

# A JSEVITZ AND SANDHURST: OFFICER TRAINING IN BRITAIN

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The Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, is the very quintessence of the English establishment. Even now in the latter half of the twentieth century the charm — and the irrelevance — of the Victorian Empire still pervades the atmosphere. It all started long before the young Victoria came to the throne. In fact, in 1798, when a handsome and ambitious young cavalry colonel by the name of John Gaspard Le Marchant, a Channel Islander, started a campaign to establish an officer training college to improve the professional standards of the highly amateurish, albeit largely successful, British Army. The idea soon attracted royal favour. By 1802, a fashionable architect, and special protégé of King George III, a certain Mr Wyatt, had finished his designs for the buildings. In 1812 the college was opened in its present grounds in Camberley about 40 miles from London on the main Southampton road.

Right from the outset the college gained a reputation that many other establishments tried to emulate. Le Marchant, who became the Lieutenant-Governor of the College, was asked by the Tsar to improve the famous cadet school at St Petersburg. West Point, although opened a little before Sandhurst, used the planned English college as a model. In later years, Sandhurst was copied throughout the world but particularly in Commonwealth countries. Imitation could not reproduce the original, however, and many Commonwealth countries decided to send their best officers to Sandhurst.

Sandhurst's founder established a brave tradition. For he was no armchair strategist: in 1812 he died in a gallant charge at the Battle of Salamanca. Twenty Sandhurst-trained officers were killed in the Peninsular War against Napoleon. Another ex-Sandhurst officer, who also served with distinction in this campaign, was later to have an influence on South African history. He was General Sir Benjamin D'Urban who acted as Quarter-Master General under Beresford's command in Portugal. After the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo — in which twelve ex-Sandhurst officers died — the college continued with little



Major-general John Gaspard Le Marchant.

change until the shocks of the Crimean War. But the setbacks suffered by the Army in the Crimea, and later in India, were not due to the lack of demanding training. Conditions at Sandhurst were quite Spartan, as a glance at the timetable suggests. The 'gentlemen cadets' were woken by a 'warning drum' at five o'clock in the morning. Just after six they were paraded and inspected. A drum was sounded again at six-thirty to summon the cadets to prayer. At seven the cadets entered the 'halls of study'. Breakfast followed at nine o'clock. At ten the cadets marched back to the halls of study, where they worked until noon. Then there was 'fencing, riding, swimming and sabre' until dinner at two. From three to five-thirty came 'military exercises'. Six-thirty until eight-thirty was set aside for 'recreation'. Supper followed. At nine o'clock there was prayers and the retreat. And

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ten o'clock to bed. The official timetable, however, did not include the cruel bullying of the juniors', the fagging system in general and the incessant inter-company fighting. The college military staff often turned a blind eye to these cruelties in the belief that young soldiers needed to be toughened for battle. After all, they felt, there could be no mollycoddling on duty on the North West Frontier.

Although Sandhurst is usually pictured as the byword for discipline, the local inhabitants of the Camberley area have often been wary of the cadets, even up to present day (sometimes young officers wear wigs to disguise their unfashionably short hair in order to gain access to local distilleries!) In the nineteenth century, frequent pitched battles took place especially at the local fairs. The rebelliousness was not restricted to the locals; frequent mutinies occurred within the college. The first broke out in 1804 (when the college was at temporary quarters in Great Marlow) and the last (publicized) disorder flared up in 1902.

By and large, the Sandhurst mutinies were caused by bad conditions, usually poor food, but there also existed among the cadets, and in the officer corps generally, dissatisfaction with the system of promotion. The tradition of purchasing commissions, which was abolished by Cardwell's Army reforms of the 1870s, had long been a bone of contention. There had always been exceptions to the purchase system. Royal favour or battlefield valour could sometimes secure free promotion. Or, as in the case of Sandhurst, the expensive fees were waived for orphaned sons of officers. Yet, even these orphans could only afford to enter the Indian Army, the one place where an officer could hope to live on his army salary. After the débâcle of the Crimea in the 1850s and the stunning success of the new dynamic Prussian Army in the wars of the 1860s, the British officer corps sorely needed the professionalism that only promotion by merit, not money, could secure.

