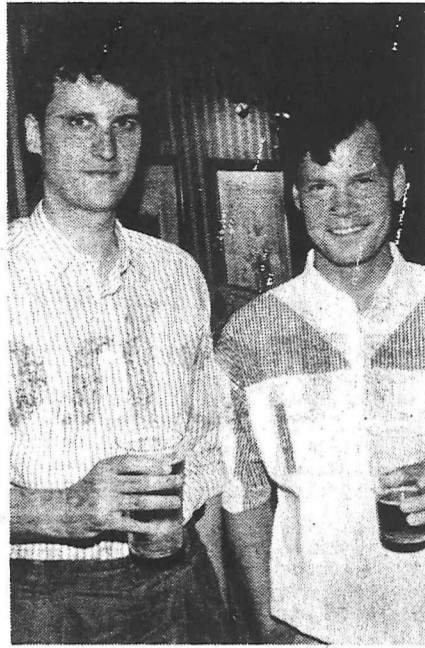


As Germany's decision to pull out of the £20 billion European Fighter Aircraft sent the four-nation project into a tailspin, the people behind the project are wondering what their future holds. Reporters PETRA COVENEY and SHELAGH IREDALE looked at the human face of EFA — the Spanish and German engineers in the Joint Avionics Team who have set up home in Lytham St Annes and also talked to their English counterparts. Pictures: JOHN EDMONDSON

# The Euro plane makers



Bae workers Frank Dordowski (left) and Julian Egner from Germany



Marisol and Alfredo Luis

Bae worker Elmer Othon



Andy Wishart (left) and Paul Hardman



Spanish planemakers Luis, Miguel and Manuel

IT should have been the centrepiece of Europe's new unity — a symbol that the post-war nations could bring down their cultural barriers to work for a common goal.

But the aircraft project that might have been the community's white dove of co-operation may now end up a lame duck that will never get off the ground.

To the German government the European Fighter Aircraft — on which Fylde planemakers' futures depend — is already a costly relic of the Cold War.

To the Italians it may have been no more than a means to replace an outdated defence system.

To the British however it's a lifeline to save an ailing defence industry and more than 20,000 aerospace jobs.

The heads of state are continuing to haggle over the political and financial cost of full production of the EFA as a warplane for the 21st century.

Meanwhile those closest to the project, the workers who have spent years involved in hi-tech research and development feel the brunt of the frustration that the project will never take off.

Ironically there is a spirit of camaraderie among the engineers from the partner countries who have been working well together at Warton despite the language barriers.

All of them are handpicked engineers of the highest calibre who have taken utmost pride in painstakingly piecing together the latest technology from each nation.

Needless to say some have felt morale sink to new depths during the past few weeks of partner Governments wavering.

As one worker put it: "Where is the satisfaction in working hard to develop something which may never be produced?"

Elmer Orthon, a Spanish systems engineer, said: "Workers have been quite nervous. There is uncertainty about what is going to happen if the project does not carry on. We have all been concerned and always listen to the Press to hear what is happening."

German engineer Julian Egner believes that even now his country's stance is not yet certain.

He said: "We have an election coming up in about 18 months and who knows, the government may change and so the decision about the EFA project might change?"

"The Germans are still committed to the develop-

ment phase of the project which won't finish until 1999 and so theoretically we could still be here until then."

Some of the Warton-based continentals have previous experience of working abroad. Like a nomadic tribe of their own, they are used to packing their bags for the next project.

Many of the engineers brought their families with them, many are happily settled in Lytham St Annes and do not relish the prospect of being uprooted once again.

Some said they would be sad to leave Britain so soon after finally laying down Fylde roots into English life.

Everyone said they had been given a warm welcome and had enjoyed the opportunity to learn the language.

## Viva St Annes?

FOR fast-living Spanish engineers and their families living in Fylde is a relaxing break from Madrid.

Alfredo Luis, aged 31, and his wife, Marisol, aged 29, are still adjusting to life on the coast after the hectic nightlife at home.

Marisol is learning English at night school and has made some women friends, but generally life in Fylde is a closed shop for foreigners, they say.

For Panamanian-born Elmer Othon, aged 33, England is a leisurely paradise — an opportunity to try gliding in Garsang and sailing at St Annes.

"Here everything is at a much slower pace and you have time to read, to write, to think and do almost any activity you want."

## County hopes fly with EFA

"IF WE lose EFA we can forget about our homes and our roots — we can forget about Lancashire."

Those are the words of one of the 6,000 workers at BAE Warton whose jobs are hanging in the balance while the government debates the prospects of the fighter plane their livelihoods depend on.

There is no doubt among the men and women at the plant that the plane's future is their future too. Now the battle is on to keep the project in the air.

Paul Hardman, aged 25, of Moreton Drive, Staining, has been with BAE for nine years after joining the company as an apprentice when he left school.

