

**British Civil Defence Policy
in Response to the Threat
of Nuclear Attack
1972 – 1986**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how successive British governments in the last two decades of the Cold War developed and adapted civil defence policies aimed at mitigating the effects of a nuclear attack on the population of Britain. It tests the hypothesis that civil defence in Britain from 1972 until 1986 was shaped by three distinct influences; economic, ideological and external. It establishes in which ways and to what extent policy was shaped by these factors and which, if any, was the primary determinant of the major policy decisions of the time.

It explains how changing economic, ideological and external contexts fused those policies with the political framework during those 15 years. It examines the theory and reality of civil defence, from its rebirth as a political and practical concern in 1972 until the end of civil defence as a practical and political response against a specific nuclear threat in 1986. It does so within the framework of a wider Cold War defence policy and explains how policy assumptions were constituted and perpetuated. By extrapolating and further analysing the idea of policy development as a direct result of certain key factors, this thesis charts the conceptualisation and evolution of civil defence through its fluctuating humanitarian, political, insurance and deterrent functions by which such policy may be explained and understood.

The thesis concludes that determining one dominant influence from within the intensely symbiotic relationship of ideology, economics and external affairs is problematic. Rather it can be seen that the initiation of civil defence policy was the aspect of the policy cycle most closely influenced by ideology. The later formulation and implementation of that policy was primarily determined by the

economic resources available. The ultimate existence of civil defence in its manifestation as protection against nuclear attack was wholly a reaction to the shifting developments of international affairs.

Chapter 1

Introduction

A Definition of Civil Defence

For the purpose of this thesis, 'civil defence' will be used as defined in the 1948 *Civil Defence Act* (the prevailing legislation from 1972 to 1986), to mean:

...any measures not amounting to actual combat for affording defence against any form of hostile attack by a foreign power or for depriving any form of attack by a foreign power of the whole or part of its effect, whether the measures are taken before, at or after the time of the attack.¹

This differs from 'home defence' which is a broader term used more widely during World War Two as it explicitly embraces circumstances where the use of coercive measures or military force are also related to matters of internal hostile threat or attack; for example, the use of the Home Guard². However these terms are often used in policy discussion without very much distinction. The interchangeability in official documentation is illustrated by the then Co-ordinator of Voluntary Effort in Civil Defence, Sir Leslie Mavor, in an article in an internally circulated journal in 1982:

Don't be thrown by my recurrent references to 'civil' defence. For all practical purposes, 'home' and 'civil' defence mean the same, but I use the latter form in deference to the Home Secretary's wishes.³

Despite Sir Leslie's assertions, the distinction between the two will be observed within this thesis for the purpose of clarity.

¹ Civil Defence Act 1948 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/12-13-14/5/contents> (accessed 29 November 2007)

² MacKenzie, S.P. (1995) p.17

³ Mavor, L. (1982) p.31

Methodology

This thesis adopts a qualitative case study methodology with a linear research design, focussing on one primary area of data collection, document and archival analysis, and one secondary area, expert interviews. The emphasis on qualitative methodology lies with the securing of content and process in context, archival research lent itself very well to the narrow, in depth focus of the study.

The research process is based on a broadly linear model, divided into five main stages: theory specification, data specification and methodology construction, data collection (archival), data collection (interviews) and data analysis. The methodology based on the analysis of documentary and archival sources with selected interviews was adopted as it offered the best opportunity for the development of new studies and modern interpretations of existing events.

Rodney Lowe notes three advantages of using public records for research.⁴ Firstly, such records contain the broadest range of information upon which civil defence policy was made. Secondly, the genesis of policy and its eventual execution can be traced through the large amounts of documentation produced by the lower levels of government and therefore is able to trace the decision making process and the eventual implementation of policy through the various stages of acknowledgement, discussion and refinement. Thirdly, it is possible to find previously unavailable views of ministers and other government officials by means of sifting through the

⁴ Lowe (1997) pp.241-2

large volumes of departmental records. So in conclusion, as Burnham et al. states,⁵ there is a great deal of evidence that the use of public records in national and regional archives can make a substantial contribution towards the understanding of the complicated policy making process of modern government.

The research is predominantly archival but utilises interviews with experts in aspects of civil defence policy in order to provide complementary data to strengthen and round findings and ensure that analysis can be cross checked against sources and methodology. This is, as Bryman notes, consistent with the standard of triangulation which entails using more than one method or source of data.⁶ A loosely-structured interview technique was used, combining a number of open-ended standardised questions followed by a period of free discussion, leaving open the possibility of an exploratory conversation around the themes rather than demanding answers which fit a particular format or structure. As Rubin and Rubin (1995) note, "Qualitative interviewing requires listening carefully enough to hear the meanings, interpretations and understandings that give shape to the worlds of the interviewees".⁷ Used in conjunction with the analysis of records in the public domain in order to fill in the gaps and reveal what may not have been noted in official documents, the data collected from one to one interviewing offers the potential for personal interpretations of events and insight into thought processes and the thinking behind particular conclusions.

⁵ Burnham et al. (2004) p.177

⁶ Bryman (2001) p.274

⁷ Rubin & Rubin (1995) p.7

The interviewees were chosen for their ability to represent the widest possible range of civil defence knowledge. Bruce Kent is a political activist and the former Chair of War on Want and the International Peace Bureau. From 1980 to 1990 he served as the General Secretary and later Chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). He remains Vice-President of CND and an active campaigner on peace issues. John Preston is Professor of Education at the University of East London. His research explores the relationship between security and disaster education and how disasters can be seen to be pedagogical events which involve learning and evolve through public reaction and participation. He is the author of *Disaster Education* (2010) and *Protect and Survive: 'whiteness' and the middle-class family in civil defence pedagogies* in the *Journal of Education Policy* (vol. 23, issue 5, 2008). Dr Robin Woolven served as an Intelligence Officer with the Security Service 1980-1997. His 2002 Ph.D. in War Studies from King's College London was titled *Civil defence in London 1935-1945: the formation and implementation of the policy for, and the performance of, the A.R.P. (later C.D.) services in London* and he researches on aspects of home defence and security.

Two separate methods of data gathering is important not only for this reason. The 15-year span of the scope of the research also engenders certain challenges which are detailed below. Firstly, the historical focus of the research introduces a certain challenge in the thirty year (and in the case of certain documents judged to be of particular sensitivity, up to one hundred year) closure rule imposed on most public records by the Public Records Act of 1967. The Freedom of Information Act of 2001 (which came fully into effect from the 1st of January 2005) created a statutory

right to access internal documents held by public authorities; the 30 year standard closure period no longer determines access to records. Instead, information is assumed to be open immediately unless one of the exemptions set out in the Act applies. Although ultimately, power still rests with the government who have the final say in the form of a ministerial veto. While this gave the author unprecedented access to primary material not available in previous research, there was certainly a notable proportion of documents related to the last decade of the Cold War that while pertinent to the research, remain inaccessible for the foreseeable future. However, the advantages for unique primary data gathering in this method outweigh the disadvantages of omission.

Secondly, this historical focus precluded the interview of government individuals central to the government decision making process during the period in question; where civil servants and former politicians involved with civil defence are still alive, they have retired from the public sphere and are unable or unwilling to be interviewed. It is for this reasons that the interviews were conducted with individuals with secondary expertise in civil defence and the policy making process; academics, former military personnel and defence and senior members of anti-nuclear peace groups.

The document research took place mainly in the National Archives, as the largest holder of government records in the UK. As Lowe states, there is no more important single source of information in the UK for those interested in policy

making.⁸ Accounts of the detailed workings of successive British governments and the key players within those administrations found within these archives are a vital primary resource for this research. In order to prevent an unrepresentative reliance on a single document source other repositories such as the British Library, Bishopsgate Institute, London School of Economics archives and the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives were utilised in order to strengthen and round findings and ensure that the analysis can be cross checked against sources.

For the purpose of the research, a distinction between primary, secondary and tertiary sources is made in the following way. Primary materials are so classified if they were produced at the time as a direct result of the event in question or policy making process. In order to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research, primary documents were used wherever possible. Secondary and tertiary material was consulted where appropriate and where issues of authenticity and credibility could be resolved and where material could be corroborated by evidence from primary sources.

Research Questions

Two clearly defined periods in civil defence policy can be identified from the end of World War Two until the end of the Soviet Union in 1991. The first period is illustrated by the unsophisticated atomic war planning based on the strategic defence principles of World War Two which lasted from the Berlin blockade in 1948 through to the Cuban crisis of 1962 and the eventual winding down of civil

⁸ Lowe (1997) p.240

defence provision in 1968. The second was the period of escalating world tensions and conflicted ideology that characterised civil defence policy from the reactivation of civil defence as a policy concern in 1972, exacerbated under the Thatcher governments from 1979 until 1986, when thawing of East-West relations saw civil defence change to encompass a broader civil emergencies remit. This thesis explores the political response to the threat of nuclear attack from the perspective of policy decisions made in the post-1972 years and seeks to explain the development of civil defence from its reactivation in 1972 until 1986. As such, the primary questions which comprise its intellectual framework are:

1. How did British civil defence policy develop between 1972 and 1986
2. In what ways have the influences of economics, ideology and external actors and events shaped civil defence policy?
3. Which of these three factors, if any, could be said to be the determining influence on the development of civil defence?

While no body of work offers a comprehensive examination of multiple policy influences, it is questions of economics, ideological considerations and events on the world stage that can most often be found in both the primary documents of the time and the literature. The economic factors underpinning policy determination have been the most openly discussed amongst both successive governments and subsequent researchers. As N.J. McCamley summarises in his book *Cold War Nuclear Bunkers*:

The progress and development of civil defence in the United Kingdom was fashioned by three forces: the fluctuating tensions of

east-west diplomacy; the often parlous state of the British Economy and the ideologies of the political party in power.⁹

This is also an approach identified by Grant (2006) who stated of civil defence in the early decades of the Cold War:

It is important to understand the factors which determined how it [civil defence policy] developed in cold war Britain. There were four big, and interconnecting, themes; these were, firstly, the changing nature of nuclear attack; secondly, the events and changing nature of the cold war; thirdly, the precarious state of the British economy; and finally the need to present an image of a 'survivable' nuclear war.¹⁰

The changing nature of nuclear attack was of greater significance in the post-World War Two period, as planning assumptions shifted from contemplation of the relatively small scale destruction possible from the first atomic bombs to considerations of the much greater devastation made possible by the advent of the hydrogen bomb. By 1972, the stockpiles of nuclear weapons by both East and West rendered further technological developments redundant as far as destructive capabilities and therefore civil defence measures were concerned. However, Grant's other factors of the changing nature of Cold War events, the need by successive governments to manage the public face of nuclear war and civil defence for political and ideological reasons, and the precarious state of the British economy continued to demonstrate their influence until the end of the Cold War.

⁹ McCamley, N.J. (2002) p.147

¹⁰ Grant, M. (2006) p.12

Because of their significance, it is these broad determinants that have been chosen as the framework with which to analyse policy decision making. This analytical framework is significant in its ability to offer a unified and original approach to the analysis of civil defence policy. By analysing policy making through the filter of these intertwined influences, this thesis explains the reasoning behind the genesis, development and termination of civil defence policies in the post-1972 period and how those policies were adopted and adapted through the changing historical contexts of the later Cold War.

Britain's fluctuating and often precarious economic situation; the ideological principles and convictions of the political party in power and the ebb and flow of tensions played out on the Cold War world stage are examined to see if they determined why civil defence policies of the period were developed as they were. By analysing the history of policy making in this thematically structured way, the evolution of civil defence from humanitarian utility to weapon of deterrence can be traced and explained.