By the late 1860s life at Sandhurst was less Spartan, but still not ideal. As one recruit described it at the time: 'We lived in a tunic, a belt and a stock, and were hunted all day by sergeants and gate keepers, for we were bold, bad boys, seldom out of mischief, the result of a system which expected nothing else!'. Indeed, all through the nineteenth century the whole tone of Sandhurst was that of a militarized public school, although by the end of the century all the cadets

were at least in their late teens. Even as late as 1914, it was still difficult to avoid comparison between the spirit of Sandhurst and that of Eton or Harrow. All three were harsh training grounds for Empire. Sandhurst was still 'a violent, ruthless and sometimes cruel place though at the same time free and exhilarating'.<sup>2</sup> But crueller events were about to alter drastically the pattern of Sandhurst. The challenge of the two World Wars helped to modernize, and sometimes improve, the conditions at the college, although not the life expectancy of its graduates. 3 600 ex-Sandhurst cadets died in the Great War (three times the number of fatalities in the second conflagration). By mid-1918 officers were churned out to become cannon fodder after only two months training; the average life span of the Western Front was three weeks for a Second Lieutenant. Their names, embossed in gold on marble, now line the walls of the college's memorial chapel.



The Royal Military College at Sandhurst in about 1884.

The Great War destroyed the great part of a whole generation and, in particular, a large proportion of the class that stocked the officer corps. Nevertheless, the post-war intake into the college was 95 per cent public school boys. So, despite the advent in 1924 of the first Labour Government, headed by Ramsay-MacDonald, Britain's only Premier from working-class origins, Sandhurst seemed hardly prepared to introduce a People's Army. Yet, it was perhaps a sign of the times that the courses began to include instruction on how to write a cheque, how to accept a dinner invitation gracefully and a caution that visiting cards should be engraved not printed. Such advice would hardly have been thought appropriate before World War One.

1. H. Thomas: *The Story of Sandhurst* (London, 1961) p. 112. Thomas' work is probably the most comprehensive and interestingly written of the many accounts of the Academy. It is now rather out-of-date.  
2. H. Thomas: *op. cit.*, p. 167.

Sandhurst was reluctantly being dragged into the twentieth century. The style began to alter slightly, but in substance Sandhurst instructors and the Army hierarchy in general, could not escape the lure of the past. Sandhurst still taught outworn infantry tactics and stressed riding skills. At heart, many of the instructors longed for the days of the cavalry charge. Polo training took precedence over tank tactics. Sandhurst was a reflection of a War Office dominated by cavalymen whose greatest fear was that mechanization would turn them into garagemen. Visionary advocates of mechanization and highly mobile tank-warfare such as Fuller and Liddel-Hart (and de Gaulle) inspired disciples abroad among the young colonels, such as Guderian, in the secretly expanding *Wehrmacht*.

In the early 1920s, another European war seemed impossible and many Army officers were pensioned off. The Royal Military College returned to its former role as a finishing school for the gentlemen who would run the peacetime Empire. Sandhurst still enjoyed royal patronage. One of the most oft-quoted tales of the college during the inter-war years is that of the drill-sergeant and cadet Prince Henry, third son of King George V. The Prince's drill was not up to scratch and the sergeant exploded with rage (an event that occurs every five minutes on the Sandhurst parade-ground!) 'Mr Prince Henry, Sir', he bellowed, 'if I was your father I'd ...' and he stopped himself just in time, realising that he could hardly add the traditional conclusion by shouting 'shoot m'self'. The king, after all, was the sovereign to whom he owed his oath of loyalty. The whole parade listened in utmost expectation for what was to follow. Then, with impeccable logic, the sergeant-major with a confident triumph in his voice shouted: 'I'd *hab-dicate*, Sir!'

