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The Civil Defence Hiatus: A Rediscovery of Nuclear Civil Defence Policy 1968-1983

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‘The Civil Defence Hiatus’[1]

A Rediscovery of Nuclear Civil Defence Policy 1968 - 1983

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[1] Lawrence J. Vale, *The Limits of Civil Defence in the USA, Switzerland, Britain, and the Soviet Union,* (Hampshire, 1987), p. 138

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Introduction

"The existence of thousands of nuclear weapons is the most dangerous legacy of the Cold War." [2]

- President Barack Obama

The Cold War left behind a world which was so littered with apocalyptic weapons that even the most powerful man in today's politics cannot make an immediate change. President Barack Obama's reaction to the recent launch of a nuclear missile from North Korea has once again opened up debate on nuclear weapons. Obama pledged his commitment to proliferation, but he admitted that this process would be so slow that it would be impossible during his lifetime. The most worrying consequence of this continued threat is terrorism. "One terrorist with a nuclear weapon could unleash massive destruction".[3] Research into the Cold War is important for two reasons. Firstly, the decisions made during the Cold War are still resounding in society today. An understanding of the reasoning behind previous government's policies has the potential to equip us for the long path towards solving the nuclear problem. Secondly, research so far has been considerably stunted by the amount of information that is available to historians. Secrecy was the "potent weapon" of the Cold War; the mystery of the enemy's political prowess formed the crux of political tension.[4] This has lead to a mix-match of complex, and often very conflicting, ideas on the exact nature of government plans during this enigmatic period. As time passes after the end of the Cold War in 1991, new information is reaching the public. It is important that this new information should be applied to these tangled debates in the hope of eventually finding resolution.

Britain's role in the Cold War was peripheral; the two main proprietors were the capitalist USA and the communist Soviet Union. This did not mean that Britain was safe from nuclear attack; its geographical proximity to the Soviet East meant that it was used as a storage base for American nuclear weapons,[5] making it a likely fighting

[2] Webb, J. 'Obama Promotes Nuclear Free World', Sunday 5th April 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7983963.stm>
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Nick McCamley, *Cold War Secret Nuclear Bunkers: The Passive Defence of the Western World during the Cold War,* (Barnsley, 2007), p. 279
[5] Bob Clarke, *Four Minute Warning: Britain's Cold War,* (Gloucestershire, 2005), p. 9

ground should warfare have begun. There were two government policies aimed at defending the British population from nuclear attack. The first was nuclear deterrent, which was a product of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). "Deterrence means transmitting a basically simple message: if you attack me, I will resist".[6] This meant that each country fought the other through scientific potential alone. The destructive capability that this policy produced reached such high levels that if one side attacked, it was likely to have caused Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). [7] It is this legacy that is still affecting world politics. The second policy was civil defence; this was "precaution other than combat taken to protect the civilian population".[8] The relationship between the two policies is ambiguous; some argue that civil defence undermines the policy of deterrence, as deterrence is based on building enough weapons that Britain was no longer vulnerable to attack.[9] Others say that civil defence can work together with deterrence, in order to enhance Britain's 'invulnerability'.[10] This study will focus on the latter protection policy: civil defence plans. Although, because both the defence policies are linked so ambiguously, the policy of deterrence will inevitably feature in some of the debates.

Civil Defence played a crucial role during the Blitz. The main asset of this policy was the Civil Defence Corps, which was governed by a philosophy of 'rescue and succour'. They were a trained group of volunteers who laboured long hours to dig survivors out of blast destruction.[11] In the jubilation of victory, the CDC was disbanded at the end of the war. However, it was reinstated again as part of the Civil Defence Act of 1948, when tensions arose between the USSR and the USA.[12] It soon became clear that a nuclear war would be very different to a conventional war; this was forcefully demonstrated to the western powers when the USSR tested their first

[6] M. Quinlan (Ministry of Nuclear Deterrence Theorist), quoted in Gwyn Prins, *Defended to Death: Study of the Nuclear Arms Race from the Cambridge Nuclear Disarmament Seminar,* (London, 1983), p. 172
[7] Suzanne Wood, 'The Illusion of Protection', in Dorothy Thompson (ed.), *Over our Dead Bodies: Women Against the Bomb,* (London, 1983), p. 50
[8] Greville Rumble, *The Politics of Nuclear Defence: A Comprehensive Introduction,* (Oxford, 1985), p. 154
[9] Prins, *Defended to Death,* p. 255
[10] Vale, *The Limits of Civil Defence,* p. 146
[11] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* p. 156
[12] W. Cocroft and R. Thomas, *Cold War: Building for Nuclear Confrontation 1946 – 1989,* (Swindon, 2003), p. 229

thermonuclear powers in 1953.[13] 'Fallout' was discovered in the same decade. The blast of a nuclear bomb would be so powerful that it would create a cloud of toxic radioactive dust.[14] This made the concept of rescue difficult – people would not be able to help after an attack without endangering themselves in the process. The Defence White Paper in 1957 admitted that conventional civil defence would be useless against nuclear weapons,[15] and then the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 demonstrated that a nuclear war could be possible within a very short space of time.[16] Civil defence as it had been during the war was no longer adequate, and the last dregs of the World War Two system disappeared after the abandonment of the CDC in 1968.[17] Civil Defence spending costs also plummeted from £22 million per year to just £7 million.[18] The outdated policy was replaced with a new cheaper concept if civil defence, driven by a 'state rationale' philosophy. [19] Rather than focusing on rescue, the policy now turned to making the structure of regional government stronger after an attack. The new system split the country into core compartments, so that each individual region would be able to function without the help of central government. The country was sectioned into eleven Home Defence Regions (controlled by a Regional Commissioner), and each of these was split into twenty-three Sub-Regional Headquarters, which would include County Controls and District Controls.[20] It was thought that the public would be safer in their own homes during an attack, so they were told to 'Stay At Home' for fourteen days.[21] They would be given advice on how to build a fallout shelter inside their homes, and that they should not move districts otherwise their county would not help them.

There are two documents that have recently been released on the topic of Cold War civil defence. These sources are particularly valuable, given that the area is so devoid of documented source material. The first source is a Home Office document containing the details of the *Protect and Survive* 'Mass Information Campaign'

[13] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* p. 157
[14] Peter Hennesy, *The Secret State: Whitehall and the Cold War,* (London, 2002), p. 131
[15] Campbell, *War Plan UK,* p. 121
[16] Hennesy, *The Secret State,* p. 154
[17] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* P. 165
[18] Hennesy, *The Secret State,* p. 139
[19] Hennesy, *The Secret State*, p. 144
[20] Rumble, *The Politics of Nuclear Defence,* p. 168
[21] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* p. 73

planned and written by the government from 1973 – 1975.[22] Released in 2005, the campaign was formed of television adverts and radio scripts. The campaign would have been opened to the public should international relations have deteriorated far enough. It was aimed at providing information to householders on how to protect themselves against a nuclear attack. The *Protect and Survive* booklet was the only part of the campaign to be released to the public, in 1980. It caused a huge amount of scepticism for the way it presented a potential nuclear situation and the advise it gave to householders. The most powerful criticism is illustrated, literally, in Raymond Briggs' *Where the Wind Blows*, where an elderly couple die of radiation poisoning despite following 'govern-mental' advice.[23] Moreover, the *Protect and Survive* television adverts from the campaign were aired in a BBC *Panorama* programme in February 1980.[24] The second source is also a Home Office document that was released earlier in 2008. It contains discussions between the government and the BBC from 1973 – 1975 regarding radio procedure after an attack.[25] The BBC had a mini-broadcasting studio in every regional government bunker; therefore they would be on the front line of maintaining communication after an attack.[26] Because this document has been released very recently, it has not been included in any research so far. McCamley was the last to publish research into this area in 2007, before the release of this document. Peter Hennesy claims that these Home Office documents are the "crown jewels of genuine official secrecy".[27] However, it must be remembered that these sources shed light on only a tiny part of government policy during this period. The government retains strict control over what is released to the public. Most information is "almost without exception closed for at least a hundred years" under the Official Secrets Act.[28] It is clear that a full analysis of government policies during the Cold War is something that will only be possible for historians in the future. Despite this, they might help us begin to challenge historiography.