The thesis recognises the conceptual models of policy analysis found in the major literature as a necessary and useful guide to understanding policy decisions but does not adopt one particular model or theory as a primary method by which to analyse civil defence policy. As Hill states:

Attempts to analyse the policy process are inescapably based upon

explicit or implicit models of the policy system. In some cases the model is seen as being 'driven' by environmental forces, in others by internal objectives and goals, in yet others by the internal perceptions of the external environment.¹¹

As Dye notes,¹² however, most public policies lend themselves not to explanation through a single model but through several different, often contradictory, models. Each model offers an individual way of thinking about civil defence policy and as such, this thesis seeks to understand both policy determination and the construction and operation of policy processes using several conceptual models.

There are a number of issues relating to the exploration of these questions that this thesis does not cover. Firstly, it does not attempt to catalogue or discuss in depth the actual provisions for public protection during the Cold War as these have been comprehensively detailed elsewhere¹³. Instead the focus is on the rationales for civil defence and analyses of the political, governmental and legislative discussions that led to the creation and implementation of British civil defence policy from 1972 onwards. As such it does not attempt to re-evaluate existing accounts of systems and structures, but rather seeks to sit alongside them as a complementary work. Neither does this thesis seek to evaluate the technical effectiveness of civil defence; many previous works describe the effects of nuclear weapons and the perceived ability or otherwise of civil defence to mitigate these.¹⁴ It is not the aim

¹¹ Hill, M. (1993) p.6

¹² Dye, T. (2008) p.12

¹³ See footnote 17

¹⁴ Openshaw, S. et al. (1983) *Doomsday: Britain after Nuclear Attack*, Goodwin, P. (1981) *Nuclear War: The Facts on Our Survival*, Greene, O. et al. (1982) *London After the Bomb*, Tyrrell, I. (1982) *The*

of this thesis to determine the utility of civil defence and when such questions are raised it is in order to explore how such limits are responded to in policy making.

Secondly, the thesis concentrates on the civil defence policy making which is directly concerned with protecting the public from nuclear attack. It does not consider the issue of policy creation in light of attack by conventional, chemical or biological weapons and neither does it investigate the issues of civil defence in mitigating the effects of natural or industrial disasters. Although these aspects of civil defence were often of parallel concern to policymakers and considered by certain parliamentarians as a complementary reason to support robust nuclear civil defence provision,¹⁵ the policy considerations that shaped civil defence against nuclear attack represent some of the most complex and challenging during the later Cold War and as such it is on that aspect of policy development that this thesis concentrates.

Lastly, it is recognised that in narrowing the focus of research to investigate just three potential policy determinants, consideration of other policy influences must be sacrificed in order to provide sufficient depth of analysis. In particular, policy evaluation in response to the technical advancement of nuclear weapons, recognised by some¹⁶ to be important catalysts in the advancement of civil defence

Survival Option, Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies (1982) *Nuclear Attack: Civil Defence*, Radical Statistics (1982) *The Nuclear Numbers Game*, Tucker, A. and Gleisner, J. (1982) *Crucible of Despair: the effects of nuclear war*.

¹⁵ Gray, J. & Rea, J. HL Deb 01 November 1983, vol. 444, cc.523-49

¹⁶ Grant, M. (2006), Smith, M. (2009)

in the pre-1968 period, is not analysed to a comparable depth. The pre-1968 period is not the primary focus of this research and as such, while it is acknowledged that the rapid development of atomic weapons in the post-war period had significant and lasting influence on post-1972 policy making, issues of weapons development and scientific advancement are not discussed within this policy-orientated work.

It is also worth noting that the nature of civil defence policy-making is often complex, ill-defined and impossible to neatly categorise and as such, there are many places in this thesis where the triumvirate of economics, ideology and external factors cannot be clearly separated. This is most obvious in Chapter 5 in the discussion of external factors, where the actions of local governments were in themselves heavily influenced by ideological factors. For the purpose of this thesis, the definition of 'external factors ' therefore means both world events and those actors or agencies working outside the central government policy sphere, even if politically connected.

Originality

The original contribution to knowledge of this thesis is that it is the first doctoral study of British civil defence policy of the post-1972 period that is entirely policy focused and the first Ph.D to benefit from the access to original government documentation resulting from the recent relaxation in the 30 year disclosure rules. Although there exists a small but useful collection of literature that

comprehensively details civil defence systems, organisations and structures¹⁷, such work is primarily concerned with *how* civil defence developed and only in a subsidiary manner, if at all, with *why*. If any analysis of policy has been made in these, it has been done so as a secondary concern, to illustrate the primary focus which lies elsewhere.

Previous academic work on the subject of civil defence policy has either taken an earlier era of civil defence (usually pre-1968) as its focus; has researched civil defence policy as just one fact in an overarching Cold War or British security concern the primary focus of which lies elsewhere, or has chosen to concentrate on another aspect of policy concern (such as the role of the scientific advisors).¹⁸

Where existing accounts touch briefly upon issues of economic or socio-political influence, this thesis is the first to attempt an identification and evaluation of the significant influences on the development of civil defence policy in the last two decades of the Cold War, something not previously seen in any of the secondary literature or existing academic theses.

That there has been no attempt to present a unified analysis of civil defence policy in the existing literature is an illustration of the paucity of current civil defence theory not only for the post-1972 period but since the beginnings of modern civil

¹⁷ Campbell, D. (1982) *War Plan UK: the Truth about Civil Defence in Britain*, Catford, N. (2010) *Cold War Bunkers*, Clarke, B. (2009) *The Illustrated Guide to Armageddon: Britain's Cold War*, Cocroft, W. et al. (2003) *Cold War: Building for Nuclear Confrontation 1946-89*, Dalton, M. (2011) *The Royal Observer Corps Underground Monitoring Posts* and McCamley, N. (2007) *Cold War Secret Nuclear Bunkers: The Passive Defence of the Western World During the Cold War*.

¹⁸ Grant, M. (2006), Hennessy, P. (2002) and Smith, M. (2009)

defence during World War One.

Literature Review

Policy Literature

There is a breadth of literature available on the policy making process. For the purpose of this thesis, this literature review primarily concentrates on those sources which seek to explore the means by which decisions are made in British politics, through theories, concepts, and models of public policy making. The review is structured by school of thought and is broadly divided into the theoretical or model-based literature which advocates either a stagist or linear framework for policy analysis, and that literature which offers criticism of, or an alternative to, the stagist model.

Policy Analysis for the Real World (1985) by Brian Hogwood and Lewis Gunn offers a mixed framework for policy analysis, one that can be used for both "description and prescription".¹⁹ Description is concerned with how policies are made and prescription with how policies ought to be made, but the primary focus of Hogwood and Gunn is on the prescriptive improvement of policy processes and this influences the policy approach adopted throughout the book. Hogwood and Gunn are broadly in favour of the stagist approach and develop a top-down notion based on a rational system model of implementation as a useful way of presenting the analysis for any issue.

¹⁹ Hogwood, B. and Gunn, L. (1985) p.4

Hogwood and Gunnø's nine step method of their own devising that values the political aspects of the policy process, can be used for both the descriptive and prescriptive aspect of the policy process, and is the first way in which their framework can be said to be 'mixed'. The second part of their mixed approach is evident in the iteration that the nature of the policy process should inform the choice of model or models by which it is analysed. Thomas Dye's 2007 book, *Understanding Public Policy*, also chooses a practical, mixed approach to policy analysis, from the perspective of not only what specific policies governments choose to pursue but also why they pursue those policies and what the consequences of those policies might be. Dye's focus is similarly comparative and analytical; he asserts that the tools offered by the different models of policy analysis can elucidate and inform our understanding of different areas of public policy.

While the overall emphasis of Hogwood and Gunnø's work lies with the rational model, they also assert the benefits of utilising different models and state that their framework does not neatly fit within either the incremental or strictly rational approach but stresses a '...contingent approach'²⁰ in which aspects of more than one model should be used according to context and issue. Likewise, Dye chooses to employ models of analysis and the stagist policy cycle approach to describe and explain public policy, encouraging the reader to utilise these models, both singly

²⁰ Hogwood, B. and Gunn, L. (1985) p.5

and combined, to explain the '...cause and consequences'²¹ of public policies. Both Dye and Hogwood and Gunn act as a linear introduction to the models of policy analysis and are less conceptual or theoretical than some of the academic works on British public policy, most notably Parsons (1995) and Cairney (2002).

Peter Dorey's book *Policy Making in Britain* (2005) is in some ways a natural successor to A.G. Jordan and J.J. Richardson's *British Politics and the Policy Process* (1987). Jordan and Richardson considered that Parliament itself was considerably limited in political decision making, and that political activity was '...largely conducted in policy communities of interested groups and government departments and agencies.'²² In these groups, party politics had limited effect with real power lying within the private worlds of individuals and groups with special interests. Dorey's approach, while not identical, shows echoes of Jordan and Richardson in its focus on the increasing influences seen outside central government in think tanks and policy transfer which lessen the role of Cabinet, ministers and civil servants.

Paul Cairney's *Understanding Public Policy: Theories and Issues* (2002) takes a similar approach to understanding public policy processes, balancing theory with comparative application of theoretical models. Like Dorey, Cairney chooses to highlight in particular the important roles of structure and agency in policy change and the relations between citizens and the political elite that produce action and subsequent policy. His approach is much more theoretical, however, and his focus

²¹ Dye, T. (2007) p.xi

²² Jordan, A.G and Richardson, J.J. (1987) p.viii

remains on the use of multiple theories to examine the policy process from multiple perspectives. Each chapter is concerned with a specific public policy concern and the questions that the application of theory seeks to answer; an approach which leaves less room for the type of applied case study analysis seen in works by Dye (2007), Duncan and Bochel (2007) or McConnell (2010).

This focus on the role of non-governmental actors is perhaps seen most acutely in Charles Lindblom's *The Policy-making Process* (1980) which offers an examination of the policy making process which focusses on the role and distribution of power in that process. The book is divided into two broad concerns; in the first, Lindblom discusses the limits and most effective use of policy analysis and in the second, examines the role and function of the parties who hold power in the policy making process, examining the relationship between citizens and government and the role of interest groups in policy formation.

Cairney's multi-disciplinary approach is also seen in Wayne Parsons's *Public Policy* (1995) which approaches policy studies with a more problem-focussed, multi-method framework. Noting that policy analysis is '...an approach to public policy that aims to integrate and contextualise models and research from those disciplines which have a problem and policy orientation,'²³ Parsons's book mixes analysis of the policy process with the use of analytical techniques in policy making. This results in a less stagist format with reduced emphasis placed on the importance of the policy cycle than seen from authors such as Dye (2007), urging that students of

²³ Parsons, W. (1995) p.xv

the policy process take an iterative, rather than linear, approach to analysis. Parsons' book is divided into four main tenets. Meta-analysis, or the analysis of the activity of analysis itself. 'Meso analysis', the analysis of problem definition, setting of agendas and the way in which policy is formed. 'Decision analysis', the study of the decision making process. And lastly 'delivery analysis', the analysis of evaluation, implementation and change and advocates a non-linear method for application of these analytical tools.

A less theoretical set of tools is offered in Hugh Bochel & Susan Duncan's 2007 *Making Policy in Theory and Practice* which proposes a unique approach to the study of contemporary policy making, offering nine chapters on the core competencies of the modern policy process as defined by the Cabinet Office Strategic Policy Making Team's 1999 report, *Professional policy making for the twenty-first century*. Each chapter, co-authored by an academic and a policy maker or practitioner, is accompanied by extensive case studies and the intent of the book is to review policy making within the context of the public sector. As such it differs from the more theoretical texts, focussing instead on the reality of the policy process under real world conditions and setting it in a wider British context. Like Parsons (1995), Bochel and Duncan view the public policy process as more of a continual, iterative process than sequential or stagist and reject the use of rationalist models of analysis as failing to reflect the situations that policy makers actually face. They argue that the alternative model of 'incrementalism', as developed in Lindblom's 1959 article *The science of 'muddling through'*²⁴ and later in *The*

²⁴ Lindblom, C. (1959) *The science of 'muddling through'* in *Public Administration Review* vol.19, no. 2

Policy-making Process (1980) offers a more realistic picture of the policy environment and therefore a more useful tool which takes into consideration the many and diverse influences that can impact upon the policy process.