Jack Masters in his *Bugles and a Tiger* chronicled, in some exquisite cameos, the traditional attitudes of the Sandhurst of the 1930s. He explains how cadets soon learned to appreciate the comic hyperbole which is the essence of *Sandhurstspeak*:

'Two grains of Sandhurst's ubiquitous sand under the leaf of the backsight of my rifle caused me to be charged with having "a disgustingly filthy rifle" on parade. I used to think a dirty soldier was a fellow with a stubbly chin, dirty finger-nails, a cigarette hanging from his lip, and a generally raffish air of uncleanness. I learned that I was wrong;

the phrase meant a junior with a bit of fluff on his otherwise impeccable tunic. The other fellow, the one I had envisaged, was not a soldier at all. He was a member of the Royal Air Force or the criminal classes — the two terms were all but synonymous.'

Masters also commented on the still dominant cavalry ethos. At Sandhurst the cadets soon came to appreciate that 'the function of cavalry in battle is to add tone to what would otherwise be an unseemly brawl'. Despite the growing menace of the ungentlemanly Nazi forces, cadets were still, according to Masters, 'expected to be efficient and win competitions, especially at riding but we were on no account to be seen trying'. These same officers were soon, in Europe, Africa and Asia, going to have to try very hard indeed.

At each period in its history, Sandhurst has always seemed to prefer living in another more peaceful and civilized era. Indeed, Winston Churchill in the 1890s after discussing his days of drill, gymnastics and riding, said:

'It is such a pity that it all had to be made to believe and that the age of wars between civilized nations had to come to an end forever. The British Army had never fired on white troops since the Crimea, and now that the world was growing so sensible and pacific — and so democratic too — the great days were over.'

But he was wrong. For both Churchill (quite literally) and the British Army were both caught off guard by the Boer War that followed in 1899. And despite Secretary of State for War Haldane's reforms the British Army was not much better prepared in 1914. Before World War Two, the men of vision such as Liddell Hart were largely ignored and once again the British Army was caught unprepared. Dunkirk was the unhappy result.

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Sandhurst has produced many fine leaders in both the army and government. Churchill is the most famous, although he tried on four occasions to pass into the college and succeeded only in 1893. In his records there is the comment 'good but unpunctual'. Other cadets became famous in many

3. See the first 50 pages of J. Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger* (London, 1973). Masters' experiences are very amusing. Whether they are all true is another matter, for he has been accused of writing a hotchpotch of all the stories ever told about the Academy

ther walks of life. David Niven, for example, earned good marks for 'comic acting' whilst a cadet. In his recent autobiography, he said of Sandhurst: 'It is never pleasant to be treated like mud but Sandhurst, at least, did it with style and no malice aforethought; it just came naturally<sup>3</sup>. Ian Fleming too was a cadet; perhaps some of James Bond's stiff upper lip was moulded by the college.

Field-Marshal Montgomery (who was remembered as a bully), King Hussein of Jordan and General Gowon were also graduates. (Field-Marshal Dr Idi Dada Amin VC, etc, however, was never a Sandhurst inmate, although there is some record of having once driven through the college grounds). Many countries today, particularly from the Third World, are led by men trained at Sandhurst (for students up to rank of Captain) and also at the Staff College next door (for Majors and above) and continue to send their sons to these establishments. It is interesting to note how many Arab oil sheiks are invited to send their offspring to Sandhurst, particularly since the oil crisis of 1973. No Israeli subalterns attend Sandhurst, although such distinguished officers as General Ariel 'Arik' Sharon, the hero of the Canal Crossing in the Yom Kippur War, have attended the Staff college. General Sharon is now a leading politician in Israel. Commenting on his political role whilst visiting Sandhurst in 1973, the Conservative Minister of Defence, Lord Carrington, said: 'Sandhurst produces one half of the future leaders of the Third World and the London School of Economics the other half, although I think the former does a better job'.