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[22] London, Public Record Office, HO 322/776
[23] Raymond Briggs, *When the Wind Blows,* (London, 1986), p. 38
[24] John Minnion & P. Bolsover, *The CND Story: The First 25 Years in the Words of the People Involved,* (London, 1983), p. 35
[25] London, Public Record Office, HO 322/775
[26] Peter Laurie, *Beneath City Streets: A Private Enquiry into the Nuclear Preoccupations of Government,* (London, 1970), p. 113
[27] Peter Hennesy, quoted in ''Nuclear Secrets of 1975 Revealed', 29th December 2005. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4565880.stm>
[28] McCamley, *Cold War Secret Nuclear Bunkers,* p. 281

It is what happened to civil defence after 1968 that will be the main focus of the study. Civil defence is not an area that has been researched meticulously. Historians who have conducted research have generally been discontent with the direction of civil defence after 1968; the 1970s have been isolated as being a "civil defence hiatus".[29] Their theories indicate that, paradoxically, civil defence took a turn towards a policy that no longer represented the best interests of civilians. This began with a body of researchers in the 1980s, whose writings are united in a common cynicism towards the government. Duncan Campbell's *War Plan UK: The Truth about Civil Defence in Britain* forms the cornerstone of the historiography of civil defence, beginning a "new trend" in historical study.[30] Much of his research has is unrivalled in the historiography of civil defence. Campbell believed that the abandonment of the CDC in 1968 led to a "cosmetic" policy that was intended to control the public, making them 'Stay at Home' in order to keep them quiet.[31] His sentiments are echoed by Suzanne Wood, who claimed, "civil defence policies are aimed at 'control' of our survivors."[32] One of the aims of this study will be to reconsider this theory of control and deceit. Part of Campbell's theory was based on the role of the police as first and foremost suppressors of political discontent. Campbell bases his conclusions on the *Police Manual of Home Defence* (1974), which was intended to familiarise police officers with "the effects of nuclear weapons, the organisation of the emergency services, the scheme of wartime regional government, and the increased responsibilities of the police in war".[33] This manual can be reassessed in order to re-evaluate the role of the police in civil defence after 1968. Moreover, Campbell's primary attack was on the *Protect and Survive* booklet, claiming that the booklet's sole purpose was to serve as propaganda to divert public attention away from the government's drive towards its goals in deterrence.[34] According to this theory, the booklet was deliberately misleading the public, withholding information from them to keep them under control. Because both documents were produced in the same year, a comparison between *Protect and Survive* and *The Police Manual of Home Defence* will show what the government told the police but kept back from the public.

[29] Vale, *The Limits of Civil Defence,* p. 138
[30] T. Gurr, 'War Plan UK: the Truth about Civil Defence in Britain: A Review', *Journal of Peace Research,* 20:2 (June 1983), p. 201
[31] Duncan Campbell, *War Plan UK: the Truth about Civil Defence in Britain,* (London, 1982), p. 151
[32] Wood, in Thompson, *Over our Dead Bodies,* p. 52
[33] London, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, *Police Manual of Home Defence,* (1974), p. v
[34] Campbell, *War Plan UK,* p. 447

Although it should be remembered that the manual only contains information for the police and so is unlikely to detail everything about the government's civil defence policy at this time. Moreover, the mass information campaign documents allow the booklet to be re-considered within its proper context as a small component of a larger entity. Campbell states at the beginning of his work that he aimed to "examine the subject through the eyes of central government and its planners".[35] Unfortunately, he was often thwarted in this quest due to lack of government documentation. The *Protect and Survive* booklet could only relate to him what the government wanted the public to see, not their underlying motives. The new documents will allow the study to take Campbell's methodology and apply it to the government sources he did not have access to.

The next body of work on civil defence during the Cold War started in this decade. Although the Cold War ended in 1991, many of the sites associated with the nuclear defence system (regional bunkers for example) were only released for public viewing in the early 2000s. For this reason, most of the more recent studies of civil defence policy have taken an architectural focus, using the buildings of the Cold War as their evidence. Bob Clarke and Nick McCamley's work combined builds a complete picture of the government machinery that formed the basis of the 'state rationale' system after 1968. Clarke's work in particular adopts a similar cynicism towards the government as Campbell. However, his critique is based on a slightly different foundation. For Clarke, the abandonment of the CDC in 1968 represented an abandonment of civil defence policy in general, rather than the beginning of a policy of deceit and control.[36] Another of the study's research aims will therefore be to find out whether civil defence policy after 1968 forgot about civilians. Cocroft's work before Clarke discovered that government nuclear bunkers had a much higher protective factor (PF) than any home shelter that the public could create. [37] Clarke used this as evidence that the government intended to ensure "their (not our) survival".[38] Clarke's use of physical evidence has meant that he has drawn conclusions about government motivations from the buildings that were erected as a result of government policy. These conclusions are therefore based on assumption

[35] Campbell, *War Plan UK,* p. 15
[36] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* p. 63
[37] Cocroft and Thomas, *Cold War,* p. 212
[38] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* p. 153

only, as the outcome of a policy only goes a small way to displaying the full intent behind that outcome. His theories can therefore be reinforced or questioned by comparing them with the new Home Office government sources. Because these new sources are archived government sources, they include information that was passed between government members without ever reaching the public: their insight into the government thought processes behind civil defence policy after 1968.

Additionally, studies in the late 1980s and in recent years have both suggested that civil defence in the Cold War should be split in three distinct sections. The nature of these sections varies slightly depending on the era in which the study was written. According to 1980s literature, the first section was the period of the CDC from 1948 – 1968; the second section was the move towards the 'Stay at Home' policy from 1972 – 1983, and the third period began in 1983, when the policy of voluntary help in communities was reintroduced, mirroring the Civil Defence Corps of earlier years. [39] In modern research, the three sections are only implied through what historians have neglected to research, rather than being specifically pointed out. Often the 1970s have been completely forgotten, with civil defence research only focusing on the 1960s and the 1980s. For example, Wayne Cocroft and Roger Thomas do not seem to register the existence of the 1970s in civil defence planning. In their assessment of 1960s advice to the public, they claim that this was "advice that was to be revised virtually unaltered in the 1980s".[40] The study's final research aim will assess whether the 1970s were a "hiatus" in civil defence. The role of this new voluntary organisation can be assessed with the *War Emergency Guide Book* written by the Wiltshire County Council in 1983. The Guide Book was intended to be used as a tool to train people who had volunteered to become Community Advisors in the event of a nuclear war, after the new voluntary organisation was introduced. It contains information on what the volunteers were taught about nuclear war, with a directory at the back listing all the volunteers in the Wiltshire region.[41] The Guide Book was never finished (although most of its chapters are completed). For this reason the source must be used with caution. It also must be remembered that it only reflects the plans of one particular county, not necessarily the whole country. Furthermore, it is unknown whether it was

[39] Rumble, *The Politics of Nuclear Defence*, p. 156
[40] Cocroft and Thomas, *Cold War,* p. 235
[41] *War Emergency Guide Book,* 1983, Wiltshire County Council

ever actually used to train the public, although the directory of names at the back suggested it intended to. Research into the new voluntary organisation of 1983 is patchy, so by comparing the *War Emergency Guide Book* to the conclusions in the previous chapter about government policy in the 1970s, it should be possible to assess how different the decades really were.

Thanks to the work of historians in this decade, "there is relatively little left to learn about the Anglo-American archaeological legacy of the Cold War".[42] However, there is a lack of detailed study of government civil defence publications since the 1980s, that this study intends to address. Campbell and Clarke are not the only two historians to have formulated theories on the subject. However, their work has contributed a large amount to the area, particularly Campbell, who is referenced by the majority of historians who followed him. Therefore, this study will use their main theories as a starting point for each chapter, in order to open up debate on the topic. The first part of the study will look at government motivations behind the new civil defence policy after 1968. Chapter One will use Clarke's abandonment thesis as a starting point for an assessment of government policy after 1968. Chapter Two will address Campbell's theory that 'civil defence' was a cover up for a policy of political control as an opening point for debate on government advice to the public after 1968. The conclusions made in these chapters will build a picture of government civil defence after 1968. The second part of the study will build on these reflections by asking whether the 1970s were an anomalous decade in the history of civil defence. Chapter Three will therefore ask whether civil defence policy after 1983 changed back to reflect pre-1968 ideas.

[42] McCamley, *Cold War Secret Nuclear Bunkers*, p. 280

Part One

Civil Defence after 1968

Chapter One

The Paradox: Did Civil Defence after 1968 Abandon Civilians?