Michael Hill's *The Public Policy Process* (2012) is a book similarly less concerned with the policy cycle as with unravelling and analysing the complex, multi-layered process by which public policy is made. Hill's view is that before alternatives or successions to existing policies can be conceived, it is essential to first understand the political processes and actors responsible for shaping those policies, however irrational or beyond rational control they seem to be. Hill compares this to effective engineering, which first must display a good grounding in physics.²⁵ In doing so, Hill makes the distinction between analysis of policy (that is, expanding the understanding of policy) and analysis for policy (improving the quality of policy) and this distinction informs his approach throughout the book. Lindblom also argues that there are "sharp constraints" on how far rational methods can go in providing insight into policy making, due to the inevitable influence of human subjectivity and partisan political processes, and makes a comparison between the effectiveness of analysis and the play of power in making public policy.

Like Parsons (1995), Dorey (2005) offers criticism of the stagist approach as a useful tool for understanding the policy process, questioning its ability to provide a

pp. 79-88

²⁵ Hill, M. (2012) p.6

²⁶ Lindblom, C. (1980) p.vii

consistently realistic account of policy making but ultimately defending its usefulness as a heuristic tool. As such it is the stagist model that Dorey employs in his exploration of the policy process, while maintaining primary focus on the role of core executive actors and how they are key in actively influencing and shaping the policy agenda rather than just responding to it as the sequential model implies.²⁷ Similarly, despite Parsons' assertion that the traditional analytical approach of phases and stages excludes "...considerations of the fact that there is a multiplicity of ways of looking at policy making and policy analysis,"²⁸ it is possible to use the latter three analytical options outlined in the book as a stages model of the analytical process in themselves.

Hill (2012) also cautions the reader not to assume that policy follows the stages of any particular policy model exactly, but that it is less concrete, with inconsistent definitions that vary between actors. As such, he offers no prescription for policy making and notes the difficulty in maintaining distinctions between description and prescription as suggested by Hogwood and Gunn (1985), preferring to remain with discussions of the relevance of various theories of power in examining the policy process. Lindblom (1980) recognises the importance of the power balance between actors, emphasising the impossibility of neutrality in the policy making process and asserting that the power and influence naturally favour the political elite and not the voting public. He argues therefore that the policy making process can only be truly understood when examined through the twin lenses of an analytical (as seen in the

²⁷ Dorey, P. (2005) pp. 25-27

²⁸ Parsons, W. (1995) p.xvii

traditional models) and a political approach (as represented by the play of power). This is unusual in the literature. While other academics note the value of combining theoretical models ó including group theory ó in understanding the process, Lindblom's focus on a solution that overcomes the inequality inherent in these models is unique. Where Hill's approach differs to that of the others however is that it is descriptive in exploring the nature of the policy process²⁹ and as such the book focusses on the processes of implementation and their relevance to public policy. It chooses instead to explore theories and conceptual frameworks over case studies of particular policy areas by seeking to understand the process of implementation and how these processes might be affected or controlled.

Civil Defence Literature

Just as any attempt to evaluate the importance of civil defence policy would be incomplete without reference to its place within the wider context of British policy making, any account concerning military and nuclear strategies of that era which did not seek to examine the significant impact of civil defence policy on such strategies would be missing a crucial element of Cold War history. Civil defence represented more than simply a set of plans for public protection or an additional string to a government's defence bow; it was a mirror held up to the threats posed by the Cold War in which the prevailing ideologies of government, economic circumstances, domestic security concerns and effects of international tensions were illustrated and reflected back as policy.

²⁹ Hill, M. (2012) p.7

As Matthew Grant notes³⁰ the importance of the Cold War on British national political and cultural history has yet to be comprehensively examined. Throughout the Cold War, a significant body of work representing the interaction between the public, civil defence and the nuclear state was published in the United States,³¹ but the same cultural representation and critical investigation into civil defence has not been seen to the same extent in Britain, either during or after the Cold War. Although a significant amount of work on the importance of the defence and military aspect of the conflict has been written in the three decades following the end of the Cold War,³² there remains little of note on British Cold War history from perspectives other than military defence studies detailed above. This absence of investigative analysis on matters relating to civil defence is especially keenly felt.

Writing in 1985 on the state of civil defence literature, Lawrence Vale argues that ð...little has been written to fill the huge gap between in-house official self-congratulation and more critical tracts by advocates of disarmament.ö³³ The end of the Cold War and the slow declassification of official documentation allowed scholars of the post-war period to critically re-evaluate Cold War nuclear histories and the government's plans for public protection. However, the continued absence

³⁰ Grant, M. (2006) p.6

³¹ McEnaney, L. (2000) *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties*, Davis, T. (2007) *Stages of Emergency: Cold War Nuclear Civil Defense*, Grossman, A. (2001) *Neither Dead Nor Red: Civil Defense and American Political Development During the Early Cold War*, Oakes, G. (1995) *The Imaginary War: Civil Defense and American Cold War Culture*, Garrison, D. (2006) *Bracing for Armageddon: Why civil defense never worked* and Roy, S. (2011) *Bomboozled: How the U.S. Government Mised Itself and Its People into Believing They Could Survive a Nuclear Attack*.

³² Arnold, L. (2001) *Britain and the Hydrogen Bomb*, Clarke, B. (2005) *Four Minute Warning: Britain's Cold War* and Greenwood, S. (2000) *Britain and the Cold War, 1945-91*

³³ Vale, L. (1985) *The Limits of Civil Defence: The Evolution of Policies Since 1945 in the United States, Switzerland, Britain and the Soviet Union* (Unpublished PhD thesis : University of Oxford)

of substantial analysis on civil defence policy in the last two decades of the Cold War is represented by a notable gap in the literature and Vale's analysis of the state of the scholarly debate on the subject remains largely true nearly thirty years later.

Secrecy was a major weapon in the Cold War. As McCamley notes, the mystery of the enemy's political prowess formed the crux of political tensions³⁴ and the results of this remains evident in the restricted nature of the material available to researchers even thirty years after the Cold War's end. Historian Peter Hennessy states that official documents relating to public protection were '...the Crown Jewels of genuine official secrecy...because you didn't want the other side to get your war plans.'³⁵ While the significant changes made to the availability of official documentation by the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and the government's move towards a 20 year closure rule are allowing scholars unprecedented access to primary materials.

The nature of civil defence means it touches on several academic fields and this is reflected in the literature which can cover a wide thematic range within a single work. For the purposes of this review, existing civil defence literature will be presented in two broad categories, each of which contains significantly different types of literature often with notably disparate purpose, and within this categorisation individual themes are explored.

³⁴ McCamley, N. (2007) p.279

³⁵ Hennessy, P. (2005) *Nuclear Secrets of 1975 Revealed*

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4565880.stm (accessed 17 January 2006)

The literature grouped within the first of these categories is the investigatory accounts of the machinery and preparations for protection during war time, primarily written during the times in which civil defence provisions in question were most active³⁶. This body of literature is primarily, though not exclusively, partisan or political in nature and ranges from the subtly critical of government policy to the outright condemnatory. The literature in this category, either as a primary or secondary concern, addresses the presentation of civil defence to the public or places the question of public civil defence advice at the forefront. It often displays a partisan bias as it seeks to expose and convince the reader of the infeasibility or questionable wisdom of civil defence or the survivability of nuclear war. This category includes theses and papers by research students examining the contemporaneous political climate of defence, books and articles by journalists and reports by independent investigative committees.

Possibly the most well-known piece of literature in this category, and the one that shaped thinking on civil defence most significantly at the time, is the investigative journalist Duncan Campbell's 1982 book *War Plan UK*,³⁷ a work that could be described as a natural successor to Peter Laurie's 1970 book *Beneath The City Streets*.³⁸ Laurie's work was ground breaking and made use of sensitive material at the time in its frank and open discussion of the existence and necessity of previously hidden sites throughout London such as underground bunkers, food storage depots and government communication posts. Laurie's book was

³⁶ Primarily between 1955 and 1968 and again between 1976 and 1984

³⁷ Campbell, D. (1982) *War Plan UK*

³⁸ Laurie, P. (1970) *Beneath The City Streets: a private enquiry into the nuclear preoccupations of Government*

campaigning against government secrecy and the undemocratic nature of those in power withholding information from the public on nuclear war. He recognised that:

...civil defence, in its higher manifestations, deals with the brute realities of government. In its concrete citadels, hardened cables and curt emergency powers and secrecy it encases the central essence of political power.³⁹

Laurie's work offers a remarkably detailed account of the government's plans for public survival considering that the majority of those plans were highly classified at the time of writing, and this foundation of exposing secret government preparations for war would later be built upon and expanded by Duncan Campbell. It represented not only a break in the secrecy surrounding civil defence planning but the most significant work in a corpus of literature that was united in its open and cynical condemnation of government policies, beginning what one academic review stated at the time to be a 'new trend'⁴⁰ in historical study.

In piecing together a contemporaneous account of government civil defence planning from the sources available to him, Campbell's stated aim was to 'examine the subject through the eyes of central government and its planners.'⁴¹ It becomes evident that his research was driven by the desire to unmask government secrets that he viewed as detrimental to the processes of democracy but more than that, by

³⁹ Laurie, P. (1970) p.vi

⁴⁰ Gurr, T. (1983) *War Plan UK: the Truth about Civil Defence in Britain: A Review* Journal of Peace Research, (20:2) p.201

⁴¹ Campbell, D. (1982) p. 15

what he viewed as the essential dishonesty of civil defence. Campbell believed that post-1968 civil defence was a widespread sham, a superficial policy designed not to protect but to keep the population under control and to suppress dissent⁴² and he is quick to dismiss civil defence advice as little more than propaganda. This was a popular theme that would continue to be seen in the literature until the end of the Cold War and one echoed by Suzanne Wood, writing in 1983, whose primary argument was that the greatest concern of civil defence policy was the control of the survivors.⁴³

Campbell attempts to expose this supposed deceit by detailing the plans and structures of civil defence and critiquing their obvious inadequacies in the face of scientific reports of the expected devastation Britain would face in the event of a nuclear exchange, stating in the introduction to his work that his aim was to 'examine the subject through the eyes of central government and its planners'.⁴⁴ However the limitations of his access to official government documentation is evident in the gaps in his analysis and his reliance on certain key sources such as 1974's *Police Manual of Home Defence*.⁴⁵ Given Campbell's lack of access to primary sources his analyses remains impressive, but less a scholarly account of civil defence and more an attempt to 'expose' the inadequacy of policy. It is also clear that his support lies with the peace movements and non-cooperative nuclear free local authorities in their primarily ideological opposition to the civil defence

⁴² *Ibid.* p.131

⁴³ Wood, S. (1983) 'The Illusion of Protection', in Dorothy Thompson (ed.), *Over our Dead Bodies: Women Against the Bomb*

⁴⁴ Campbell, D. (1983) p.15

⁴⁵ *Police Manual of Home Defence* (1974) HMSO

planning of the 1970-1974 Conservative government and the promotion of alternative, non-nuclear means of defence.

As such, Laurie and Campbell's work must be questioned as accurate historical sources concerning policy creation or the validity and ultimate usefulness of civil defence. They should be read in light of these partisan allegiances, limited access to information and subsequent lack of analysis regarding the policy making decisions which are so crucial to the more nuanced understanding of civil defence policy. There has been no serious academic attempt to build upon these journalistic accounts or offer the kind of policymaking analysis seen in the work of Hennessy or Grant for the post-1972 period.