Carrington's quip underlines what is a central question of officer training. What exactly is the officer's role in modern society? Can, or even should, the officer in a Western democratic society always observe the Clausewitzian insistence on political control of the army. Politicisation of an army, can mean two things: that politicians intervene in what are professionally military matters, or that generals intervene in what are purely political matters. The first leads to corruption in the army; the second can destroy a free democratic society. The 'man on horseback' has appeared in most countries, particularly in developing states. Undue military influence, if not outright intervention, has occurred even in advanced states such as the United States of America (e.g. General MacArthur versus President Truman during the Korean War), Russia (e.g. Marshal Zhukov's king-making role, 1953-55) and in Britain (e.g. the military's unwillingness to use force over Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence). Despite these historical aberrations, the

British Army has generally been easy to handle since, by long tradition, to mention politics in the Officers Mess was forbidden on pain of standing a large and expensive round of drinks. But this is no longer the case, particularly with junior officers.



Cadets at Sandhurst in 1884. The riding school.

By and large, the United Kingdom can boast of a good record in the Army's obedience to the legal government, that is in being non-political. But the continuing conflict in Northern Ireland has strained the British Army's relationship with Westminster as it has done in the past, for example, during the Curragh mutiny of 1914. Recently, large, albeit secret, rifts have arisen over internment policy and the Ulster Workers Council's strike in May 1974. The Army's morale in Ulster has on occasions been quite low, particularly among some regiments. This is not because of casualties caused by the attacks of the Irish Republican Army but rather it is a result of the dilemma of the 'can't win, can't lose, can't quit' situation. The Americans felt the same way in Vietnam and there is an analogous situation in Rhodesia, although the troops there are much better motivated. The stress finds various outlets. Desertion is one way out. In 1975 in a written parliamentary reply to an MP's question, the Ministry of Defence stated that an average of 1 735 soldiers per annum had deserted over the previous five years. Occasionally, this frustration erupts into the application of excess force as happened during the so-called 'Bloody Sunday' of 1972 when 13 Irishmen were killed. The Army has been heavily criticized, and Britain was taken to the European Court of Human Rights because of complaints against its interrogation methods, although since the publication of the Compton Report techniques have been more restrained. Army disquiet is rarely vented officially or openly. But discontent reached such a peak in early 1975 that the Officer Commanding

4. W. S. Churchill, *My Early Life* (London, 1944) p. 52.

Northern Ireland, General Sir Frank King, did express Army grievances, to a certain extent, in a well-publicized speech. The political restraints, imposed for the best reasons upon the Army in Ulster, have created the impression both among officers and men that the Army is being placed under unfair and intolerable strain. They want simply either to do the job properly, which means physically destroying the Irish Republican Army, or get out of Ireland.

There is also discontent in the Army with regular defence cuts initiated by an increasingly leftward-leaning Socialist Government. Moreover, the imperial recession has removed most of the attractive overseas postings in the sun. The tedium of barracks life in Germany offers little compensation for this. In the days of Empire the British Army did have an important political role; it was often expected to govern. That Army has now, in the main, returned home. Does it miss that role? How far should the armed forces stand back from political and societal pressure. Is it to be allowed to be influenced by the so-called permissive society or develop unions as in the German or Swedish armies? Should the Army do away with feudal class structures and 'democratize' along the lines of the highly effective Israeli Defence Forces?

The British soldier has not only to be trained for external deterrence functions in NATO Europe but also, primarily perhaps, for an internal garrison role within Britain. (Northern Ireland is not recognized as 'British' by most soldiers, despite its constitutional status). The Army's 'philosophical' generals, such as Brigadier Frank Kitson, have concentrated their intellectual efforts on 'low intensity' operations, internal security, urban guerilla warfare, etc.) Their research has related mainly to the Irish Republican Army, Trades Unions and communist activity but also more recently on nationalist groups in Wales and Scotland. The possibility of Scotland, with its vital NATP bases, securing independence is becoming a nightmare for Whitehall defence planners. It is not insignificant that the Army Intelligence Corps has increased its intake of Scottish as well as Irish and Welsh officers.