Clarke believes that in civil defence after 1968 "preparations which directly supported the public had gone" and therefore "the population would be left to their own devices". [43] This is partly because the heavily protected government bunkers he based his research on only divulged how the system would work, leaving Clarke guessing as to government intentions behind the system. It is also partly because from the public's perspective, the government was silent in the 1970s; no advice was issued to the public between the *Advising the Householder on Protection against Nuclear Attack* in 1963, and *Protect and Survive,* which was released in 1980.[44] Given the secretive nature of all government activities during the Cold War, this silence may not seem surprising. But the government issued guides for the public in every decade apart from the 1970s. So it is understandable that Clarke interpreted this, along with his evidence that the government built highly protective bunkers for itself and not for the rest of the population, as proof that government civil defence policy after 1968 had taken a turn away from the very civilians it was supposed to protect. The condemnations of the government are founded on a basic dislike of the route the government took after 1968. So this chapter will begin by asking: if the system of 'state rationale' was not suitable, but the old system was inappropriate, what would have been the right action for the government to take? Were there any alternatives? The chapter will then go on to address Clarke's criticisms in particular; did silence in the 1970s show that the government forsook the public?

The most popular suggestion amongst civil defence researchers has been that the government should build shelters for the whole population. Switzerland was held up as a shining example of a country that had completed this successfully. Every building

[43] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* p. 10
[44] Campbell, *War Plan UK*, p. 124

that was erected after the 1960s was to be fitted with a nuclear shelter in the basement as standard.[45] However, almost as soon as these suggestions had been voiced, obstructions to the idea become apparent. A body of researchers in the 1980s calculated that it would cost the government £60,000 to £80,000 million to provide shelters for everybody.[46] Although the government were spending large amounts on developing nuclear weapons at this point, in order for them to spend such extortionate figures on shelters they would have to be convinced that they would work. The same group of researchers also pointed out that the shelter system can only provide adequate protection from fallout, it would not protect from direct hits. As Switzerland was not a member of NATO, it was only vulnerable to fallout clouds from surrounding countries rather than from direct hits. The shelter system was suitable for them, but as Britain was a member of NATO, and likely to be hit directly, "we must conclude that public shelters are not a realistic option for this country".[47]

Another suggestion was that Britain should organise evacuation schemes, similar to those in World War Two. Although the government had considered evacuation schemes in the 1950s, these were abandoned after the discovery of fallout. Because fallout would be so unpredictable, and the country is so small, it was thought that there were no longer 'safer' zones than others any more. Any part of the country was vulnerable to fallout, depending on the force of the blast and the strength of the wind. "No place in the UK is safer than any other".[48] This is why the government decided the best way of handling the public was for them to 'Stay At Home' and build indoor shelters for themselves. There is a strong line of counter-argument which suggests that that there would be predictable lines of population movement before an attack, and these should be planned for. There would undoubtedly be a considerable exodus from cities such as London and Birmingham into the surrounding countryside.[49] But it is likely that benefit from a scheme like this would be minimal – how would the countryside cope with so many extra families? The countryside might be affected by fallout and then evacuation would have been pointless. Moreover, other countries that

[45] A Erlich, S. Gunn, J. Horner, J. Lee, P. Sharfman, F. Von Hippel, *London Under Attack: The Report of the Greater London Area War Risk Study,* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1986), p. 278
[46] O. Greene, B. Rubin, N. Turok, P. Webber, G. Wilkinson, *London after the Bomb: what a Nuclear Attack Really Means,* (Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 90
[47] O. Greene et al, *London after the Bomb,* p. 91
[48] *Protect and Survive* Mass Information Campaign booklet, 1974, HO 322/776
[49] A. Erlich et al, *London Under Attack,* p. 282

had attempted evacuation plans, such as America, had only been able to propose piecemeal half thought-out schemes that were "deeply flawed".[50] So it seems that the justification given in the *Police Manual of Home Defence* adequately describes the futility of an evacuation scheme in Britain, "it is not longer sensible to plan for the movement of people from areas of high radiation to places of little or no radiation… 'safer' areas might be few and far between".[51] It is therefore clear that there were few alternatives available to the government in nuclear civil defence planning.

How were the public viewed in light of the unclear direction for the policy of civil defence after 1968? The new Home Office documents show that two sections of government were formulating strategies as to how to advise and communicate with the public in the event of an attack. The planners of the *Protect and Survive* mass information campaign prepared a four-phased scheme that would disseminate information to the public in the most understandable and compatible way possible. The first stage in the media campaign would begin when the international situation moved into a 'low level crisis'. During this stage, the precautions that the population should start taking would be shown in the form of television adverts. If the international situation deteriorated, the government would move into a 'preparatory' stage, in which the public would be told to build and stock their fallout shelters. The *Protect and Survive* booklet was intended to be released during this stage, in order to give people a checklist to work from. If the situation declined further, it would move into a 'probably inevitability' stage, in which both of the above stages would be repeated; and the mass media would be used to ensure that everyone would be issued with advice.[52] Far from making 'no preparations' for the public, the government had devised an elaborate scheme to ensure that the whole population was advised on what to do before an attack.

The most interesting and revealing elements of the mass information campaign are the hand-written aside comments penned by the ministers in charge of the campaign on draft letters and minutes. In an era before emails, these asides show the initial reactions of the ministers, the real stresses and strains they were under, and their

[50] A. Erlich et al, *London Under Attack,* p. 266
[51] *Police Manual of Home Defence,* p. 55
[52] *Protect and Survive* Mass Information Campaign booklet, HO 322/776

intentions for the campaign. Mr Buttery (the director of the mass information campaign) leaps out of the documents as a lively, and sometimes controversial, figure. His harsh comments are at first quite shocking. For example, on the subject of pets in a crisis, he has written, "my advice would be to kill 'em. So you see why we are silent." [53] It firstly seemed that many of the key decisions propelling the campaign were made by an indignant man who did not care about its outcome. However, after becoming accustomed to his style, it became noticeable that they were actually the outcries of a man who was frustrated with the impossibility of his task, rather than a man who did not care about the campaign or the public. It was "clearly a major problem to get the right approach for getting information over to the general public in this period of crisis".[54] Buttery had to deal with a number of situations in which he was likely to face criticism no matter what decision he made. For example, he had to decide what should be included in the list of items for the householder's fallout shelter. The list has been criticised for the possibility that it might induce panic buying amongst the public. "There are not sufficient stocks on the market to be able to supply any but a small proportion of the population".[55] The Home Office was aware of this problem. Before the mass information campaign was written, a proposal was sent to certain parts of the government in 1973 to affirm that the new campaign was along the correct lines. A few of the replies pointed out that the availability of materials was a problem. For example, Mr Christianson (Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) sent a letter to Mr Buttery reminding him that the campaign would be "conducive to creating panic".[56] So, Buttery and his team responded to these fears by writing the guidelines according to the "old civil defence philosophy of going to war with what we have", [57] ensuring that "the measures recommended would not require special tools materials or skills".[58] Therefore, the final list included crockery, extra clothing, a torch, bedding, etc.[59] However, the list has since been criticised for its mundane nature; Clarke points out that the first-aid kit is "rather optimistic" to

[53] Buttery's annotation on Yeates' Note, 1973, HO 322/776
[54] Letter from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to Mr Buttery, 17th December 1973, HO 322/776
[55] Wood, *Over our Dead Bodies,* p. 56
[56] Letter from Mr J. A. Christianson to Mr Buttery, 17th December 1973. HO 322/776
[57] Buttery's annotation on a Note by Yeates, 20th December 1973, HO 322/776
[58] Note for the Press Office from Mr Buttery to Mr Grant, 'Advice to the Public on Protection against Nuclear Attack', 10th November 1975, HO 322/776
[59] *Protect and Survive,* p. 16

include aspirins and plasters.[60] In attempting to combat one problem, Buttery inadvertently created another. It seems he could not win. This was only one of many situations Buttery had to deal with on a daily basis over the course of campaign planning. The difficulty the government faced in attempting to advise the public is not something that has penetrated civil defence historiography so far.

