

PROTEST TO SURVIVE

Protest and survive is an extension of EP Thompson's original essay on the 'New Nuclear Threat'. It contains several essays by other authors on the economic and political nature of the Bomb. However, in this short revue it is intended to consider Thompson's basic arguments, as this is what the rest of the book is based on.

Thompson's work is in the form of an answer to a letter to 'The Times' by a Professor Michael Howard, who is the Professor of War History at Oxford. On the whole, Thompson accuses him of trying to prepare people for a new kind of 'Winnable nuclear war'. The basic argument is as follows. Up to now nuclear war has not happened because a policy of MAD (how apt) or 'Mutually Assured Destruction', has been followed. However, over the past couple of years, the collective brains of NATO and the Pentagon have started calculating a method of war which may give one side 'victory'. This is known as a 'theatre' war, in other words the super-powers will fight a nuclear war in Africa, the Persian Gulf, or Europe, but not between each other.

"Nuclear weapons must be employed ... to convey a decisive escalation of sufficient shock to convincingly persuade the enemy that he should make the political decision to cease the attack and withdraw. To evidence our solidarity I am considering use in all regions employing both UK and US weapons using primarily aircraft and land-based missile systems. The initial use would be restricted to GDR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria."

Telex message from General Alexander Haigh, then Supreme Allied Commander Europe to the NATO Command, during the WINTEX 77 exercises.

At the moment, Britain is preparing to welcome new Cruise missiles, which will be based here but will be under USA control. In other words, if theatre nuclear war starts, Britain would be a launching pad for USA missiles, while America would not receive any damage herself.

Thompson criticises Professor Howard for trying to prepare us for this tactical theatre war. His argument is that if we ac-

cept that a war is 'winnable' on a nuclear scale, we have lost everything. One of Professor Howard's suggestions is that 'Civil Defence' must be strengthened to get the country back on its feet again, so that only 30 - 35 million would die, and the political system would survive these 'disagreeable consequences'.

Thompson refutes this, and though some of his arguments may be semantic and sentimental, there is no turning away from the testimony of this Nagasaki child.

"My younger sisters died the next day. My mother ... she also died the next day. And then my older brother died ...

"The survivors made a pile of wood on the playground and began to cremate the corpses. My brother was burned. Mother also was burned and quickly turned to white bones which dropped down among the live coals. I cried as I looked on the scene. Grandmother was also watching, praying with a rosary ...

"I am now in the fourth grade at Yamazato Primary School. That playground of terrible memories is now completely cleared and many friends play there happily. I play with my friends there too, but sometimes I suddenly remember that awful day. When I do, I squat down on the spot where we cremated our mother and touch the earth with my fingers. When I dig deep in the ground with a piece of bamboo, several pieces of charcoal appear. Looking at the spot for a while I can dimly see my mother's image in the earth. So when I see someone else walking on that place, it makes me very angry."

The whole basis of Thompson's argument, and indeed, those of the whole book are that to survive, we must protest. It is up to you and me, with what time and energy we have, to stop the now almost 'feasible' nuclear holocaust that dims all our futures. What is being said is that we must make everyone realise that a nuclear war cannot be won - it can only be lost.

H Hamer