The Ministry of Defence is also concerned about the growth of Trades Union militancy and the dangers of using troops in 'blackleg' activities (e.g. the Glasgow dustmen's strike of 1975) or even picket-breaking roles. There is also disquiet about the unofficial response of the self-styled 'private armies' to what these vigilante groups see as a communist threat in the growing power of the

Trades Union Movement. These armies, whose numerical composition is very small, are usually led, in *Freikorps* style, by ex-army officers.

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The officer's role has been dramatically transformed: from the glories of a cavalry charge to the logistics of the dustcart. How has Sandhurst adapted to the changing complexities of British society?

Sandhurst took a major step towards modernization in 1924 with the introduction of civilian instructors and Royal Army Education Corps Officers (RAEC). The college began to move in the direction of a university. Non-military courses, including history, geography, political science as well as the more traditional language courses were taught. The civilians were usually ex-officers but ex-schoolmasters were also specially employed. After the Second World War, Sandhurst absorbed the college at Woolwich and the Royal Military College (RMC) became the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst (RMAS). The gunners and the engineers at Woolwich did not put up such resistance and, so for the first time Sandhurst became the training place for all regular officers and not just for the cavalry and infantrymen. By the 1970s all officers were trained initially at Sandhurst. Afterwards they could complete further studies according to the Progressive Qualification Scheme to achieve promotion and perhaps later enter Staff College.

Until the 'sixties' it seemed that Sandhurst with its two year period of training could develop along the lines of the four year degree courses offered at West Point and the German military colleges. However, both the imperial and the economic re-trenchment gradually cut into the length of the Sandhurst term. Increasingly sophisticated equipment and an even more complex technological society, required far greater officer expertise than during the heady days of Empire. In these circumstances, a shorter period of training must logically be based on a higher quality intake of students. This supposition is difficult to substantiate, especially as the full employment of the 'sixties and early 'seventies tended to counteract the not always successful (in numbers let alone quality) recruiting drive of the 'New Professional Army'.

Shorter training periods could lead to incompetence or to personal stress afflicting a hastily trained officer. The harrowing streets of Belfast demand

greater celebration than the brave acceptance of death in the trenches after the two months training period of 1918. It used to be said that from the roof of Sandhurst's old college building an officer could see before him the panorama of his whole career, first at Sandhurst, then Aldershot, later the Staff College — and, finally, Broadmoor Lunatic Asylum. Certainly, today's young officers find the short, hectic course at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, a strain, although of course it is hardly likely to have any permanently adverse psychological effect. There is a lot of cramming but little of the examination tension that exists in civilian colleges. In contrast, West Point's four year course imposes constant exam pressure which has frequently inspired notorious and widespread cheating, regardless of the much vaunted 'honours system'. Sandhurst does not need a 'system' to maintain its high standards of honour. Cheating is practically unknown at Sandhurst, partly because of the high standards of integrity and partly because neither the students nor staff take the academic exams very seriously. (One cavalry officer, however, was reprimanded recently for drinking champagne during an examination, because it was said to disturb other students).

Perhaps one factor in West Point's favour is that it went 'co-educational' in 1976, although whether males find training alongside female officers a stress factor is a moot point. Sandhurst has stoutly resisted female encroachment, despite the expense and inconvenience of its instructors having to travel to the Women's Royal Army Corps Officer training establishment a few miles away (in distance but not compatibility). By way of a contrast, long experience with mixed training in the Israeli Defence Force has been a constant factor in maintaining Israeli army morale.