These problems were magnified by the sheer unpredictability of nuclear war. The government funded 'what if' research teams, such as the Joint Inter-Service Group for the Study of all-out Warfare (JIGSAW), to research the possible effects of nuclear war on British society.[61] However, they still knew very little. If there was fallout, how far would it reach? How long would its effects last? The BBC and the Home Office began plans for post-attack broadcasting optimistically. They wanted the BBC to record and store a number of different tapes that could be broadcast after an attack. It was hoped that by taping a considerable quantity of slightly varied messages, the public would not get bored of the advice, or start panicking that they were just listening to a machine. However, despite Yeates' best efforts at writing a script for these tapes, he soon realised,

> "The scenario is so vague that all we know for certain is that a) there has been a nuclear attack and b) communications must be severely disrupted. We do not even know how long before the broadcast the attack took place. In these circumstances it is very difficult to prepare even once script which carries any conviction".[62]

The inherent problems in planning for an unknown situation are obvious. It is clear that government silence in terms of provision for the public was partly because it was severely limited in the amount of information it could give. It obviously did not want to present a message that either gave false hope or presented the situation as worse that it actually was. It is possible that the complications faced by Buttery and his team go some way to explain the logic behind the controversial 'Stay at Home' policy. The government had a hard enough task trying to decide what to put in a list or in a radio

[60] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* p. 226
[61] Hennesy, *The Secret State,* p. 141
[62] Letter from Yeates to Colwill, 6th March 1974, H0 322/775, image reference 11

broadcast. Imagine how difficult it must have been to arrange the safest possible place for each individual to hide in.

However, the documents indicate that this was not the only reason why the government's plans for the public were so ambiguous in the 1970s. The close correspondence between Mr Yeates (who was Mr Buttery's assistant) and Mr Buttery suggests there were tensions between different sections of the Home Office involved in the public element of civil defence planning. The relationship between Yeates and Buttery is particularly helpful for the historian, as they tended to be very blunt in their personal memos to each other, illustrating exactly what they wanted done and why. Mr Yeates comments,

"I have an uneasy feeling that COI are easing themselves deeper into their well-worn rut, in which the preparation and printing of the booklet become their main concern… we have now lost nearly 2 months, while the COI have been retreating towards their previously entrenched positions, instead of concentrating on producing original material"[63]

Strains between F6 (the division of the Home Office under Buttery) and the COI (Central Office of Information) are evident throughout the document. The relationship between these two sections of government was that the F6 planned the overall details of the mass information campaign, and the COI then turned these plans into the finished product (e.g. the *Protect and Survive* booklet). The F6 division wanted the campaign to make a clean break from the previous decade's reliance on booklets by focusing mainly on television adverts.[64] The COI on the other hand wanted the booklet to be the centre of the campaign, as it had been throughout the 1960s, and they therefore seemed to ignore the pleas of the F6 division to move away from the booklet as a base. [65] There is evidence that this tussling of priorities affected the way the *Protect and Survive* campaign was written, therefore affecting civil defence policy. In a note to Mr Yeates, Mr Buttery responds to a query over how disinfectants and buckets would be purchased at late notice by exclaiming "the question has got

[63] Note from Yeates to Buttery, 29th April 1974, HO 322/776
[64] Letter from Buttery to be sent to various sections of government, 1973, HO 322/776
[65] Letter from Yeates to Mr Bishop, 13th October 1975, HO 322/776

nothing to do with the mass information programme. We are not stockpiling these items – so presumably they will run out. So what!!"[66] The fact that Mr Buttery specifically outlines the parameters of his task could indicate that he was guarding the position of the F6 against the COI. If the COI would not cooperate with the F6 then why should Buttery step outside his job description? If nobody thought that addressing questions such as resources was their responsibility, then the issue would remain unresolved. The correspondence between the BBC and the Home Office also exhibits similar difficulties, although in this case confusion between the government and the corporation slowed down the tasks they were trying to complete. For example, it took the government and the BBC from the 11th July 1973 to 31st May 1974 to decide on how the Regional Home Defence bandwidths should be conveyed to the public.[67] This is almost a whole year to decide on one paragraph in the pre-recorded announcement. If this was the case for each decision they had to make, it is surprising they made any progress at all. Communication issues in the government and the BBC therefore hindered parts of civil defence planning, either by confusing the lines of responsibility for decisions, or by slowing down the task.

The new Home Office documents demonstrate that civil defence after 1968 did not abandon the public. However, this does not necessarily negate Clarke's theories. On the contrary, the documents can be used to expand Clarke's findings. In the preparations for the mass information campaign it says,

"The number of possible scenarios that could be envisaged is very large. Rather than making any – inevitably arbitrary – assumptions… the booklet has been written in terms of advising the public to 'plan' and 'prepare'.[68]

Due to the impossibility of planning for an unknown situation, hindered further by a lack of Home Office cooperation, the government were forced to only advise the public on 'planning' for a nuclear attack. This mirrors the movement from "planning"

[66] Buttery's annotation on Yeates' Note Collating replies to his 'Advice to the Public on Protection Against Nuclear Attack' letter, 1973, HO 355/776
[67] The concept was first brought up in a letter from Mr Butler to Mr Anson, 11th July 1973, HO 322/775, image reference 20. The final paragraph was only decided in a letter from Mr Colwill to Mr Yeates, 31st May 1974, HO 322/775, image reference 8
[68] *Protect and Survive* Mass Information Campaign Booklet, HO 322/776

to "construction" that took place in government plans for the regional government.[69] Thus, civil defence plans for the public can be specifically linked with the same philosophies as regional civil defence plans after 1968. The 'state rationale', which ignored the public according to Clarke, actually influenced a second strand of civil defence policy, which was aimed at informing and guiding the public. However, this strand was smaller than the regional strand, due to the complications that the government faced, which have been illuminated in this chapter. Presumably this is why the mass information campaign was only part of "low-level contingency planning", which was on a modest budget of only £100,000.[70]

[69] McCamley, *Cold War Secret Nuclear Bunkers,* p. 149
[70] Note for the Press Office, 10th November 1975, HO 322/776

Chapter Two

The Alternative: Was Civil Defence a Method of Political Control after 1968?

"*Protect and Survive* was intended more to reinforce obedience to government policy than to give advice"[71]

This sentiment formed the basis of Duncan Campbell's conclusions on government civil defence policy. He believed that after 1968, the government decided to focus solely on the policy of deterrence, disregarding civil defence as the second protective strategy. As a result, 'civil defence' was used to promote and defend deterrence, rather than to provide defence to civilians.[72] Campbell's theory involved two elements, and this chapter will be structured to look at these two elements in turn. The first part of Campbell's theory, based on the *Protect and Survive* booklet was that civil defence before a war was an elaborate pretence.[73] Was the booklet propaganda to steer the population away from political discontent? The second part of Campbell's theory, based on the *Police Manual of Home Defence,* was that 'home defence' after a war was aimed primarily at controlling the survivors to ensure there would be no political upheaval. The fact that 'Civil Defence' had now become 'Home Defence' is important: according to Campbell they are not interchangeable terms. 'Home Defence' implies "protection from internal enemies" rather than protection of the population.[74] Was the primary role of the police after an attack to control 'internal enemies'?

It was believed that *Protect and Survive* was intent on "keeping the public in ignorance of the facts".[75] Campbell uses laws such as the Official Secrets Act as evidence that the government had the "facility to cheat, deceive and sometimes downright lie" to the public.[76] According to this theory, the information related in the *Protect and Survive* booklet did not show the public the reality of a nuclear attack, in order to stop the population spotting the new focus on deterrence. A considerable

[71] Campbell, *War Plan UK,* p. 151
[72] Campbell, *War Plan UK,* p. 19
[73] Campbell, *War Plan UK,* p. 149
[74] Rumble, *The Politics of Nuclear Defence,* p. 154
[75] Prins, *Defended to Death,* p. 158
[76] Campbell, *War Plan UK,* p. 16

amount of the *Police Manual of Home Defence* contains information that is not present in the *Protect and Survive* booklet. However, many of these sections contain details such as the organisation of regional government, and the role of the police during wartime, which would not necessarily be imparted to the public in any case. As *Protect and Survive* is concerned mainly with self-protection before an attack, it is this section of the police manual that will show whether the government told the police more than it told the public. In the self-protection section, there are some areas where the police are given more information than the public. In the chapter on the 'Effects of Nuclear War' it details that the nuclear race had produced weapons that "have an energy release equivalent to the explosion of many million tones (megatons) of TNT" by this point.[77] Considering that the bomb dropped on Nagasaki in Japan at the end of World War Two had the force of twenty thousand tons of high explosive, this scientific potential is staggering. The manual also explains how radiation works, and how it is linked with the fallout that occurs after a nuclear bomb has dropped. The exact mathematical principles of radioactive decay are detailed, along with the way to calculate safe amounts of radiation exposure. For example, the police are told that "persons who have remained in shelter for several days and have accumulated radiation doses while in shelter, may undertake essential tasks provided the totally dose does not exceed 150 r".[78]