Several volumes were also written in the 1980s which analyse the effects of a large scale nuclear attack on Britain in the post-1972 period. These offer some conclusions on the perceived inadequacies of policy and, by extension, some speculative comment on the reasons behind this. These are *London Under Attack*⁴⁶, the report of the GLC's Greater London Area War Risk Study; *Nuclear Attack: Civil Defence*⁴⁷ compiled by the Royal United Service Institute for Defence Studies; and Stan Openshaw, Philip Steadman and Owen Greene's 1983 book *Doomsday*.⁴⁸ These volumes stop considerably shy of offering a comprehensive contribution to policy analysis, although *London Under Attack*, written by the Greater London Council (at the time one of the 'nuclear-free' local authorities that

⁴⁶ The Greater London Area War Risk Study (1986) *London Under Attack*

⁴⁷ The Royal United Service Institute for Defence Studies (1982) *Nuclear Attack: Civil Defence*

⁴⁸ Openshaw, S.; Steadman, P. and Greene, O., (1983) *Doomsday: Britain after Nuclear Attack*

refused to comply with central government civil defence training plans) offers some critical analysis of central government civil defence plans but strictly within a limited, unilateralist ideological framework.

The second category contains primarily academic works defined by a more balanced style of analysis, drawn chiefly from primary archival sources and with a greater focus on policy examination and determination. This category is predominantly comprised of the highly-focussed books and papers of research students, contemporary historians and political scientists as well as a small but significant body of work which is broader in scope, but still useful for the civil defence researcher, on particular satellite issues such as weapons policy and architecture and these have been discussed thematically where appropriate.

Scholarly work concerning the post-1968 period has rarely been produced since the contemporaneous research of the early to mid-1980s, when British participation in a globally developing culture of nuclear brinkmanship produced a spate of theses and dissertations concerned with the immediate and seemingly urgent concerns of nuclear war and civil defence. The first and most important of these pieces of doctoral research is that produced by George Crossley in 1985⁴⁹. Crossley's thesis covers a very wide range of Cold War history, from 1957 until 1983 and the analysis of policy determinants reflects the limited availability of official information at the time. However, it remains an invaluable piece of work for its focus on multidimensional influences on civil defence genesis and development.

⁴⁹ Crossley, G. (1985) *The Civil Defence Debate in Britain 1957-83* (unpublished PhD thesis: University of Bradford)

Crossley's major research concern is the detailing of civil defence structures, plans and preparations and is not without personal ideological and political influences and this places his work wholly within the first category of literature on the subject. Like Duncan Campbell's work of 1983, Crossley comes to the debate openly critical of the civil defence policies of the governments in question, often referencing Campbell at length⁵⁰ and devotes large sections of his work to the successes of the peace movements (especially the Nuclear Free Zones) of the time in forcing the government to alter or abandon civil defence exercises. Though Crossley's work displays these imbalances, his research into the political development of policy through three decades is extremely thorough and the analysis he offers as to the cause and effect of policy succession in particular is comprehensive.

Another important thesis in this category is Lawrence Vale's comparative study of civil defence across four countries, produced in 1985⁵¹. Vale's work is long and the research is densely packed with information garnered from government papers and publications. Although just one chapter is given to the development of civil defence policy in Britain, Vale comparatively studies not only policy development between Britain and other countries, but also the causes of policy genesis and influence between pre- and post-1968 Britain which gives considerable insight into the way domestic policy developed in the later stages of the Cold War. In comparison with more recent studies of civil defence in the second category of literature, Vale's work

⁵⁰ Crossley, G. (1985) p.67

⁵¹ Vale, L. (1985) *The Limits of Civil Defence: The Evolution of Policies Since 1945 in the United States, Switzerland, Britain and the Soviet Union* (Unpublished PhD thesis: University of Oxford)

lacks the analysis made possible by later released sources, as does other similar research compiled during this time.⁵² However Vale's conclusion, highlighting the duality of civil defence concerns and the dichotomy and conflict at the heart of its humanitarian and insurance rationales, based on limited availability of relevant primary sources, is insightful and offers a limited but valuable contribution towards the body of British civil defence literature.

M.J. Flannery's doctoral thesis⁵³, written just two years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, offers a theoretical approach to the analysis of British civil defence policy not seen in other bodies of work in this first category which lack a theoretical basis. His thesis spans the best part of a century and focuses not just on protection against nuclear attack but on industrial uses of civil protection. It uses the analytical model of policy change and succession developed by Hogwood and Peters⁵⁴ in an attempt to understand the wide sweeping changes to civil defence seen in the 90 years since its inception and analyses policy development within this theoretical framework. The wide-ranging scope of this study means that this research is rather more overarching than detailed; examples for deeper analysis are provided where they can be demonstrably shown to fit the model used; otherwise the work gallops through large swathes of history without pause for reflection. Where they relate to policies for nuclear public protection however, parts chosen for deeper evaluation are significant and from these a greater theoretical

⁵² See Crossley, G (1985)

⁵³ Flannery, M.J. (1993) *British Civil Protection, The Industrial and the Military Reaction to External and Internal Threats. 1900-1990* (Unpublished PhD thesis - University of Exeter)

⁵⁴ Hogwood, B. and Peters, B. (1982) *The Dynamics of Policy Change: Policy Succession* (Policy Sciences 14 pp.223-24)

understanding of policy development can be obtained which is especially valuable in light of the majority of work on civil defence which is without a theoretical framework.

The next major body of work on civil defence policy, which falls within the second category, was not to begin until more than a decade after the end of the Cold War. Twenty one years after *War Plan UK*, Peter Hennessy's 2003 book *The Secret State*⁵⁵ is the first major work by an historian on the subject of civil defence. It investigates government plans in the event of nuclear war by bringing together a wide range of archival sources and interviews with key political players to provide an outline of the development of Britain's civil defence plans from the start of the Cold War to the 1960s. Hennessy offers a balanced, academically-orientated review of civil defence planning as it rose to prominence in the first half of the Cold War, concentrating on the planning assumptions and government debates connected with policy creation which results in a unique behind the scenes look at policy creation. As a result, this approach is highly revealing in its exploration of the minutiae of certain decisions made by the intelligence community ó and in particular the Joint Intelligence Committee ó that informed policy itself and subsequently provides much insight into the possible influences upon policy decision. This is at the expense of much exploration of the wider context in which policy decisions were taken but it is the first serious attempt at tackling the issue of civil defence and an important starting point for anyone attempting to understand the conflicting pressures shaping policy making at the time.

⁵⁵ Hennessy, P. (2003) *The Secret State: Whitehall and the Cold War*

Matthew Grant, a former student of Hennessy's, goes further into the influences of domestic politics and the British economic landscape on civil defence policy making and builds on Hennessy's work in his monograph *After the Bomb: Civil Defence and Nuclear War in Britain, 1945-68*.⁵⁶ While still examining, as Hennessy does, the pre-1968 period, Grant also makes much of newly accessible archival sources and offers a much more detailed policy study of successive British governments' civil defence plans, arguing, as Hennessy does, that civil defence must be considered a fundamental part of post-World War Two British history. Grant's book evaluates not only the policies that were adopted to meet the threat of nuclear war but the political and economic contexts in which those policies and priorities were decided. He identifies three primary policy phases from the end of World War Two until 1968: the "atomic age," from 1945 to 1954; the "thermonuclear age," from 1954 to 1960; and lastly the "deterrent age," from 1960 to 1968, and evaluates policy making through the distinct and different government attitudes towards civil defence during these phases.

It is unique amongst studies of civil defence covering the early Cold War period as an investigation into the external factors shaping decision making, framing civil defence as a set of policies that can only be understood as reactions to constantly shifting developments in international tensions, domestic political concerns and often fraught economic circumstances. It offers a systematic analysis of the political debates surrounding policy at the time, detailing how these debates led to

⁵⁶ Grant, M. (2009) *After The Bomb: Civil Defence and Nuclear War in Britain, 1945-68*

shifts in policy concerns and the framework within which he sets this analysis succeeds in unravelling a complex policy environment. Grant's work is a key text in understanding how the civil defence debate of the post-war period influences later policy development, however, it is not concerned with the change and development of civil defence after it was reactivated in 1972 and as such is different from this thesis in that it addresses a different historical period.

Rose Farrell notes⁵⁷ that at the beginning of the new millennium many previously classified Cold War structures such as bunkers, communication posts and regional government headquarters were made known and, in some cases, opened for public viewing or even sold. As a consequence much of the literature on civil defence at this time is grounded in the architecture and other physical manifestations of the Cold War, taking these mysterious and compelling buildings as their framework. The two most significant publications within this theme are Bob Clarke's *Four Minute Warning*⁵⁸ and N.J. McCamley's *Cold War Secret Nuclear Bunkers*⁵⁹.

Both these works describe the development of the physical infrastructure and institutional structures of Britain's nuclear security during the Cold War and together they build a detailed picture of the machinery of government after 1968. Both Clarke and McCamley are sceptical about the level of protection that civil defence policies afforded the public, while Campbell attributes this to successive governments' desire to manage dissent. These later critiques, which fall squarely

⁵⁷ Farrell, R. (2009) *The Civil Defence Hiatus: A Rediscovery of Nuclear Civil Defence Policy 1968-1983* p. 8 (unpublished BA dissertation: University of Bristol)

⁵⁸ Clarke, B. (2005) *Four Minute Warning: Britain's Cold War*

⁵⁹ McCamley, N.J. (2002) *Cold War Secret Nuclear Bunkers*

into the second category of civil defence literature, primarily attribute the perceived lack of humanitarian focus in late Cold War civil defence to a shift in policy function towards an adjunctive role in supporting a nuclear defence and deterrence, rather than one of public control.⁶⁰

Both authors draw conclusions about policy motivations from the structures that were commissioned as a result of those policies and do not seek to explore any further influences in policy making. Consequently these conclusions are naturally limited because, as Farrell observes, the outcome of a policy can only go so far in displaying the full intent behind that outcome.⁶¹ Where such influences are acknowledged they are done so in passing, discussed fleetingly and without any significant insight. In-depth policy analysis is missing and that absence is felt as a clear indication of the need to close that gap in civil defence policy literature.

In addition to published secondary sources, there are also several other important works concerning the developmental influences of late Cold War civil defence in the form of unpublished theses, essays and undergraduate dissertations. As with their published counterparts, literature in the academic sphere has been primarily concerned with civil defence policy as seen before the 1968 stand down.

The 2009 doctoral thesis of Melissa Smith⁶² is the most recent academic work on the subject of civil defence in the pre-1968 period, offering both a policy driven,

⁶⁰ Clarke, B. (2005) p.63

⁶¹ Farrell, R. (2009) p.9

⁶² Smith, M. (2009) *Planning for the last Time: Government Science, Civil Defence and the Public 1945-68* (Unpublished PhD thesis - University of Manchester)

post-Cold War analysis of civil defence focussing on the role of government scientific advisors and the public response to civil defence during the pre-1968 period. While Smith's scope of focus is outside that of this thesis, she provides enlightening historical and theoretical context based on previously unavailable sources. This literature is key to understanding historical trends in the development of policies in the post-1968 period. Additionally, three articles written since 2000, with the benefit of more readily accessible archival sources, shed light on three of the most important and influential events on civil defence policy change and progression in the later Cold War. Grant, writing on the Sandys White Paper⁶³; Smith, on propaganda and public information⁶⁴ and Jeff Hughes on the Strath Report⁶⁵.