But mixed training, although it may be close to the heart of many a young Sandhurst officer, is an insignificant issue compared to the duration and content of training. There is a fundamental issue. It is this. Even with no limitation on time it is exceedingly difficult to synthesise the dictates of education and training. Education ideally aims at creating what Matthew Arnold called 'disinterestedness'. *Education* should create independent judgement, but the *trained* man does what he is told to do. Educating fighters produces inevitably a sharp paradox: officers must learn to understand 'the value of what they may have to destroy'.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, the modern Sandhurst student is not granted the time to fully appreciate this paradox

and its implications, let alone attempt to establish a personal compromise. By 1973, the Sandhurst course had been cut from two years to eleven months. The British subaltern had become the briefest, although not the worst, trained regular officer in the NATO alliance. True, there was also the military-sponsored university at Shrivenham, and a few reserved places for bright Sandhurst hopes at the more conservative civilian universities, but not many Lieutenants could avail themselves of these opportunities. As usual, the Army wished to emulate the Royal Air Force and to strive for an all-graduate officer corps. To this end, a vigorous recruitment drive was set up in order to attract university graduates, particularly from Oxbridge. These post-university courses, however, are few compared with the direct entry from the schools (with still a large proportion from the public schools) and promotion from the ranks which has gradually increased.

The Sandhurst permanent academic staff has a teaching complement of approximately 70. A more diverse character has developed among the staff particularly with the influx, in the early 'seventies, of a small group of young academics straight from the universities. But the heavy preponderance of older ex-officers on the academic staff has dampened the innovative spirit of these 'Young Turks'. Gradually, the fresh university and civilian approach, which could have provided a tremendously important supplement to the understanding of the Clausewitzian principle of civil-military balance, has been eroded. As perhaps befits the foremost character-forming institution in Britain, these young civilian lecturers have been 'militarized' by Sandhurst. The civilian counterbalance is thus destroyed.

It is difficult to dispute the high standards and qualifications of the Sandhurst staff. But from an historical point of view, it is not easy to ascertain whether the quality of the young officer has declined since the days of the nineteenth century Empire-builder. Although a military career is frowned on nowadays by many able young men, especially in the universities, the standards of the Sandhurst eighteen-year old and also the older ex-rankers are surprisingly high. Compared with a civilian university, the average Sandhurst Lieutenant is eager, idealistic and often possessed of a good solid common sense, if not necessarily of intellectual dynamism. It is slightly startling to dis-

5. D. Niven, *The Moon's a Balloon* (London, 1971) p 54.

6. The phrase is Professor J.D. Rosenberg's.

cover that, despite what the sociologists tell us, many young men do still respect the qualities of 'service' and the untrendy beliefs in loyalty to God, Queen and Country. It is perhaps only too easy to mock these simple virtues in a 'submerging' Britain. However, these views are more likely to be held by the old Etonians or Welbexians rather than the more pragmatic ex-grammar or comprehensive schoolboy who will tend to emphasise career prospects and pay.



The modern Sandhurst serves a number of functions. In short they are: —

- To train short service officers, usually for three years' service. There is no academic phase.
- To train longer term officers. A Regular Commission lasts usually at least nine years.

The entry qualifications for school-leavers for both courses is nominally the university equivalent, namely, two 'A' levels in the General Certificate of Education although, in the best British tradition, the well-connected can circumvent these requirements if necessary. There are special conditions for university students and ex-rankers.

- To train Overseas Students. These predominantly Commonwealth officers do not number more than 20% of the student body.
- To assist in the Territorial and Army Volunteer Reserve courses.

The training schedules are constantly in a state of flux. Sometimes, change is internally generated; independently-minded Commandants can try to innovate. One such man arrived in 1974. He was Major-General Robert Ford, an impressive, highly respected and also very approachable officer. Usually, however, external influences dominate planning whether they are indirectly induced by Defence cuts or directly determined by Civil Service Reviews. The general outline of the training at the present time (1977) is as follows.

