repeatedly and widely as the thesis of the Nuclear Disarmers.' Yet another agreed that 'much more is wanted both from Ministers and from scientists, correspondents, publicists, etc.' By mid-March, Macmillan himself was promising Plowden to do his best to 'steady public opinion' on the nuclear question. And his memo to Hill of March 24 provided a green light for the government-managed campaign.

Hill quickly developed a very vigorous programme. In a memo to Macmillan of April 2, he reported: 'Active steps are being taken to identify the intellectuals, Churchmen, scientists and others who support the government in the controversy over this country's possession of nuclear bombs.' Once identified, these persons 'will be discreetly approached with a suggestion that they should give expression to their views in one way or another . The B.B.C. and the programme companies will be confidentially informed and the suggestion made that these people should be invited to give expression to their views on sound and television.' Meanwhile, 'Canon

Mortlock, Treasurer of Chichester Cathedral, and Sir Kenneth Grubb, both of whom I have seen, are helping in the theological field.' On the memo, Macmillan scrawled: 'This is good.'

On April 22, Hill reported new progress in the 'H-bomb campaign' to Macmillan. 'Steps have been taken to gather together a group of distinguished churchmen and Conservative backbenchers to organize the public expression of support for the government's attitude,' he wrote. Canon Mortlock and William Deedes 'are convening a meeting within the next few days to start the ball rolling. The next step will be a larger meeting to which selected bishops and Members of both Houses will be invited. The objective is a steady stream of spoken, printed and broadcast contributions. With the confidential help of Sir Henry Willink and others, Hill was 'considering how best to secure parallel action by scientists and other intellectuals.' Once again the Prime Minister expressed his satisfaction at the measures taken.

In May, Hill worked hard—and with some effect—to counter a petition, drafted by Russell and signed by 618 British scientists, criticizing nuclear weapons testing and calling for an immediate international agreement to ban it. 'The press reaction to the Russell letter and petition was better than I feared,' Hill reported happily to Macmillan on May 7. 'After consulting Sir Harold Himsworth, I put out a good deal of guidance on Thursday night, at a special meeting of the Lobby and through other contacts.' As a result, 'Friday's press played the story down, giving as much prominence to your letter as to Russell's effort. The Sunday press ignored the petition,' while 'the supplementary Russell letter aroused little interest in yesterday's press.'

Hill also 'visited' and had 'a long talk with Lord Adrian,' former President of the Royal Society and then Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, where Russell's anti-war statements had earned him dismissal from his fellowship decades before. Adrian agreed that 'the moderate view'—as Hill put it—'seldom finds expression and he gave me the impression that he will help to stimulate such expression.' Hill 'thought it best not to press him too hard and he promised to think over what I said.' Meanwhile, Hill was 'continuing such personal contacts in Cambridge, Oxford and London' in the hope of stimulating pro-government statements. Unfortunately, he added, 'there is little chance of organised action. Many dons prefer to smile indulgently at those who have fallen for Russell and leave it at that.' On the other hand, work with the press was proving rather efficacious, and 'we are more than usually busy "killing" stories.'

The following year Hill reported that, although his work with the Anglican Church had encountered 'many difficulties,' a 'modest beginning' had been made toward mobilizing Church support for the government's H-bomb policy. On July 23, William Deedes, James Ramsden, and Hubert Ashton 'dined with the Bishop of Portsmouth, the Bishop of Chelmsford and the Bishop of Chichester.' At the gathering, 'there was general

agreement that a closer exchange of views between the government and Church leaders' was 'desirable.' In addition, those present agreed to the 'creation of an informal group, comprising conservative Members of both Houses and a number of Bishops, which might meet about three or four times a year for dinner at the House.' Bishops would also be 'encouraged to write direct to Ministers when they wished for authoritative guidance on government policy.' Once the 'informal' meetings were 'fully established,' Hill intended to 'inject the idea that the group invite Ministers to attend.'

Did this government-directed campaign against critics of nuclear weapons pass over from opinion manipulation into the nether world of surveillance, covert operations, and illegal activities? In subsequent years, after all, CND grew larger, more influential and, in the eyes of officialdom, more threatening. Unfortunately, it is impossible to answer this question with any certainty. Hill—who became Lord Hill of Luton before going on to chair the Independent TV Authority and the B.B.C.—is now deceased. Furthermore, British government records covering the period from 1961 to the present are still closed to researchers under the 30-year rule for release of government documents. Finally, the official document list for the period to 1959 shows that the folder which produced most of the information for this article (PREM 11/2778) is followed, sequentially, by four others marked 'Closed for the next 100 years.' Like the government's campaign to counter its critics, this is rather remarkable.

## Cross-cultural Ministry in Crisis

### Eugene Hillman CSSp

How fruitful is this Decade of Evangelization going to be? The analyses and proposals offered in this essay refer specifically to the missionary enterprise in Africa south of the Sahara. But the implications are much wider, touching even the *raison d'être* of each one of Christianity's multiple ecclesial manifestations.

#### *Anthropological Roots of the Crisis*

Because the world's irreducible cultural pluralism cannot be ignored with impunity, much less scorned and replaced with alien cultures, the declining esteem for what missionaries have done may be seen as an inevitable consequence of the European and American cultural monomania that produced a network of dependent Western spiritual colonies through sub-Saharan Africa.