Grant explores the impact of the Sandys Defence White Paper, a key document in Britain's Cold War history. Grant's detailed article argues that in failing to make an adequate case for civil defence while stressing the need for a credible deterrent strategy, the Paper highlighted what critics of government nuclear policy saw as an inability to protect the population from nuclear attack. This was a criticism that was to have policy influence right up until the end of the Cold War. In a short but precise article, Smith tackles the issue of government-produced education and information materials, assessing their foundations, agendas and influences in themes that are built upon in her doctoral thesis. She argues that the dissonance

⁶³ Grant, M. (2008) *Home Defence and the Sandys Defence White Paper 1957* (Journal of Strategic Studies, vol. 31(6) pp.925-949)

⁶⁴ Smith, M. (2009) *'What to do if it happens': planners, pamphlets and propaganda in the age of the H-bomb* (Endeavour, vol. 33(2) pp.60-64)

⁶⁵ Hughes, J. (2003) *The Strath Report: Britain Confronts the H-Bomb 1954-1955* (History and Technology, vol. 19(3) pp.257-275)

between the information given to the public on the issue of self-protection and the reality of civil defence spending and provision led to the undermining of civil protection policy for years to come. She argues that the disparity was responsible for the damage to the credibility of civil defence by the later Protect & Survive campaign and peace groups who used it as a campaigning tool.

Finally, Hughes offers a historically based analysis of the previously classified Strath Report, its genesis, compilation and ramifications. The Report had profoundly pessimistic conclusions on civil defence policy in its portrayal of the widespread destruction that would devastate Britain in the event of a nuclear exchange. Hughes extrapolates the far-reaching changes that resulted from the Report, not only in successive governments' preparations for war but in attempts to suppress public discussion on the true risk and possible consequences of nuclear strategy that would continue for the following three decades.

The bulk of the literature on civil defence is concerned with civil defence in either its pre-1968 stand down phase or after its reactivation as a policy concern in 1972. There is a notable exception, however, in the unpublished BA dissertation by Rose Farrell.⁶⁶ It concerns that most neglected period in civil defence history, where the literature is at its thinnest, the period between the standing down of civil defence in 1968 and the warming of the Cold War in the early 1980s. Farrell offers a modern, historically-minded analysis of the period using recently released archival sources

⁶⁶ Farrell, R. (2009) *The Civil Defence Hiatus: A Rediscovery of Nuclear Civil Defence Policy 1968-1983* (Unpublished BA dissertation - University of Bristol)

and raises questions as to what degree policy making was determined by political agendas. Additionally, there is some exploration of the dichotomy between the political rhetoric of civil defence and what was actually provided to the public for means of protection.

Mention should also be made of the series of *UK Nuclear History Working Papers* produced by Robin Woolven for the British Nuclear History groups of the Mountbatten Centre for International Studies, University of Southampton. In particular, the third paper of this series⁶⁷ concerned with the interplay of the British nuclear weapons programme and civil defence policies covering the period of civil defence hiatus from 1968 to 1972 is useful in understanding the often complex relationships between defence, deterrent and public protection that informed nuclear policy development during the 1970s and 1980s.

A theme explored in the literature in the 1980s is the interaction of policy and local government; local councils during this time were often ideological battlegrounds in which many skirmishes with central government were played out, and civil defence was no exception to this.⁶⁸ Lexa Hillard's 1986 article *Local Government, Civil Defence and Emergency Planning: Heading for Disaster?*⁶⁹ written as civil defence began the end of its slow segue towards emergency planning, critically investigates the legislative and operational framework of local authority civil defence plans and

⁶⁷ Woolven, R. (2007) *Civil Defence and Nuclear Weapons 1960-1974* (UK Nuclear History Working Paper No. 3)

⁶⁸ See chapter 5 for more information on local government and civil defence.

⁶⁹ Hilliard, L. (1986) *Local Government, Civil Defence and Emergency Planning: Heading For Disaster?* (Modern Law Review, vol. 4 pp.476-488)

offers an enlightening insight into the ways in which central government used the law to quash local government dissent over participation in civil defence activities. The interaction between central and local governments on the issue of civil defence is also seen in the thesis of George Crossley, who demonstrates in detail the direct effect that ideologically and financially motivated councils had on policy development in their refusal to comply with planning.⁷⁰

The various peace movements of the 1970s and 1980s cannot be said to have spoken with one voice or to have responded in the same way to the threat of nuclear weapons and the development and promotion of civil defence. There are few bodies of work which offer a thorough contextualisation to the debate on which peace and protest groups used civil defence as a motivating tool and can be said to have had influence in the policy making sphere. Richard Taylor's *Against The Bomb: the British Peace Movement 1958-1965* and Mark Phythian's *CND's Cold War* are both notable examples of the literature of peace groups which offer an overview of their activities and origins. But like much of the literature on peace groups and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in particular they focus on the personal histories and the internal politics and ideologies of these groups and fail to relate the groups' activities to the wider political and policy making context.

However, to study the work of CND in response to civil defence policy is to understand one of the ways in which that policy impacted upon the public and how

⁷⁰ Crossley, G. (1983) pp.90-110

that reaction subsequently influenced policy. Several pieces of literature help to contextualise the analysis of civil defence advice as a tool of propaganda or persuasion. As Melissa Smith notes, considering the reactions of particular sections of the population can provide a useful insight into the reception of some of the publicity issued by the government.⁷¹ To peace groups such as CND, civil defence was also a tool to further the cause of disarmament.

Chapter Discussion

Chapter 2 of this thesis provides historical contextualisation in analysing how World War Two strategies influenced the concept and planning of home defence. It examines the Strath Report of 1955⁷² and evaluates the historical basis for change in policy concerns away from World War Two models and analyses the lasting results of the Padmore Working Party's 1954 investigation into the national economy in war. The redistribution of power in the 1950s and the increased role of local authorities in the political hierarchy will be detailed as a precursor to later discussion on local authority rebellion. The chapter ends with analysis of the 1965 review of home defence⁷³ and the factors that led to the winding down of civil defence provision in 1968 under Labour.

Chapter 3 is the first of three chapters concerned with the three main areas of potential policy influence, focussing on economic influences. It starts with an

⁷¹ Smith, M. (2009) p.51

⁷² The National Archives (TNA): CAB 134/940, HDC (55) 3 *The Defence Implications of Fall-Out from a Hydrogen Bomb. Report of a Group of Officials* (8 March 1955)

⁷³ THA: Cmnd.2270 *Statement on Defence* 1965

identification of the factors that served to establish a new policy climate in 1972 and develops with an analysis of the relative decline in civil defence spending in the 1970s and early 1980s. It concludes with an evaluation on whether the state of the economy can be said to be directly linked to the policy of 'no evacuation, no shelter' of the time.

Chapter 4 explores ideological factors, beginning with the new strategies for civil defence seen in the 1970s and 1980s and the emergence of policy based on the concepts of deterrence and strong national defence. This development of policy is illustrated by the rapid changes in civil defence provision under the Thatcher governments and a comparison and analysis of cause will be made between aggressive Conservative defence policies and their weak civil defence position. The critical response to civil defence will be discussed and analysis made of Labour and Liberal policies in opposition (both nationally and locally).

Chapter 5 discusses influences external to central government. It starts by mapping international developments/tensions against UK policy and measures the influence of United States and European administrations and civil defence models on the development of policies, with a focus on the nuclear brinkmanship of the late 1970s and early 1980s. It will finish by looking briefly at the role of the Scientific Advisory Branch and, more significantly, peace movements (with particular focus on the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) to determine what influence these organisations may have had on policy development.

The conclusion draws together the main findings from the previous chapters and analyses the effects of each influence of the genesis and development of civil defence policy.

Chapter 2

The Historical Context

This chapter explores the genesis of modern civil defence policy in Britain and the emergence of civil defence as protection against nuclear attack in the post-World War Two period up until civil defence's stand-down in 1968. It provides historical context for the main argument of this thesis and explores to what extent economic, ideological and external factors were evident as precedents for civil defence policy from 1972.

The chapter is primarily concerned with the origin and post-War development of Cold War civil defence as defined by the influential humanitarian World War Two strategies. It explores technological catalysts such as the explosion of the first atomic bomb and how these were influential in creating the policy climate in which the 1948 *Civil Defence Act* was passed and how policy strategies resulting from the Act became subject to increasing economic and ideological pressures. The second part of the chapter, *The Strath Report*, evaluates the historical basis for change in policy concerns which formed the basis of civil defence planning throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, analysing the influence of the Report on subsequent models of civil defence.

This is followed by *The Sandys Defence White Paper* which analyses its lasting results and how these findings echoed through policy making in later decades. The cementing of civil defence as a subsidiary of the deterrence posture is explored and the final shift away from community-based policy making examined. In *Local Authority Dissent and the Anti-Nuclear Movement*, the effects of central

government policy on local authorities are analysed. The ideological considerations that led to the rebellion of certain local authorities, as well as the role of civil defence policy in creating and shaping the anti-nuclear movement, is evaluated. Civil defence policy as a catalyst for the newly-emerging nuclear disarmament movement is explored and the influence of this on policy making is detailed.

In the last part of the chapter, *Home Defence Reviews of the 1960s*, the move from the traditional ideas of civil defence as public protection is examined through the 1960 and 1965 Reviews. The civil defence response to the Cuban Missile Crisis is highlighted as an example of the shift in policy priorities and a comparison made against the official information on civil defence for public consumption. In *The Labour Party and Civil Defence 1945-1972*, the party's attitude towards the nuclear deterrent and civil defence is traced from its roots in 1947 until the end of the 1960s and the influence of ideological differences in policy consultation explored. It analyses the economic factors behind the civil defence policy decision making of the 1964-1970 Labour administration and the effect this had on public provision. Lastly *The 1968 Stand Down* investigates the economic and external factors that led to the winding down of civil defence provision in 1968 under the Labour government of Harold Wilson, exploring the ideological criticism that met this decision.

The Genesis of Modern Civil Defence Policy

With the advent of World War Two and the increasing sophistication of warfare technology, the necessity for a policy of civil defence for the British population on home soil was impressed upon the government as the domestic threat from war became more real. Britain's experience of the 1917-8 air raids had resulted in approximately 1,500 killed in just over 100 raids. In the early 1930s government estimates calculated that 600,000 would be killed and 1.2 million injured in air raids in a future war.⁷⁴ In the inter-war years, a report set out by the Air Raid Precautions committee recommended that future planning for public protection be comprised of three strands: warning, protection and rescue.⁷⁵

Despite the government's estimation that Britain could face a greater number of bombs per day than it saw in the entire four years of the previous war⁷⁶, attempting to construct measures to enshrine these recommendations for public protection in law was not without difficulties. The government faced threats for which it had little previous experience, a challenge that would haunt civil defence planning until the end of the Cold War. In a 1937 House of Commons debate concerning public protection against the increased threat from the skies, the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, confessed:

...in my own experience I have never found a more baffling problem of defence than the problem of air raid precautions. There is the question on what sort of scale should you make your plans. What

⁷⁴ Caddick-Adams, P. (2005) p.8

⁷⁵ O'Brian, T. (1955) p.17

⁷⁶ Hoare, S. HC Deb, 29 October 1937, vol. 328, cc.425-508

should be the exact relations between the central government and the local authorities? What are the risks against which we are trying to protect the country? All these questions are new and very complicated.⁷⁷

Hoare's planning culminated in the Air Raid Precautions Act 1937, which required local authorities to make schemes for neutralizing, reducing or repairing the effects of enemy action against the civilian population. This was brought into practice over the following two years. The model of civil defence during this time, while also designed to protect industry and infrastructure, was essentially based around the humanitarian policies of shelter, evacuation and the wardens and warning system of the Air Raid Precautions⁷⁸. The modern age of civil defence had begun, and it heralded a ð...close interlocking of military and civil defence, if the two can ever be anything but indivisible.ö⁷⁹

With the use of atomic weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki towards the end of World War Two, it would become clear that a new model of public protection to face a new and poorly understood threat would become necessary. Newly elected Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee, speaking to the Atomic Energy Committee in 1945, realised the extent of Britain's leap into the unknown when he said:

It is difficult for people to adjust their minds to an entirely new situation... it is infinitely harder for people to realise that even the modern conception of war to which in my lifetime we have become

⁷⁷ Hoare, S. HC Deb, 29 October 1937, vol. 328, cc.425-508

⁷⁸ TNA: HO 45/17610 *Air Raid Precautions Act 1937*

⁷⁹ Johnson, F. (1960) p.254

accustomed is now completely out of date.⁸⁰

The explosion of the first Soviet atomic bomb in August 1949, only four years after the end of World War Two, also forced the British government to consider how the potential effects on Britain of this new and catastrophic weapon could be moderated and how the British people could be protected from the consequences of its use. Just months after the first Soviet test, the civil defence question was brought back into focus. In a House of Commons debate on defence expenditure in November 1949, Labour MP Emrys Hughes questioned what the Soviet development of the atomic bomb would mean for the defence of the British population:

The other night, when we were debating the Civil Defence Regulations, I quoted some figures from a Government committee. This Government committee, which had investigated what happened in the bombing of the Japanese towns, estimated that we could expect from the dropping of one atom bomb at least 50,000 dead; the destruction of property would be immense, and the estimate was that 400,000 houses would be destroyed by one atom bomb of the type that was dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since then the President of the United States has told us that they have atom bombs immensely more powerful. How has that affected our Defence Estimates? Can the Secretary of State for War tell us how much of the £800 million is actually to be devoted to the protection of the civilian population in this country?⁸¹

The Under Secretary of State for War, Michael Stewart, gave an oblique circular response that would become familiar over the subsequent decades. He stated that

⁸⁰ TNA: CAB 130/3 *Atomic Energy Committee* (28th August 1945) *Memorandum to the Prime Minister*

⁸¹ Hughes, E. HC Deb, 11 November 1949, vol. 469, cc.1641-52

no answer could be given as policy which reduced the chances of nuclear weapons being used was a policy in and of itself a policy of civilian protection.⁸²

These questions would remain contentious subjects in the political arena for the next forty years. Britain's geographical location close to the Soviet Union and ideological similarities with the United States led to it being used as a storage and launch base for American nuclear weapons.⁸³ It was clear from early in the Cold War that Britain was very much a potential target for the Soviet Union and vulnerable to attack. When Britain started to develop its own nuclear capabilities at the end of the 1950s, it became a target in its own right.

The destruction that would be wrought in the event of a nuclear exchange involving a small, densely populated country such as Britain would have been widespread.⁸⁴ The upshot being that questions of protection and regeneration would be asked anew by each successive government until the end of the Cold War.

Post-World War Two Civil Defence Policy

In the aftermath of the Second World War, although a skeleton staff remained, the majority of civil defence provisions in Britain were stood down. When Labour won the general election in 1945 the Chiefs of Staff agreed with the government that no

⁸² Stewart, M. HC Deb, 11 November 1949, vol. 469, cc.1641-52

⁸³ Clarke, B. (2005) p.9

⁸⁴ For a more thorough discussion of the effects of nuclear war in Britain, see Glasstone S. and Jolan, P. *The Effects of Nuclear Weapons* (1977)

major war was likely in Europe for at least a decade.⁸⁵ Less than a year later however, Churchill, now leader of the opposition, was declaring that an iron curtain had descended across the Continent and increasing diplomatic tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union meant that the Chiefs of Staff assumption was looking less than assured. In *The Bomb: A Life*, Gerard De Groot states:

In the nuclear arena, Great Britain has always behaved like the boy who shows up at a party in flared trousers, only to discover that everyone else has returned to straight legs. This tendency to miss the beat was especially apparent in the approach to civil defence.⁸⁶

This is a view that was shared by opponents of the government's plans for civil protection in light of the new nuclear threat. In 1948, The Joint Intelligence Committee suggested that the USSR might produce their first atomic weapon as early as 1951.⁸⁷ However a 1948 Civil Defence Committee paper supposed that the USSR would not be in possession of atomic weapons until around 1957 and then only in limited numbers, envisioning a future war in which nuclear weapons would play only a minor role alongside the conventional explosive weapons seen in World War Two.⁸⁸ Be that as it may, the eventual explosion of the first Soviet atom bomb in 1949 - as well as later successful detonations of UK and US thermonuclear devices in 1952 - provided much of the impetus for the expansion of a new civil defence programme. The sheer destructive force of these new weapons attracted attention from the public and questions for the government. Planning proceeded

⁸⁵ Essex-Lopresti, T. (2005) p.18

⁸⁶ De Groot, G. (2005) p.31

⁸⁷ Hennessy, P. (2003) p.32

⁸⁸ TNA: CAB 134/82 CDC(48)10 *Background and Policy for Civil Defence Planning 07/07/1948*

along the lines seen during World War Two with its reliance on shelter and evacuation.

Conservative critics of this approach accused the government of failing to adequately respond to the potential threat posed by atomic weapons and urged politicians of all parties to back motions that increased spending, recruitment and resources towards civil defence as a fourth arm of a broader defence strategy.⁸⁹ Others decried what they viewed as a steadily growing acceptance of nuclear weapons, urging the government to “...end the agreement by which American bomber bases are stationed in Britain, and to initiate and support disarmament proposals which will make substantial expenditure on inadequate civil defence measures unnecessary.”⁹⁰

After the Berlin Crisis of 1948, the Ministry of Defence commissioned the newly-revived Royal Observer Corps to make an assessment of new civil defence requirements in the event of war. As a result of this consultation and against a background of international uncertainty, the 1948 *Civil Defence Act* was passed, which remains to this day the principal statute concerning civil defence measures.

The Act defined civil defence as:

...including any measure not amounting to actual combat for affording defence against any form of hostile attack by a foreign power or for depriving any form of attack by a foreign power of the

⁸⁹ Wilson, G HC Deb, 18 July 1952, vol. 503, cc.2473-560

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

whole or part of its effect, whether the measures are taken before, at or after the time of the attack⁹¹

and requested that the designated Minister be responsible for the following:

- (a) the organisation, formation, maintenance, equipment and training of civil defence forces and services;
- (b) the organisation, equipment and training for civil defence purposes of police forces, fire brigades and employees of local or police authorities employed primarily for purposes other than civil defence purposes;
- (c) the instruction of members of the public in civil defence and their equipment for the purposes of civil defence;
- (d) the provision, storage and maintenance of commodities and things required for civil defence; and
- (e) the provision, construction, maintenance or alteration of premises, structures or excavations required for civil defence and the doing of any other work required for civil defence.⁹²

The humanitarian principles of rescue and recovery seen in the World War Two model are very much evident in the wording of the Act, with its emphasis on the creation and organisation of civil defence services that played such a crucial role in civilian protection during World War Two and the recognition of the usefulness of public information and training that was seen in detailed and widespread wartime information campaigns. Nevertheless, portents of how civil defence would later come to be regarded could be heard from the Conservative backbenches in the same year, with Henry Legge-Bourke MP inquiring:

Would the Under-Secretary say that the Government accept the principle that if Civil Defence is in a proper state of preparedness it

⁹¹ *Civil Defence Act 1948* <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/12-13-14/5/contents> (accessed 29 November 2007)

⁹² *Ibid.*

can, in fact, act as a deterrent to war, and have an effect before war begins?⁹³

The Under-Secretary to the Foreign Office, Kenneth Younger, agreed, stating that preparations 'must of necessity apply to a period before war has broken out'⁹⁴ although he chose not to say how far in advance of any conflict this might be.

Following the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, civil defence planning was accelerated and, as Grant shows, the Official Committee on Civil Defence of May 1950 recommended that £137 million be spent over four years, principally on communications, warning systems, the training of volunteers and the stockpiling of food and equipment.⁹⁵ This was considered unsatisfactory by the Home Office who considered that the budget should be increased to allow for shelter building. This was countered by the Chiefs of Staff, who argued that expenditure should be concentrated on those measures which would most contribute towards the 'preparedness of the armed forces'.⁹⁶ Just two years later the House of Commons Select Committee on Estimates noted that: '...such plans as they had were destroyed by successive budgetary restrictions and policy decisions regarding expenditure on equipment and capital works.'⁹⁷ Such economic concerns and persisting, often ideologically-driven conflicts between spending on active versus passive modes of defence were to dog civil defence policy until the end of the Cold War. As Smith notes, the conflict between spending on military forms of defence

⁹³ Legge-Bourke, H. HC Deb, 22 March 1948, vol. 448, cc.2648-705

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Grant, M. (2009) p.40

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p.43

⁹⁷ *First Report from the Select Committee on Estimates 1953-54*

(including deterrence) and public defence is key to understanding much of the development of civil defence policy⁹⁸ and highlights the core nature of civil defence as not just one set of unified plans but as a series of interconnected, multi-perspective policies.

In addition to the moral and political questions raised by the ownership of such weapons, the Conservative government of 1951-55 faced major new home defence policy issues. Policy of the time was based almost entirely on specifications and practice developed and maintained during World War Two and was designed to provide Britain with the ability to endure a nuclear war lasting months, with an emphasis on maintaining the UK as a forward air base for as long as possible.⁹⁹ As Duncan Campbell states:

British defence planners soon came to accept that future war would be prolonged and involve extensive use of nuclear weapons. It is often forgotten in the present age that the idea of a limited nuclear war, involving only a few hours of exchanging nuclear salvos, is a wholly modern concept. The planners of 1950 and 1960 had a perception of war which was partly based on the long campaigns of previous wars.¹⁰⁰

Provisions at this time centred on the evacuation and dispersal of over ten million people in priority classes, including pregnant women and children under sixteen. Advertisements were placed in national newspapers and leaflets produced for distribution amongst the population, stressing the revived slogan that 'Civil

⁹⁸ Smith, M. (2011) p.70

⁹⁹ Campbell, D. (1983) p.71

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p.72

Defence is Common Sense',¹⁰¹ to educate the public at large about their new role in peacetime civil defence preparedness and to encourage people to sign up for civil defence training. These plans were severely criticised in a 1953 report from the House of Commons Select Committee on Estimates, which condemned the organisation of civil defence as '...extravagant and inefficient, with uncertain training standards, poor leadership and a proliferating and top-heavy Home Office bureaucracy.'¹⁰² In the same year, a parliamentary committee was convened to consider the national economy in war. Led by Treasury official Thomas Padmore, the committee sought to investigate the continuation and machinery of government during any future war.¹⁰³

With the Soviet development and testing of the hydrogen bomb and the results of US testing, the increased capabilities of these new weapons made it clear that the pattern of civil defence based on the Second World War model had to be reconstructed. The threat of radioactive fallout raised questions about the viability of Britain's existing defence plans as the government acknowledged the hydrogen bomb's superior capacity for destruction over the (relatively) limited destructive power of the atomic bomb and the need for civil defence to reflect this. As the Secretary of State for Scotland, James Stuart, acknowledged in a Commons debate in April 1954, '...instructions to Civil Defence authorities are being reviewed in the light of the development of atomic weapons of all types.'¹⁰⁴ By the mid-1950s, the

¹⁰¹ See appendix A

¹⁰² Campbell, D. (1983) p. 76

¹⁰³ Brooke, H. HC Deb, 23 March 1956, vol. 550, cc.1689-734

¹⁰⁴ Stuart, J. HC Deb, 06 April 1954, vol. 526, cc.171-2

extent of the destructive capability of the hydrogen bomb was fully realised and civil defence went through a degree of technologically-driven change, the emphasis of nuclear policy moving from a rationale of protection to one of deterrence. Sir Norman Brook, Cabinet Secretary stated in 1954 that;

The development of this bomb had now reached a stage which required us to re-assess first, our foreign policy and general strategy and, thereafter, the 'size and shape' of the Armed Forces, our civil defence policy and our atomic weapons programme.¹⁰⁵

The view of Sir Norman concerning the need for a re-evaluation of Britain's thinking on defence was in accordance with conclusions drawn by the government's 1954 White Paper on Defence which highlighted the new duality of civilian defence. The need for a revaluation of policy appeared evident. Civil defence was no longer only a humanitarian concern, but one also closely linked to the concept of deterrence and, as such, open to the influence of the ideology of the political party in power. As the Paper stated: ð...the emergence of the thermonuclear bomb has overshadowed all else. Nevertheless our problem is still fundamentally a dual one. We have to prepare for the risk of war and so prevent it.ö¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Hennessy, P. (2002) p.50 TNA: CAB 130/101 *Note of a meeting held in Sir Norman Brook's room* 12 March 1954

¹⁰⁶ THA: Cmnd.9075 *Statement on Defence 1954*

The Strath Report

The Attlee Labour government had won a landslide in 1945 on the promise of an extensive welfare system, but the financial commitment required to fulfil this promise plus spiralling defence costs meant the government began to look to atomic weapons as offering a cheaper alternative to traditional methods of defence.¹⁰⁷ The United States' Atomic Energy Act of 1946 (McMahon Act) determined how the superpower would control and manage the nuclear technology it had jointly developed with its wartime allies, Britain and Canada. Implementing the McMahon Act, which excluded the United States' allies from receiving any information or data, created a substantial rift between the United States and Britain¹⁰⁸ and the United Kingdom faced the decision to create a separate atomic programme from the United States, an early influence of external actors on the development of British policy.