Despite these scientific intricacies, the basic advice given to the police on self-protection is strikingly similar to advice given to the public in *Protect and Survive.* Police were told to create a shelter inside a room as far away from windows as possible, and to pad it with thick materials.[79] This is the same as *Protect and Survive,* which tells the public to "choose the place furthest from the outside walls and from the roof" for their inner refuge.[80] Moreover, in the 'Food and Water' section of the manual, police were told that "food should be kept in sealed tins, cartons or plastic bags", and that "emergency reserves of drinking water should be kept in stoppered or covered containers". This is exactly the same as the advice in *Protect and Survive* to "choose foods which can be eaten cold, which keep fresh, and which are tinned or well wrapped" and to "provide your drinking water beforehand by filling bottles for

[77] *Police Manual of Home Defence,* p. 1
[78] *Police Manual of Home Defence,* p. 4
[79] *Police Manual of Home Defence,* p. 5
[80] *Protect and Survive*, p. 7

use in the fall-out room".[81] The *Police Manual of Home Defence* demonstrates that to an extent, Campbell was correct, the police did withhold scientific information from the public. However, the extra scientific knowledge given to the police only provided justification for the precautions that were being advised. This indicates that the withholding of information from the public was not intended to deceive the public into following guidance that would not work. So why was this information hidden?

The key to this question lies in the target audience for the *Protect and Survive* mass information campaign. The campaign was planned because advice that had been written in the 1960s, such as *Advising the Householder of Protection against Nuclear Attack* (1963), was "not comprehensive enough".[82] It was thought that the material was "obsolete in its content and ineffective in presentation".[83] The planners therefore aimed to take a "slightly different approach" to the way they intended to convey their message,[84] hoping to make new material easier to read and more modern in its presentation. The campaign needed to reach "the general public as a whole, almost irrespective of their ages and social and educational backgrounds".[85] This meant the campaign had to be simple, so it would be "readily comprehendible" to "adults of all classes and age groups".[86] Buttery makes these views crystal clear in one of his notes that remind the writers that they should "KEEP IT SIMPLE".[87] Buttery and his team were faced with the difficult situation of how to present the campaign at a "low level of literacy", whilst at the same time realising that it would be read by university graduates and intellectuals. So they made the decision to target the campaign at the lowest common denominator. The aim to keep the campaign straightforward explains why Yeates and Buttery had so many disagreements with the COI over the role of the booklet within the new campaign. They were determined that the campaign would be presented primarily through the television, so that even those who could not read would understand the message. The television scripts were consequently built of a number of self-contained modules "to provide enough information on one subject but

[81] *Protect and Survive,* p. 12
[82] Minutes from a meeting with the Central Office of Information, 5th November 1974, HO 322/776
[83] Protect and Survive Mass Information Campaign Proposal Booklet, 1974, HO 322/776
[84] Buttery's draft letter for the Home Office, 1973, HO 322/776
[85] Home Office Circular, October 1973, HO 322/776
[86] Mr Buttery, Note for Press Office, 10th November 1975, HO 322/776
[87] Buttery's annotation on Yeates' Note, 1973, HO 322/776

without such detail that the audience cannot absorb it".[88] This also explains why the scientific justifications that were detailed to the police were withheld from the public,

"The language of the films should avoid pedantry and the whole structure should be reduced to the lowest common denominator – even at the expense of some scientific simplifications."[89]

Simplicity was also a target for the planners of the BBC radio broadcasts after an attack. As previously mentioned, the Home Office and the BBC spent a whole year exchanging letters, deciding how to tell people how the Home Defence system related to counties in the least confusing way possible. It was initially feared that if they were told the regions but not the counties, people would not know which region they fell under. But then if they were told which counties were in which regions before stating the wavebands, people might have already switched off.[90] Although this did show that the government and the BBC took too long to make straightforward decisions, it also illustrates how important simplicity was to a campaign that would have to reach the whole nation.

The goal of the public strand of civil defence policy after 1968 was not only to maintain simplicity. The discourse between Buttery and Yeates makes it clear from the beginning that the campaign was also intended to make "maximum possible impact".[91] Their main purpose was to spur the public into "overcoming any sense of apathy or hopelessness". [92] Yeates' vigour for the benefits of the television as the primary medium for the campaign was not just because it would reach every part of society. It was also because it had the ability to portray a hard-hitting message to viewers that may not be as effective in a booklet. This theory might seem strange - why would people not react to information that they might be subjected to a nuclear attack in the near future? However, Ehrlich and his research team conducted a study into the possible psychological affect of nuclear of war the population of London by comparing experiences of the Blitz with Hiroshima. They came to an interesting

[88] 'Television' section of the Protect and Survive Mass Information Campaign Proposal booklet, 1074, HO 322/776
[89] *Ibid.*
[90] Letter from Mr Yeates to Mr Anson, 21st November 1973, HO 322/775
[91] Note from Mr Yeates to Mr Buttery, 29th April 1974, HO 322/776
[92] Protect and Survive mass information campaign booklet, 1974, HO 322/776

conclusion – that the population's initial reaction to the threat of nuclear war would be one of denial. The research team called this the belief in "personal invulnerability".[93] This reaction was demonstrated in other countries, when the government had tried to introduce civil defence measures too early, and "the advice was soon forgotten".[94] The most palpable illustration of the government's attempt to beat the 'personal invulnerability' stage in public psyche is demonstrated in a side annotation in Yeates' handwriting on a File Note by Mr Moores. The File Note stated that "the department did not want to alarm the public". By the side of this Yeates has written, "This is inaccurate".[95] Inherently, it is shown that the government *did* want to alarm the public into action. Yeates' annotation directly negates those who thought that *Protect and Survive* was a "pretence to reassure the public that a nuclear war would not be as horrendous as generally predicted"[96]. It would probably come as a shock to these researchers that "reassurance" was certainly not the primary motive behind a campaign which was intended to alarm the public in an attempt to persuade them to take action.

In order to show how this new evidence affects the historiography of *Protect and Survive*, two of the most prominent 'misleading' samples of the booklet will be re-examined. Bob Clarke, amongst others, has used the sentence in the booklet in which the public are told they can "resume normal activities" after a nuclear bomb has detonated, to question the booklet's "level of credibility".[97] For the manual to indicate that there would be such a thing as "normal" after a nuclear bomb does seem absurd. It is easy to see why historians who have read this have begun to question the intentions of the government. Society would be incontrovertibly altered after an attack, if it survived at all. There is no information directly relating to why this peculiar phrase was included in the mass information campaign. However, within the context of a campaign that endeavoured to invigorate an apathetic crowd, it makes sense to assert that things would go back to normal afterwards, otherwise what would be the point in building a shelter? Buttery's correspondence shows that the campaign was a delicate balancing act between presenting the "stark reality" of a potential

[93] Erlich et al, *London Under Attack,* p. 176
[94] Note for Press Office by Mr Buttery, 10th November 1975, HO 322/776
[95] Yeates' annotation on File Note by Mr Moores, 1975, HO 322/776
[96] Wood, *Over our Dead Bodies,* p. 56
[97] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* p. 228

nuclear holocaust but at the same time ensuring the public that there was "point to the precautions". [98] This was yet another of his complex tasks to overcome in civil defence planning. The other puzzling part of the booklet is its attitude towards Electro Magnetic Pulse. EMP travels up phone lines and along electricity wires until it reaches the electronic device these wires are attached to, melting the inside of the equipment on its arrival. This would mean that for a radio to work after an attack, it would have to be disconnected from the mains, have its aerial tucked in, and preferably be wrapped in foil.[99] Campbell, amongst others, pointed out that advice in the *Protect and Survive* booklet about protection of radios for the fallout shelter is inadequate, people are only told to "keep any aerial pushed in".[100] The campaign writers knew about the possible effects of EMP upon radios, but still said that "no action" would be taken to amend this, as they believed that people would not bother to buy new radio sets.[101] This shows that, not only did parts of the booklet deliberately withhold information in order to keep the campaign simple, but it was also because the government did not believe the public would listen if they did include the information.