Initially, all students undergo a basic six months military phase which includes the traditional disciplines of tactics (with an increasing emphasis on unconventional warfare), skill-at-arms, drill, physical training, staff duties, administration and military law, etc. The Short Service Officers then leave to join their units. The longer term Regular Career Commission (RCC) Officers undergo an 18½ weeks 'Professional Studies Phase'. This crash course includes nine periods (45 minutes each) of War Studies, which is supposed to consider chiefly

events since the Second World War, but sometimes the adamant traditionalists never get beyond Waterloo. As a supplement, an up-to-date course on International Affairs is taught. Military Technology, which includes snatches of computer studies and even chemical and biological warfare, takes up nine periods a week. Management studies and 'Communication', as well, all add up to 33 compulsory periods a week. Add to that drill, field exercises and games, then the four month course which allows precious little time for private study is more a shock treatment than a broadening of intellectual horizons. It is training, not education. The university graduates, are expected to complete a shorter version of the above instruction. At the end of the academic phase, a short sharp military period is added to 'ginger up' officers grown sloppy with too much slouching in desks and in libraries.

In sum, although the course content and standards of students and staff are often excellent, the meagre education forced on Sandhurst by economic exigencies and misguided policy have undermined the proud traditions of the Royal Military Academy. This potential university could become a technical college, at best, or a high school crammer, at worst. Despite consistent protests by the Academic Head, Donald Moss, the Director of Studies, economy-conscious governments have prevailed upon an increasingly restive Defence Ministry to trim where it can. And it is the back-up, particularly training, that has often been sacrificed to preserve, some, at least, of the weapons required at the 'sharp end'.<sup>7</sup> In the end, no real economy results. For whether the issue is the computer-controlled Intelligence Centre in Belfast or a unit of ultra-sophisticated battle-tanks in Germany, the army still needs officers with the best possible training if the hardware is to be used effectively. Britain claims to have a fully professional Army. By most standards it is an excellent fighting force. But standards cannot be maintained without intensively-trained leadership; and Sandhurst is the core. One radical reform might be to adopt an Israeli-style training in which all officers are promoted through the ranks. After all, in modern democratic Britain why should it be assumed that the feudal principle should continue, where some men are

7. Consider a comment by Albert Einstein. 'It is characteristic of the military mentality that non-human factors — are held essential while the human being, his desires and thoughts — in short, the psychological factors — are considered as unimportant and secondary' *Our of my Later Life* (West Port., 1950) p.36.

born to lead (after training on the same playing fields and in the dining halls of the public schools) and some are born (in Glasgow or Bradford tenements) to follow unquestioningly?

Sandhurst, the old home of Empire and Army tradition, is unlikely to approve of such notions. So, within the existing parameters, what is at fault and what can be done? It has been argued that the basic problem is lack of time. In the four-month academic phase insufficient time is available to transform the 18-year-old Etonian, or even the burly warrant officer, into a successful street-fighting officer in the Bogside, or an effective, public relations-conscious, liaison officer in Hanover. During the six-month military phase not enough time is allowed to drill perfectly for the Sovereign's parade and practise the practical arts of counter-revolutionary warfare, let alone understand the theoretical implications. The British Army, and its instructors, have been almost as reluctant fully to accept the challenges of urban guerrilla warfare and civilian disorder in general as it has been reluctant to discard the glories of the cavalry charge. Those who have thought deeply about such issues are often ignored. As in the 1930s, British military philosophers are almost without honour in their own land. Today, Frank Kitson's writings, for example, are probably far more widely studied, and read, in Germany and Russia than in Britain.

The British Army will increasingly operate within the United Kingdom: to protect civilian installations (e.g. Heathrow Airport); to assist in rescue operations (such as Aberfan) or in strike-induced breakdowns in the supply of vital materials or services. The isolation of imperial garrisoning is gone; at home, the intellectual *demi-monde* of the Officers' Mess will offer little comfort. The ever expanding civil-military interface demands an understanding of the Clausewitzian principles, in general, and the specific democratic functions of the British Army in an increasingly strained society. At the moment, most Sandhurst graduates do not really know who Clausewitz was, let alone what he said. There is no time for political sophistication to develop before the young subaltern is forced to listen to shrilly abusive arguments on the Belfast streets or the quieter subversion of the far left on the mainland. The young Sandhurst officer of 19 may not have had the time to mature and develop greater caution and commonsense. Too many young officers have rushed into booby-trapped deaths in Ulster through lack of experience.