Britain's nuclear programme started in 1946 with the creation of the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell, although it was not until January 1947 that a formal decision to create the bomb was made.¹⁰⁹ Some in government were opposed to the huge financial commitment the hydrogen bomb represented, warning of an extremely serious economic and financial situation in two to three years¹¹⁰. This was highlighted by Hennessy, who noted that in the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Atomic Energy on the 25th October 1946, ministers

¹⁰⁷ Cawood, I. (2005) p.39

¹⁰⁸ Calder, R. (1953) pp. 303-6

¹⁰⁹ McIntyre, D. (2006) p.1

¹¹⁰ TNA: CAB 130/2. *GEN 75/15th meeting* (25 October 1946)

Hugh Dalton from the Treasury and Stafford Cripps from the Board of Trade were well on the way to talking out the bomb project¹¹¹ on economic grounds. Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary in Clement Attlee's post-war government, recognised however that power lay with the possession of this new nuclear weapons technology which would ensure Britain's continued role on the world stage. Referring to the condescending attitude of the nuclear-armed Americans, Bevin famously stated:

I don't want any other foreign secretary of this country to be talked to or at by a secretary of state in the United States as I have just had in my discussions with Mr Byrnes. We've got to have this thing over here whatever it costs. We've got to have the bloody Union Jack on top of it.¹¹²

In the official minutes of this crucial meeting the opposing forces at work, represented by the Treasury and Bevin, in reaching that monumental decision were recorded as follows:

In discussion it was urged that we must consider seriously whether we could afford to divert from civilian consumption and the restoration of our balance of payments, the economic resources required for a project on this scale. Unless present trends were reversed we might find ourselves faced with an extremely serious economic and financial situation in two or three years' time.

On the other hand it was argued that we could not afford to be left behind in a field which was of such revolutionary importance from an industrial, no less than from a military point of view. Our prestige in the world, as well as our chances of securing American co-

¹¹¹ Hennessy, P. (2011) p.7 <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-information-office/2011%20Lord%20Hennessy%20Robing%20Room%20Lecture%20.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2013)

¹¹² Hennessy, P. (2007) p.48

operation would both suffer if we did not exploit to the full a discovery in which we had played a leading part at the outset.¹¹³

Six years later in 1952 the Conservative Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, announced that the first atomic test would occur before the end of the year and on 3rd October 1952 the first British atomic device was tested. As Goldberg argues, the test resulted from '...a conjunction of military, technological, political, economic and psychological currents in 1952 that persuaded the Churchill Government, newly returned to power, to adopt the nuclear deterrent strategy and accept the consequences.'¹¹⁴ These currents can often be seen converging and diverging throughout Britain's subsequent integrated defence strategy and in turn, decisions on civil defence - until the end of the Cold War.

Six months after the successful test, Lord Cherwell, scientific advisor to Churchill, reported 'I think we know how to make an H-bomb'¹¹⁵ The initiative to force a decision on the hydrogen bomb however came from Cabinet secretary Sir Norman Brook, chair of the Home Defence Committee. Realising that the hydrogen bomb made existing defence planning obsolete, a series of meetings with the Chiefs of Staff was convened, the outcome of which was the report of the Working Party on the Operational Use of Atomic Weapons entitled *Hydrogen bomb research and production in the United Kingdom*.¹¹⁶ The report was submitted to the Defence Policy Committee in June 1954, which recommended that a programme

¹¹³ TNA: CAB 130/2, GEN 75/15th Meeting, 25 October 1946

¹¹⁴ Goldberg, A. (1964) p.409

¹¹⁵ Arnold, L. (2001) p.37.

¹¹⁶ TNA: DEFE 32/4 COS *Committee Annex to COS(54) 66th meeting* (2 June 1954)

be initiated to develop a hydrogen bomb.¹¹⁷

It was not just existing military defence planning that the advent of the hydrogen bomb threatened to render obsolete. McIntyre argues that Britain's defence policy at the time of atomic weapons development was 'strongly influenced by economic considerations, as well as by military planning and the strong political desire to maintain a strong international profile.'¹¹⁸ These factors can also be seen in the government's strategic reaction to civil defence planning. In December 1954, a committee of civil servants was convened led by the head of the Cabinet Office Central War Plans Secretariat, William Strath.¹¹⁹ The purpose of this committee was to explore the implications of the hydrogen bomb for Britain and to determine to what extent the country could survive a thermonuclear attack. Comprised of scientists, military personnel and economists the committee sat for three months drawing up a detailed picture of how British life would be after war involving the effects of ten H-bombs of ten megatons each dropped on British centres of population.¹²⁰

The report placed particular emphasis on planning for protection of the public from the newly-realised threat of fallout, and '...paid special attention to shelter and evacuation policy, since planning cannot proceed in many other fields until

¹¹⁷ For comprehensive accounts of the development of Britain's atomic weapons, see Gowing, M. (1974) *Independence and Deterrence: Britain and Atomic Energy 1945-1952. Vol. 1 Policy Making and Vol. 2 Policy Execution* and Arnold, L. (2001) *Britain and the H-Bomb*.

¹¹⁸ McIntyre, D. (2006) p.5

¹¹⁹ Hennessy, P. (2002) p.131

¹²⁰ Hughes, J. (2003) p.258

decisions have been reached on these two inter-related subjects.¹²¹ As historian Jeff Hughes argues, '...the threat of fallout necessitated a re-conceptualisation of the British state: now for war planning purposes it had to be imagined as a series of zones of contaminated risk mapped by imagined fall-out plumes in a '...hyper-real post-attack topography.'¹²² Policy makers were now obliged to deal not only with the threat of a weapon with the destructive potential far in advance of anything that could have been imagined during the last mass organisation of civil defence of World War Two, but with creating a strategy to deal with danger that could often neither be seen or heard.

The resulting report issued to ministers in March 1955¹²³ was a pivotal event in British civil defence planning. It reviewed a wide range of issues from civil defence to the means of ensuring the continuation of the machinery of government and its findings were bleak.¹²⁴ A far-reaching review of civil defence was recommended, and Strath noted that the risk to centres of high population could be reduced by a combination of shelter, evacuation and dispersal.¹²⁵ The report lists 62 points of recommendation, including the necessity of evacuation plans for high-risk individuals such as women, children, the elderly and infirm as well as key individuals necessary to continue the functions of government and essential services. Home shelters were recommended for those areas that fell outside

¹²¹ TNA: CAB 134/940, HDC (55) 3 *The Defence Implications of Fall-Out from a Hydrogen Bomb. Report of a Group of Officials 8 March 1955* (hereafter 'Strath Report') p.2

¹²² Hughes, J. (2003) p.263

¹²³ TNA: CAB 134/940, HDC (55) Strath (8 March 1955)

¹²⁴ For a detailed summary of the contents of the Strath Report see Grant, M. (2009) p. 92-97

¹²⁵ TNA: CAB 134/940, HDC (55) 3 Strath (8 March 1955) p.13

expected zones of complete devastation. The provision of shelters within these zones was considered too technically difficult and financially 'prohibitive', an important example of influence of the economic sphere. Materials should be stockpiled in central reserves for this purpose and central stores of food, fuel and medical supplies created.¹²⁶

Another key theme in the report was the idea of public awareness and the ability of the individual and family group to prepare. Strath recognised:

...the difficult problem of educating public opinion in the implications of 'fall-out' without undermining public confidence...it will not be possible to postpone for long some announcement of our policy for dealing with this menace.¹²⁷

Public reaction to the prospect of thermonuclear conflict was often referred to during official assessments of various courses of action and this was mirrored by debates inside the government, which often found itself in a dilemma when considering the potential for the negative political impact of public opinion resulting from any official information that might be released. Strath, however, was clear:

Life in all contaminated areas would demand a high degree of self-discipline on the part of every individual in the observance of elementary procedures to reduce risks from exposure...such discipline could not be secured unless the need for it were widely

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p.11

¹²⁷ TNA: DEFE 13/45 *Strath's notes on 'Fall-Out' in Macmillan to Churchill* (December 1954)

known and the basic precautions thoroughly understood by everyone in advance.¹²⁸

Despite this conviction that a successful civil defence policy was based on the widespread dissemination of knowledge and public preparedness, governmental control of information in the public domain became increasingly important throughout the 1950s, and, as Hughes states, ð...shaped both the reception of the Strath Report and the subsequent development of government planning for nuclear defence.ö¹²⁹ This was exploited by Labour in opposition who, in 1955, published their own report into civil defence, which concluded with the following call to action:

We feel that this report should be published and given as wide a circulation as possible. We say this because we are convinced that the time has come when the truth about the danger in which we stand should be told to the public. The Government appears to be deliberately withholding similar information from the British public.¹³⁰

While the majority of the parliamentary Labour Party were supporters of the decision to develop a British hydrogen bomb,¹³¹ the Leader of the Opposition, Hugh Gaitskell, agreed with Sandys on the importance of reducing dependence on the American deterrent.¹³² Sandys showed the growing unease amongst the opposition towards nuclear weapons and arms control which would go on to split

¹²⁸ TNA: CAB 134/940, HDC (55) 3 Strath (8 March 1955) p.12

¹²⁹ Hughes, J. (2003) p.272

¹³⁰ *Report of the Labour Party Joint Committee on Civil Defence* (1955) p. 21

¹³¹ Scott, L. (2006) p.687

¹³² Goldberg, A. (1964) p.411

the party along ideological lines in later years of the Cold War.