Having focused on the motives behind civil defence policy preparations before an attack, the chapter will now turn to preparations for after an attack. Researchers who have criticised these preparations stress the role of the police as a force of political control. 'Breakdown' is defined as "the point at which survivors turn inwards, and cease to be assets of the state".[102] Police would be expected to "maximise internal security" [103] by controlling those who had reached the point of 'breakdown', stopping them before they could "wreak vengeance on the government that brought disaster upon them".[104] This claim is closely linked with the 'Stay at Home' policy. By telling everyone to remain in their houses, and by shutting off the Essential Service Routes in and out of towns, it is thought that the government would have the population under control from political revolt. Moreover, if the police knew that the population were separated into their individual home units, the community would not have a chance to

[98] Protect and Survive mass information campaign booklet, 1974, HO 322/776
[99] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* p. 199
[100] *Protect and Survive,* p. 13
[101] Buttery's advice to Yeates, 1973, HO 322/776
[102] Hennesy, *The Secret State,* p. 142
[103] Vale, *The Limits of Civil Defence,* p. 147
[104] Rumble, *The Politics of Nuclear Defence,* p. 170

meet, and therefore it would be less likely that political discontent would breed.[105] The *Police Manual of Home Defence* does tell the police to,

"Maintain internal security, with particular reference to the detention or restriction of movement of subversive or potentially subversive people".[106]

They were also told to take a hard line on those who were made homeless by the attack, rest centres would be created to look after these people, but people "should be collected into groups only for the shortest possible periods…and every effort should be made to avoid large groups".[107]

However, this was not the primary role of the police according to the *Police Manual of Home Defence*. Straight after an attack, the police were at first expected to ascertain the exact level of damage to buildings, roads and communication lines "as soon as opportunity presents itself", and report this to the highest authority they still have communication connections with.[108] This links back to the lack of knowledge that the government had about the post-attack period detailed in Chapter One. This meant that the Regional or Sub-Regional Commissioners would be able to build a picture of the extent of the situation, particularly so they could monitor fallout. The reconnaissance of data was not just for the benefit of the Regional authorities. The scientific information that the manual contains, mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, is not only relayed to the police so that they understood the precautions they were being told to take. It also allows "authoritative information" to be "made available to the occupants" of every house.[109] For example, the manual explains how to use Radiac instruments to measure the amount of radioactivity in the atmosphere, so that the police could calculate how long it was safe for police and others to go outside every day.[110] The police were therefore advisors to the public before they were controllers. This role as advisor also applies to the 'Stay at Home' policy.

[105] Wood, in Thompson, *Over Our Dead Bodies,* p. 54
[106] *Police Manual of Home Defence,* p. 26
[107] *Police Manual of Home Defence,* p. 37
[108] *Police Manual of Home Defence,* p. 31
[109] *Police Manual of Home Defence,* p. 56
[110] *Police Manual of Home Defence,* p. 11

"It is not part of the scheme to force people to remain under cover, or to regard them as law breakers if they emerge contrary to, or stay out longer than, suggested by the Controller's advice."[111]

It is clear that police authority lay in "persuasion" rather than force; their duty was to relay government advice, but not to impose it. It also stated, "a police officer might find himself in a shelter with members of the public whom he would be expected to lead and advise."[112] The previous chapter suggested that the 'Stay at Home' was adopted as a result of the difficulty in planning for an unknown eventuality. This evidence further elaborates this conclusion; suggesting that the 'Stay at Home' policy was not intended to be a policy of control: an inhabitant would not be forced to remain at home, it was only advised due to the unpredictable and long-lasting nature of fallout. It also confirms the previous conclusion that the police were given the same instructions as the public in the event of an attack.

Campbell has taken his argument completely out of context from the rest of the *Police Manual of Home Defence.* Only one section of the manual is dedicated to informing police officers of their duties. There are other section preparing police to gather information and act as informants for the public. The BBC source is particularly useful for corroborating this conclusion. Given the "vital importance of broadcasting in the post-strike period",[113] it should elaborate further on how the government intended to handle the public after a nuclear attack. The War Time Broadcasting Service (WTBS) was an integral part of boosting public morale during World War Two, by presenting familiarity in an alien wartime situation. It seems that this part of World War Two civil defence policy was still relevant to civil defence after 1968. It was thought "the general public identify themselves to some established, peacetime organisation".[114] Therefore, the BBC were "particularly anxious to keep to a minimum any enforced silence on WTBS because of the adverse effect on public morale".[115] The system was dedicated to keeping the airways filled after an attack. The live scripts penned by the BBC allowed the government to maintain continuity in

[111] *Police Manual of Home Defence,* p. 58
[112] *Police Manual of Home Defence,* p. 35
[113] Letter from Mr Yeates to Mr Anson, 21st November 1973, HO 322/775
[114] Letter from Mr Quilter to Mr Anson, 19th November 1973, HO 322/775, image reference 16
[115] Record of an informal Meeting, 'Police on Pre-Recorded Announcements', Wednesday 12th September 1973, HO 322/775, image reference 17

their message to the public before an after attack, whilst also leaving room for the inevitable amendments that would have to be made according the specific circumstance. Moreover, pre-recorded scripts were prepared "in the personal as opposed to the impersonal style",[116] and they would be read by a well-known voice such as Hugh Searight,[117] in case a live announcement was not possible. Thus, the message that the BBC and the government wished to present to the public after an attack was also one of information and support. After all, if the 'BBC was still there' then things could not be too bad? The officials are careful to ensure that the public will receive the most comforting message possible after an attack. This confirms that governmental attitude towards the behaviour of the public after an attack was not as violent and hard-lining as Campbell and others have suggested. Survivors of Hiroshima described that in the aftermath of the attack, the majority of people who had not been killed were trying to find and help their relatives.[118] The public were far more likely to need comfort and information after an attack than they would need to be suppressed from disruptive behaviour.

It is clear from the previous two chapters that there are some divergences between the historiography of civil defence, and the actual intent behind civil defence that the new sources seem to indicate. Information given to the public in the *Protect and Survive* booklet may have been misleading to the extent that it was deliberately conveying a simple message. However, the planners' anxiety that the campaign should be explicit and hard-hitting implies that they were writing for an apathetic audience, not a group of politically motivated activists. It is therefore unlikely that the booklet and the campaign were "carefully drafted to avoid political discord".[119] Moreover, it is highlighted at the beginning of the planning that the campaign was intended to be a "permanent source of reference"[120], available for the government to use in the event of a deterioration in international relations for at least 15 years.[121] This is one final indicator that the *Protect and Survive* scheme was not a quick-fix propaganda to keep the public at bay, but what the government thought would be a long-term source of reference for the future of civil defence. Governmental attitude to civil defence after

[116] Letter from Mr Rayner to Mr Anson, 6th February 1974, HO 322/775, image reference 13
[117] Letter from Mr Rayner to Mr Yeates, 17th June 1974, HO 322/775, image reference 6
[118] Thompson, *Protect and Survive,* p. 20
[119] Vale, *The Limits of Civil Defence,* p. 141
[120] Minutes from a Meeting with the COI, 5th November 1974, HO 322/776
[121] Letter from Mr Buttery to Mr Summerskill, 10th November 1975, HO 322/776

an attack equally does not seem to indicate as much fear of political animosity as historians have suggested so far; it seems to be that the government wanted to advise and comfort the public more than to control them. The previous two chapters have attempted to build a picture of civil defence policy after 1968. What caused the considerable variation in the way the same policy has been interpreted?

Part Two

Civil Defence After 1983

Chapter Three

The Anomaly Decade: Did Civil Defence from 1983 Reflect a Pre-1968 Ethos?

The reintroduction of a voluntary service to civil defence in 1983 has been seen as a turning point by researchers such as Rumble and Greene. They believe that in this year, civil defence changed back to echo its pre-1968 ancestor. This theory assumes that the new volunteer service would be undertaking the same duties as the Civil Defence Corps, thus reviving the 'rescue and succour' ethos of the 1960s. It also claims that the 'state rationale' philosophy of the 1970s was discarded.[122] There is no doubt that a concerted effort was made at the beginning of the 1980s to move civil defence into the new decade. The Civil Defence Review of 1980 suggested that civil defence needed to be updated, and its budget was increased from £13.7 million in 1977 to £45 million in 1983.[123] This was probably partly because it became clear that the attempts at détente in the previous decade had failed; the SALT II document in 1979 was never ratified by either side, and in the same year Russia put SS-20 missiles in Europe.[124] This chapter will use the *War Emergency Guide Book*, written by Wiltshire County Council in 1983, to ask, was the new civil defence drive evidence that the government had moved back to previous philosophies?

