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Costumes of secrecy
and with a bang

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Centuries of secrecy end with a bang

A GOVERNMENT defence centre lifted its security curtain yesterday for the first time since the days of Sir Francis Drake.

The Explosives Research and Development Establishment at Waltham Abbey, Essex, opened its doors on Government instructions — the day after open days were announced for the Porton Down germ and chemical warfare research centres.

The director, Dr. Lionel Bellamy, said it was about time the taxpayer learned what some of his money is spent on.

"We feel strongly that some of the things we have been doing in defence ought to be more widely shown, because they can also be of use to industry."

His scientists laid on a display of pyrotechnics and mild bangs, and underwater explosions of one of

By BRIAN WOOSEY

the newest and most powerful torpedo warheads.

The establishment is on a 5,000-acre site where gunpowder was made for Drake's cannon balls. A thousand technicians—including 200 scientists—brew up sophisticated concoctions to power the latest Navy, Army and Air Force missiles.

They work in thick-walled blockhouses amid giant

chestnut trees and flower-filled borders.

"No fishing" signs warn staff against casting a line among the water lilies in the canal network which winds through the grounds.

The scientists produce the explosives for the sharp end of missiles and rockets, and the propellants for the blunt end.

PRIDE

They have developed the charges for secret missiles like Bloodhound, Tigercat, Seawolf, Blowpipe, Seacat.

The hitherto anonymous boffins take pride in their

share in Britain's recent big missile export achievements including the £100million-plus Libyan sales deal.

But the message the scientists tried to put over was that there is now a gradual swing over to peaceful uses of explosives. Dr. Bellamy said: "About 30 per cent of our work has industrial applications."

They include plastic materials that are lighter and stronger than steel, explosives for Martin Baker ejector seats which have saved 2,000 pilots' lives, and a line-throwing rocket gun to rescue people at sea.

BIG THREE GERM BAN URGED

A BRITISH Nobel Prize-winner called yesterday for a Big Three move to halt germ-warfare research.

The United States, the Soviet Union and Britain managed to agree to a nuclear-test treaty which paved the way for the United Nations' overwhelming endorsement on Wednesday of the draft treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The man who thinks Big Three talks might do the same for chemical and germ weapons is Professor Cecil Powell, 64-year-old director of the H.H. Wills Physics laboratory at Bristol University.

He said yesterday: "Any movement towards three power discussion would be welcome, and it would be quite timely at the moment."