Of course, some consideration also must be given

to the European theatre of operations, particularly within the framework of a possible European Defence Community. Even within the present NATO alliance, the Sandhurst student is often embarrassed by his own monolingualism compared with his European comrades' fluency in English. Ironically, just as Britain joined the Common Market in 1973, Sandhurst's highly efficient language unit had to stop teaching foreign languages to Academy students. At the same time, the expertise of the Soviet Studies section, with its Russian language instruction, was denied to the majority of the officers. This may just be the old-time religion as far as traditional English linguistic chauvinism is concerned, but it does little for the cohesion of an alliance which is already racked by procurement, deployment and, most crucially, political antagonisms. Small wonder, then, that in a simulated NATO maritime exercise in 1974, for example, one half of NATO planes were 'shot down' by their own side, partly because of communications failure. In contrast, the opposing Warsaw Pact boasts a highly-integrated, that is Soviet dominated, structure. For example, the Pact saves substantial sums on its standard equipment, whereas NATO tyres are not even standardised. The Russians could create havoc with tintacks alone!

Sadly, against this background of disorder and threat, officer-instruction in Britain is in the doldrums. As far as academic status is concerned, Sandhurst is in danger of becoming merely a hectic sausage machine where the teachers regurgitate the same short packaged lessons, sometimes three times a week, and often rush through the same course three times a year. Such a regime is gradually driving the better trained and more sensitive academic staff away.

The Army has a reply to the academics' discontent and exodus. It plans to replace potentially troublesome civilians with members of the Royal Army Education Corps (RAEC). Not only are the Royal Army Education Corps' standards very uneven, but more important, this solution negates the civilian input which is vital if the already hastily trained officer is to appreciate the fine equilibrium of British civil-military relations.

Of course, a shorter reply to these criticisms is that most officers want to fight, not learn. Indeed, the overwhelming impression that Sandhurst officers give is that they wish to join (or rejoin) their regiments and corps as soon as possible, not sit around the Sandhurst library. However, this could just be a comment on the nature of the course



rather than a lack of academic ambition. The history of the British Army is chock-full of fighting spirit, while often it has been deficient in its intellectual leadership. Such enlightened direction is even more vital in Britain in the coming years.

Sandhurst has within itself the human resources to maintain its great traditions. But its future will be in jeopardy if the British Government continues to ignore the peacetime army to the detriment of the nation's security as it has tended to do for the last 150 years. For the modern British Army is patently not at peace, both within itself and with its potential foes. An 8-year-old war simmers in Ulster. Soviet-led troops in Eastern Europe heavily outnumber the British Army of the Rhine, as well as other NATO forces in the area. Imperial commitments remain in such trouble-spots as the Falkland Islands, Hong Kong and Belize. More dangerously, Britain could soon be asked to join, or lead,

Commonwealth peacekeeping force in Southern Africa. Can all these potential challenges be met?

All nations decline, but it is not only the nostalgics who will perhaps feel a little sad that Britain's defence of the Khyber has had to give way to the defence of the pound, that the crackle of gunfire has been drowned by the rattle of collection tins. Despite the economic retrenchments, Sandhurst still possesses excellent raw material in its staff and students. What it does not have is time to train and educate. Time is short to reorganize that august establishment. For, to adapt a famous phrase, nothing could be more dangerous for British society, and its army, than for Sandhurst to produce unsophisticated lions, whilst Westminster is led by political donkeys. It may prove to be a tragic irony if just enough time is found to train Sandhurst officers to defend Hamburg, or even Belfast, but not Westminster.