There are some parts of the guide book which indicate that civil defence policy after 1983 had changed since the 1970s. The "unequivocal advice to the public to stay put in their homes" had disappeared.[125] Moreover, the fact that individual volunteers had the potential to be invested with "wide powers"[126] in their communities after an attack could indicate a step away from the 'Stay at Home' policy, which had reserved functioning roles after an attack for police and regional authorities only. Volunteers were also warned "the imminent threat of attack will cause a considerable exodus of

[122] Rumble, *The Politics of Nuclear Defence,* p. 156
[123] Vale, *The Limits of Civil Defence,* p. 140
[124] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* p. 179
[125] Rumble, *The Politics of Nuclear Defence,* p. 173
[126] 'Radiation 2' Handout, *War Emergency Guide Book*

the population from the large towns in the countryside".[127] Despite the steadfast refusal to admit that there would be population movement before and after an attack in the 1970s, it seems the government was now ready to acknowledge that a mass exodus from town to country would be inevitable. The government was now issuing advice to counties in the country such as Wiltshire to be prepared for an influx of refugees. However, there is also evidence that there was no change in civil defence policy after 1983. The *War Emergency Guide Book* contains a section that explains to the volunteers the 'Machinery of Government in War'. If the government had moved away from its philosophy of 'state rationale', then a new system would be explained here. The *Guide Book* states that the structure after an attack would "enable control to be decentralized", resulting in three levels of control: District – County – Region format.[128] This does not seem to have altered at all from the description of the structure of regional government described in the police manual in 1974.[129] It is also stated that the system after an attack would "be extended to parish / community level".[130] This still reflects the grass-routes policy of the previous decade. We are left with a dichotomy; how could policy after 1983 have changed yet remained the same?

The *War Emergency Guide Book* demonstrates that the main role of the volunteers in 1983, who are rather revealing named 'Community Advisors', was to give advice to the public. The booklet is focused on explaining the situation to Community Advisors, in order to:

> "Place specialised knowledge and understanding at community level. The more people resident in each community who understand and know how to act quickly, the greater will be the chances of survival."[131]

The aim was to inform and advise the local community. The volunteers would be trained in a process where they would first be given a science lesson on the topic they were learning about that session. The volunteer would then be given an example of a situation they might be faced with, and asked how they would cope with this situation.

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[127] 'Radiation 1: Problem', *War Emergency Guide Book*
[128] 'Machinery of Government in War' Handout, *War Emergency Guide Book*
[129] 'Regional Government in War', *Police Manual of Home Defence,* p. 7
[130] 'Machinery of Government in War' Handout, *War Emergency Guide Book*
[131] Foreword by the Chairman of Wiltshire County Council, July 1979, *War Emergency Guide Book*

They would then be informed of the best way of handling the circumstance.[132] The guidebook contains no evidence to suggest that the new voluntary service would parallel the CDC; nowhere in the booklet are the Advisors taught how to rescue survivors. It seems the previous 'rescue and succour' scenes in the Blitz in which a party of eight rescuers would spend two and a half hours digging out survivors would not return.[133]

The role of the new volunteer force as described by the *Emergency War Guide Book* suggests an answer to the dichotomy between evidence that the policy had changed and evidence that it remained the same. The scientific information the volunteers were given parallels the scientific element of the 1974 *Police Manual of Home Defence* detailed in the last chapter. For example, the volunteers would be trained in how radiation and the Radiac equipment worked, so they could become Survey Meter Readers.[134] This is exactly the same advice that was given to the police, as described in Chapter Two. This suggests that the government had recognised that individuals deserved to know scientific justification behind precautions as much as police officers. Moreover, the inclusion of individuals in the civil defence system meant that the "survival unit" was extended right down to the level of the people, to the smallest natural community. [135] The new volunteer system therefore represented the highest level possible in breakdown",[136] an evolution and extension of the 'state rationale' ethos rather than a desertion of this philosophy. Given this, it is possible to propose that the parts of the *War Emergency Guide Book* which suggested that civil defence policy had changed after 1983 actually show that the government were making improvements on the 1970s system. For example, despite the change in the 'Stay at Home' policy mentioned above, the guidebook still focuses on the home as the base, stating, "at least 14 days may have to be spent in the Inner Refuge and a Survival Kit should be placed there before the attack". Moreover, it is advised that those suffering from radiation sickness should "be isolated and treated in their own homes as far as

[132] For Example, 'Resource Management' Information Handout, 'Resource Management: Problem 1', 'Resource Management: Notes on Problem 1', *War Emergency Guide Book*
[133] Greene et al, *London after the Bomb,* p. 81
[134] 'Radiation 1' Handout, *War Emergency Guide Book*
[135] Letter from the Chairman of Wiltshire County Council, July 1979, *War Emergency Guide Book*
[136] 'Environmental Health: Notes on Pollution, Sanitation and Hygiene' Handout, *War Emergency Guide Book*

possible".[137] The 'Stay at Home' policy was therefore still in existence, but it had evolved into a slightly more relaxed plan, which would allow these specially trained volunteers to help the authorities in their communities after an attack.

The Wiltshire County's *War Emergency Guide Book* is valuable as it fills in on a part of government policy that has yet to be researched properly. However, it is limited in that it only shows the attitude of one county. At the same time as Wiltshire was preparing for a potential nuclear war, other counties were rebelling against these government plans. Many local authorities were "less than enthusiastic" about being the crux of civil defence policies;[138] over one hundred and fifty local authorities declared themselves 'nuclear free zones'.[139] Campbell declared, "the bluff of civil defence planning had finally been called".[140] But why did local governments chose this time to make a stand against the government, when it has just been proved that the policy was a more developed form of the same policy in the 1970s? Why did local councils not rebel against government plans in 1968, as soon at the Regional system of bunkers was proposed? The 1970s was an era of relatively quite public opinion on the nuclear question. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), which had campaigned against nuclear ownership in the 1960s, faded away.[141] It seemed that, after twenty years of Cold War nuclear threats, people had begun to "live with the bomb".[142] This was partly as a result of a period of détente, which began in 1972 with the signing of the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT).[143] It is crucial to point out here that, although the SALT talks gave the impression of a cool-down in international tension, the country was still updating Polaris (the latest deterrent).[144] So public opinion had eased in this decade, but civil defence was still necessary as the threat at not totally disappeared. The 1980s saw the return of political campaigners against the government's attitude towards nuclear politics. The "better educated, more socially aware" generation were now beginning to question nuclear policy more than

[137] 'Radiation 2' Handout, *War Emergency Guide Book*
[138] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* p. 168
[139] Rumble, *The Politics of Nuclear Defence,* p. 171
[140] Campbell, *War Plan UK,* p. 20
[141] Zoe Fairbairns, 'Study War No More', in Minnion & Bolsover, *The CND Story,* p. 68
[142] Kate Soper, 'Contemplating a Nuclear Future: Nuclear War, Politics, and the Individual', in Dorothy Thompson, *Over Our Dead Bodies, (*London, 1983), p. 177
[143] Sean Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War: 1945 - 1991,* (London, 2000), p. 182
[144] Clarke, *Four Minute Warning,* p. 165

any other generation before it.[145] This was partially because détente broke down in 1979, and deterrence was becoming more volatile. As technology increased, and computers now controlled everything, the risk of mistakes rocketed (excuse the pun).[146] The CND returned, protesting against Britain's reliance on NATO and the acceptance of American weapons in Britain.[147] The most famous display of anger was the 'Peace Camp' that feminist campaigners set up in US Airbase Greenham Common. This change in public attitude affected the outlook of regional government, particularly Labour constituents. Although the CND maintained that it was a not a political body, and that people of any party could support its ethics, over the 1970s, Labour began to adopt disarmament as part of their political rhetoric.[148] Thus, despite the government's policy being the same as in the 1970s, by the 1980s the political element of the CND had become part of the Labour manifesto, which filtered down to regional level, and initiated the creation of 'nuclear free zones' in certain counties. It seems that Wiltshire County Council might have been the exception rather than the rule.