He works in the Stress Office testing the airworthiness of components which will eventually make up the EFA. About 128 people work in that section.

Paul is set to marry his girlfriend Samantha Renner at the end of August and they have bought a house in Poulton.

He should be looking for-

ward to a settled future but instead everything is clouded by the EFA doubt.

He said: "We're first time buyers and obviously we have stretched ourselves to be able to afford the house."

"BAE has been good to me and has given me a trade but at the moment there is so much uncertainty that, apart from a mortgage, I can't have any outstanding debts."

"My wife-to-be is also local and at the moment we certainly wouldn't want to leave the area."

Paul, whose father Ted retired from BAE two months ago after 30 years with the firm, added: "Most people are happy with BAE and want to stay working there. But you can't look forward to putting in 30 or 40 years anymore."

Colleague Andy Wishart, aged 34, of Fulwood, Preston, has worked on and off for nine years at BAE.

He and his wife Maureen have two children, Daniel, aged seven, and Amanda, aged five, both at local schools, and also have a mortgage to pay.

## The English experience

GERMANS Frank Dordowski, aged 32, and Julian Egner, aged 35, both came from Munich to take part in an exciting new defence project and to taste English life.

What they found in St Annes was a sleepy town they soon learnt was nicknamed "the graveyard with bus stops."

Both have enjoyed their stay but it's an experience they would not repeat.

Julian said: "It's like a prison

here — the people do not seem to have lived anywhere else and their attitudes are like those you find in some small villages in Germany."

"But the people have been very friendly and we even felt at home as the names Kirkham and Lytham are German words for church house and leisure home!"

Frank said: "St Annes is so small — I have to drive a long way to hear any classical music or other concerts and I don't really go out in Blackpool."

"I came here because it is better than seeing England as a tourist taking pictures all the time. Working here gives you more time to see the life and the people as they are."

"But I have met only engineers here so I think the situation is not quite a real experience of English life."

"My worst experience has been buying a British Mini car — it broke down on me on the motorway and I had to walk miles to find an emergency telephone which was broken!"

## The end column



by PETER MYERSCOUGH

## The Compleat Wangler!

A SHREWD lot these anglers.

If anyone else were to sit on a canal bank all day staring at the water, they would be classed as an idle oaf or a would-be suicide victim.

But, put a rod and line in their hands (there might even be a hook on the end of that float, too) and all is forgiven. They are fishermen practising the noble art of Isaak Walton and all that.

A good way to get away from a nagging wife or the washing-up, mowing the lawn or going to Tesco's.

You need all the gear, of course. Umbrella, big wicker basket, wellies and a folding seat. Then you merely take up your place by the water and sit there for the rest of the day, taking in the sun.

Nice work if you can get it. Ideal for the retired chap or the worker on night shift, of course.

You don't have to have a worm on the hook — or even a hook for that matter. No-one will be any the wiser.

Though there's always someone to come along and spoil it — like those American scientists who have developed the ultimate in bait that reputedly sends fish into a feeding frenzy.

Gotta Bite sets their teeth snapping as they relentlessly hunt for food — like a stranded coach party at a motorway service area.

### Fish & microchips

Amino acids are at the root of it all, apparently. They can trigger uncontrollable feeding in catfish, though other fish can be equally hooked.

Better not take a can of that with you if your ploy is a quiet afternoon's snooze by the lake. For it's hardly that kind of fisherman's friend.

And high technology has been brought into angling in another way.

You can now book a beat on one of Britain's top salmon rivers by computer — just as you might book a last-minute holiday with your travel agent.

So now it's microchips with the fish! It all links in nicely with an advert I keep on seeing in a motor magazine, which asks "Do you attract girls?"

Yes, I know I'm reaching my sell-by date but the spirit is still willing.

The ad tells of androstrenone pheromone — a natural female attractant. A newspaper extract claims: "Minute quantities were sprayed on a chair in a dentist's waiting room. Women patients went straight for the chair."

Well perhaps that was the one with the up-to-date magazine on it too.

Or as DT, of Cardiff, put it: "When I wear it at discos, girls just drift towards me and start flirting."

Wow! A five-gallon drum of that stuff and you're made for life.

But pity the angler who buys a can of it and that other amino acid stuff — and gets them mixed up.

He's the one you see being chased along the towpath by all those amorous dolly birds one Sunday afternoon in the summer before finally diving in the canal by means of escape, when all he wanted was a bass of fish to take home to the wife.

Meanwhile, back home his missus has fed the amino to the goldfish — and it's already emptied the deep freeze and is now heading for Kwiksav, gnashing its gums and with a mean look about the gills, ready to attack the Supersavers.

Where's our free

Mid Summer Sale  
SECOND REDUCTIONS