The impact of the political rebelliousness of the 1980s means that research carried out in this decade is diverse; not does it enrich the subject, but it can also be used as a primary source. It is clear that these writers were considerably affected by the new political ambience; in fact they were part of it. Campbell makes his political beliefs clear from the beginning of his work, "if you believe in deterrence, there is no drawing back from the final brink".[149] Prins and Rumble both agree to a similar goal and the two bodies of researchers deliberately aim their work at gathering more information, in retaliation to government secrecy throughout the cold war. None are more overtly political than Thompson's collection of feminist writings on the Cold War, all based around their objection to the "outdated and suicidal" policy of deterrence.[150] In order to find out the extent to which the atmosphere of resistance in the 1980s has affected the historiography of civil defence, we can compare Campbell's work with Peter Laurie's study of civil defence carried out in 1970. They both focused on the same research question. In fact, Campbell was directly influenced

[145] McCamley, *Secret Nuclear Bunkers,* p. 149
[146] Greene et al, *London after the Bomb,* p. 93
[147] Prins, *Defended to Death,* p. 222
[148] Minnion & Bolsover, *The CND Story*, p. 19
[149] Campbell, *War Plan UK,* p. 17
[150] Thompson, *Over our Dead Bodies,* p. 2

by Laurie to begin his investigations.[151] Laurie conducted his research two years after 1968, so he could only document the beginning of the period of civil defence this study have focused on. Despite this, Laurie and Campbell's results to the same question are staggeringly different. Laurie is positive about the government's civil defence plans:

"I had thought of civil defence as a small group of elderly and irrelevant volunteers in blue uniforms. I was astonished to uncover how deep and thorough Britain's preparations were."[152]

This is in stark contrast to Campbell's opinions, which imply that his expectations of the government were very high. Moreover, Laurie's lack of enthusiasm for the remains of the Civil Defence Corps does not fit with the nostalgic presentation of them as rescuers and heroes in 1980s literature. Laurie is also positive about the regional system of government, stating, "It is worth protecting the tiny core of government".[153] Indeed, he declares, "The elaborate HO control system would indeed be something to be glad of if one survived a nuclear attack."[154] Eerily, Laurie even recommends the actions that the government should take in future policy that are incredibly similar to the policy that the government did end up developing. He suggests that:

"If householders were intelligently advised in good time before the attack and provided with suitable materials they could doubtless do a good deal. But something more to the point is needed than *Handbook Number 10*".[155]

This is exactly what the government did when they planned the *Protect and Survive* mass information campaign four years after Laurie published, making sure that it was simple and informative. Moreover, Laurie also suggests "wireless broadcasting would need to be used to the fullest extent to explain the remainder of the plans being made

[151] Campbell, *War Plan UK,* p. 4
[152] Laurie, *Beneath the City Streets*, p. vi
[153] Laurie, *Beneath City Streets,* p. 116
[154] Laurie, *Beneath City Streets,* p. 208
[155] Laurie, *Beneath City Streets,* p. 122

to help them".[156] The BBC and government communications show that the government also began to plan this in 1973. So Laurie, who was the most researched man on the area of civil defence before the 1980s, recommended the steps that the government should take in civil defence, which they then followed. Why then is the current image of civil defence in the 1970s one that is so opposite to Laurie's positive vision of the future of civil defence?

The drastic difference in attitude between the two historians implies that the decade in which they were writing affected the way they interpreted civil defence. However, to ensure this was not just a clash of personalities, let us refer back to the question that was left unanswered in chapter two. How could the *Protect and Survive* booklet have been interpreted as propaganda to disorientate a politically minded audience when it had actually been aimed at making a high impact on a potentially apathetic public? 1980s research was often focused on an objection to Thatcher's "child-like faith in nuclear deterrence".[157] In order to launch an argument against deterrence, researchers used the civil defence policy as the basis of their argument. They conducted elaborate research into government civil defence policy in the decade before them, in order to prove that it was ineffective.[158] If they established that civil defence policy did not work, then they could argue that "the only rational civil defence policy open to this country is the removal of the nuclear targets from our territory".[159] Thus, civil defence was used as a scapegoat in the fight against deterrence. E. P Thompson's *Protest and Survive* published in 1981 is a perfect example to demonstrate that government civil defence policy became a part of anti-deterrence symbolism. Although the title of Thompson's pamphlet is based on civil defence, the pamphlet itself only fleetingly mentions civil defence. The rest of the pamphlet is dedicated to a detailed political argument against deterrence. *Protest and Survive* is still used as a slogan for political protest against nuclear weapons today.[160] The *Protect and Survive* booklet was written in 1974, but released in 1980. It was therefore written for a 1970s audience, but received by public of the 1980s. This explains the extreme difference between intent and reception of the booklet. The 1980s public assumed that the booklet was intended

[156] Laurie, *Beneath City Streets,* p. 125
[157] Minnion, *The CND Story,* p. 33
[158] Greene et al, *London After the Bomb,* p. 92
[159] Wood, in Thompson, *Over our Dead Bodies,* p. 59
[160] Aida Eidemariam, 'Protest and Survive', Monday 9th October 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/oct/09/nuclear.uk>

to distract them from their anti-deterrent values. In doing this, they inadvertently projected their own values and goals onto the generation before them. The disastrous reception of the booklet is not surprising; it must have seemed insulting to the politically innovative 1980s public. Therefore, the 1970s were an anomalous decade, but in the attitude of the public towards the government and the nuclear question, rather than in civil defence policy.

Conclusion

What began as a study of the nature of the change in Cold War civil defence policy after 1968 has taken an unexpected turn. Considering that the majority of the discoveries made on civil defence governmental documents were made in the 1980s, a large portion of the work on civil defence was influenced by a political agenda rather than by the quest for historical truth. The newly released Home Office documents suggest that these researchers left a construction of civil defence history that was manipulated by the writers' preconceived notions on the government. This is not to say that civil defence policy after 1968 was anywhere near perfect; it has been shown that it suffered from communication breakdowns and confusion over policies. However, historiography so far has refused to recognise the government's side of the picture. Mr Buttery's lively tones demonstrate the profound difficulties the government faced in attempting to collate a campaign of definitive advice to the public, when they did not know or understand the situation they were attempting to combat. That the government were attempting to update the old information into a modern format shows effort on the part of the government to protect the population.

There is room for a serious re-assessment of existing conclusions on civil defence; the political sentiment needs to be disentwined from the historical facts. In order to do this, historians will need to view the topic from a politically neutral perspective. As the Cold War sinks deeper into collective memory, this will become more possible. However, nuclear weapons may still be such a contentious issue that historians may not be able to gain true political neutrality until nuclear weapons are eradicated. Indeed, it was difficult to argue against the findings of the researchers in the 1980s; their passion for their worthwhile cause radiated from every page of their argument. Moreover, as explained in the introduction, most of the information regarding British civil defence policy during the Cold War will be withheld for many years to come. It may be that the threat of terrorism will have to end before more information is released.

Despite the confusion that 1980s political literature has caused historically, it still allows us to form some interesting conclusions. This particularly relates to the reception of the *Protect and Survive* booklet. It is easy to see why the public

completely misinterpreted the booklet. The people who wrote the critiques were highly educated, and the campaign was aimed at the lowest common denominator. In a way, it was inevitable that the educated elements of society thought they were being treated like "imbecilic sheep".[161] The confused jumble of different decades and different philosophies that the booklet has come to represent also demonstrates the transient nature of society during the Cold War. The jostling between detente and nuclear threats in the 1970s and 1980s clearly took its toll. In a more abstract way, it also shows the ease with which a particular generation can construct a politically bias historical narrative.

There is one question that has been particularly vexing in the research for this study. It is continually repeated throughout the planning of the *Protect and Survive* mass information campaign that the booklet was only a small component and that under no circumstances should it be released on its own. It therefore does not seem to make any sense that the booklet was eventually the only part of the campaign which entered the public domain. This also seems like a particularly careless decision, given the bombardment of criticism the booklet was then subjected to. Perhaps the COI finally got the upper hand over the F6 and succeeded in making the booklet the central part of the campaign. For the time being this is only speculation. But hopefully in the future more Home Office documents will be released to resolve this small puzzle, and ultimately the bigger problem of Cold War civil defence.

[161] Campbell, *War Plan UK*, p. 155

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