In the years following the publication of the Strath Report, few of its recommendations were acted upon. Over the summer of 1955 the government rejected the advice contained within the Strath report on economic grounds, and from 1955 civil defence spending fell year on year until by 1957 spending stood at half its 1952 levels.¹³³ It could be argued that the findings of the Strath report lay behind the pessimistic view of the 1955 Statement on Defence that said of the consequences of a nuclear attack on Britain that: '...central and local government would be put out of action partially or wholly. There would be grave problems of public control, feeding and shelter. Public morale would be most severely tested. It would be a struggle for survival of the grimmest kind.'¹³⁴ The unpalatable conclusion of the Statement on Defence is one that would come to haunt the government in the following years, as Labour opponents of government policy criticised the nature of existing planning.¹³⁵

In the months following the Report, the development of civil defence policy was subject to a number of conflicting economic, political and ideological pressures. The Strath report had concluded that the success of civil defence lay in widespread civil preparedness. The Home Secretary, Gwilym Lloyd-George, was an advocate for the recommendations laid out in the report, arguing in October 1955 for shelters

¹³³ Smith, M. (2009) p. 60

¹³⁴ Greene, O. et al. (1982) p. 88

¹³⁵ Lawson, J. HL Deb, 02 November 1955, vol. 194, cc.209-56

to be constructed on the grounds of public morale.¹³⁶ However critics of the plans cited the prohibitive expenditure required of over £1000 million against the numbers that could realistically be saved and others still questioned the expense on civil defence which would ultimately have to compete against the budget for the British nuclear deterrent and other military forces.¹³⁷ Competing claims on a limited budget could be seen as a reason that none of the report's recommendations were made policy. Its publication coincided with a time of economic difficulty in Britain and in 1955 the Chancellor, Harold Macmillan, advocated slashing ö... a substantial block from the load now pressing on our resources.ö¹³⁸ Hennessy notes that civil defence would have been one of the primary targets of those cuts:

The Minister of Defence who has circulated the Strath Report to his colleagues and presided over the cabinet Committee on its implications now proposed to hack £17m out of the £55m planned for Home Defence in 1956-57 by not buying food, medical supplies and oil for the post-attack stockpile and by stopping the building of protective headquarters and control rooms.¹³⁹

By 1956 it was clear that the report's recommendations would not be acted on and the idea of a widespread public shelter policy in particular was effectively dead.¹⁴⁰

The figure eventually authorised by Macmillan for 1957/58 was £22 million.¹⁴¹

This drastic cut in expenditure on civil defence was the first of many that would

¹³⁶ Lloyd-George, G HC Deb, 01 March 1955, vol. 537, cc.1893-2012

¹³⁷ Grant, M. (2008) p. 931

¹³⁸ TNA: CAB 129/79 CP(56)17 *The Economic Situation; memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer*

¹³⁹ Hennessy, P. (2006) p.384

¹⁴⁰ Grant, M. (2009) p.107

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* p.113

have a profound influence on the nature of civil defence policy until the end of the Cold War.

The Cabinet Office led Home Defence Review of 1955, an exercise in evaluating home defence expenditure that was to be repeated later, debated various items of proposed civil defence measures against the projected costs in 1960 and again in 1965:

To sum up, while the Strath recommendations, as accepted by the Defence Committee, ranged over the whole field of civil preparations for home defence, Government policy has been in practice to exclude expenditure on the comparatively costly 'survival' measures, while concentrating the limited amount of money available on the maintenance of the civil defence services.¹⁴²

As Robin Woolven points out, it was generally the cheapest option that was agreed upon.¹⁴³

In the following year, a civil defence circular announced that:

...the megaton weapon has produced a situation so different in degree as to amount to a difference in kind. This required a ... complete overhaul of our home defence plans, the number of casualties, extent of damage by blast and fire, and restrictions on movement imposed by fall-out will necessitate a much closer co-ordination of effort, over far wider areas than has previously been required.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² TNA: CAB 134/2039 (1960)

¹⁴³ Woolven, R. (2007) p.23

¹⁴⁴ Civil Defence Circular 28/56 (1956)

However it was the prevailing economic climate that was to dominate civil defence policy decisions. After Harold Macmillian became Prime Minister in 1957 he sought to reduce government expenditure; and the administration's belief in the nuclear deterrent allowed large cuts to be made in civil defence provision. In response to the request from Macmillian, the then Minister of Defence, Walter Monckton, produced a report on home defence measures that recommended wide-ranging cuts in civil defence. He recommended that the only provisions that should be continued were those that "the absence of which would be liable to undermine the deterrent"¹⁴⁵, including measures for control of the public at large and the continuation of government. As Grant asserts¹⁴⁶, the maintenance of the deterrent and the good public perception of such was crucial to the successful revision of civil defence set out in the Monckton review and "that within these limits, our home defence preparations will be realistic and not a façade."¹⁴⁷

The issue of whether it was preferable to funnel defence spending into building up a strong military deterrent was to be an ideologically-driven one that would recur throughout the Cold War, the genesis of which had a particularly defining influence on civil defence under the later Thatcher governments. Gathered at a meeting to discuss the Report three years previously, members of the Home Defence Committee noted that "the desirability of giving a higher proportion of available

¹⁴⁵ TNA: CAB 134/1315 *Home Defence Policy Review*

¹⁴⁶ Grant, M. (2008) p. 935

¹⁴⁷ TNA: CAB 134/1315 *Home Defence Policy Review*

resources to home defence measures would have to be weighed carefully against the risk that this would be at the expense of the primary deterrent.¹⁴⁸

With the need to convince the British public that both the nuclear deterrent and civil defence were viable in mind, in 1956 HMSO produced the first publicly available information on the hydrogen bomb - a manual called *Nuclear Weapons* - in which some details concerning the immediate effects of these weapons was given.¹⁴⁹ This was followed a year later by a booklet called *The Hydrogen Bomb*, still offering advice used in World War Two such as keeping a bucket of water or sand handy to put out fires caused by a thermonuclear detonation.¹⁵⁰ As will be seen, the Sandys Defence White Paper in 1957 was more realistic about the chances of survival for the population under nuclear attack.¹⁵¹

The Sandys Defence White Paper

The defence review of 1957, led by the Minister for Defence Duncan Sandys, was to set forth the future of British defence and was in some aspects a response to the Suez disaster of the previous year which had revealed a crisis in the battle readiness of the British military. Although primarily concerned with foreign and defence policies, the paper also had implications for Britain's nuclear deterrent and home defence, tying the two aspects of defence together more closely than ever before

¹⁴⁸ TNA: CAB 134/940 HDC(55)4 *Minutes of an informal meeting* 16/03/1955

¹⁴⁹ *Nuclear Weapons No. 1* (1956) HMSO

¹⁵⁰ *The Hydrogen Bomb* (1956) HMSO

¹⁵¹ TNA: CAB 129/86 *Statement on Defence 1957*

and embracing deterrence as the main tenet of Britain's defence posture. As historian Sir Michael Howard, speaking on Sandys in 2007, reflected the paper
“...did make us dependent upon deterrence” I wonder whether the realisation in the back of people's minds that we have got the deterrent, we are absolutely dependent upon it for our general defence policy, made very much difference to the way in which they handled these matters.¹⁵²

When the paper was published in April 1957, echoes of many of Monckton's suggestions could be found within its pages. Chief amongst these was the new position that civil defence was to hold as a subsidiary of the deterrent posture:
“...the central aim must be to prevent war rather than to prepare for it. In present circumstances the only way to deter nuclear aggression is to possess the means of retaliating in time.”¹⁵³ While the paper stressed the worth of civil defence and the need for plans that would allow for 'organised society' to survive and made assurances that current passive defence organisations would be allowed to continue, there was a conspicuous lack of provision for actual practical measures to ensure the continuation of life.

In the most famous passage from the paper, Sandys states:

It must be frankly recognised that there is at present no means of providing adequate protection for the people of this country against the consequences of attack with nuclear weapons. This makes it more clear than ever that the overriding consideration in all military

¹⁵² Michael Howard, speaking at 'Cabinets and the Bomb', conference held at the British Academy 27 March 2007

¹⁵³ TNA: CAB 129/86 *Statement on Defence 1957*

planning must be to prevent war rather than to prepare for it.¹⁵⁴

The government spent much time attempting to mitigate the effect of this statement, with mixed results. Ministers argued in the following months with limited success that to interpret this as implying civil defence to be useless was to misunderstand the intent of the statement, which was to frame civil defence not only as a continuing insurance but as a necessary part of deterrence.¹⁵⁵ The technological advances that brought forth the huge destructive capability of the hydrogen bomb meant that government defence strategy was no longer geared towards 'winning' a war but towards preventing one and civil defence played a crucial part towards convincing an aggressor that Britain was willing to use its nuclear capability.

It was clear from the very first years of the Cold War that the Conservative party viewed civil defence as having a function beyond its fundamentally humanitarian one, and this can be seen in the response to the conclusions of the Strath report. Advocating an increased level of public preparedness, Selwyn Lloyd, Minister of Defence argued that "the primary objective is to prevent war, and a sum of £100 million spent on medium bombers would be much more likely to influence the decision of an aggressor than the same sum spent on shelter."¹⁵⁶ It was Sandys however that first formally tied the two aspects of defence together and embraced civil defence as a fully-fledged arm of Britain's nuclear defence posture.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Sandys, D. HC Deb, 16 April 1957, vol. 568, cc.1758-878

¹⁵⁶ TNA: CAB 134/1245 HD(M)(55) Home Defence (Ministerial) Committee: Meeting 1955

Earlier in 1957 the Conservative government commissioned a report into the future of home defence that recommended that the only civil defence measures that should be continued were those that "the absence of which would be liable to undermine the deterrent,"¹⁵⁷ suggesting that the question of the upkeep of the nuclear deterrent was crucial to the successful revision of civil defence. In turn, this report was to influence the conclusions of the Sandys report, with its recommendations that "the central aim must be to prevent war rather than to prepare for it. In present circumstances the only way to deter nuclear aggression is to possess the means of retaliating in time."¹⁵⁸ The report's frank admission that "there is at present no means of providing adequate protection for the people of this country"¹⁵⁹ undermined the government's policy on both civil defence and the nuclear deterrent. It drew both public and opposition criticism; if civil defence was still needed then what was the case for the deterrent, and if the deterrent could fail, what use was a civil defence that failed to adequately protect? Nevertheless, the Conservative administration continued to frame civil defence not only as a continuing insurance but as a necessary part of deterrence.¹⁶⁰

The Conservative party considered that the advent of the increased destructive capability of the hydrogen bomb meant a necessary shift in the focus of civil defence. The model seen in World War Two with its emphasis on community-

¹⁵⁷ TNA: CAB 134/1315 *Home Defence Policy Review*

¹⁵⁸ TNA: CAB 129/86 *Statement on Defence 1957*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Sandys, D. HC Deb, 16 April 1957, vol. 568, cc.1758-878

based, humanitarian functions was slowly being replaced by a home defence policy with objectives beyond that of simple public protection. Some in the Conservative parliamentary party believed that civil defence could not hope to be effective and as such all monies allocated to the development and upkeep of civil defence should instead be put towards maintaining the deterrent.¹⁶¹ In the 1960 Home Review, however, the political impossibility of abandoning civil defence entirely due to continuing international tensions was recognised.¹⁶²

The 1964-70 Labour government's decision to place civil defence on a care and maintenance basis was met with widespread condemnation from the Conservative party, who accused Labour of having an ideological agenda, undermining the deterrent by means of stealth and reducing its effectiveness by abolishing civil defence.¹⁶³ David Renton MP voiced the widely-held opposition opinion when he stated:

It is very strange, because the Government, like their predecessors, had assumed that civil defence was a necessary part of the policy of the deterrent and lent credibility to the deterrent. We are not only to have the credibility of the deterrent removed at a time when we are continuing our policy of having atomic weapons, but we are to have removed a most valuable service to humanity... we on this side are deeply distressed by what the Government have done this week.¹⁶⁴

The concept of civil defence as a function of deterrence is one that would shape not

¹⁶¹ Sharples, R. HC Deb, 20 April 1956 vol. 551, cc.1323-406

¹⁶² TNA: CAB 134/2041 *Home Defence Review* (1960)

¹⁶³ Hogg, Q and Blaker, P. HC Deb, 29 February 1968, vol. 759, cc.1784-896

¹⁶⁴ Renton, D. HC Deb, 18 January 1968, vol. 756, cc.2093-104

only policy itself but the way in which the public thought about it and responded. Melissa Smith notes that emphasising the deterrent function of civil defence saw a shift in policy focus. It became less important whether civil defence provision would work and increasingly important that it *appeared* to work¹⁶⁵, both in terms of foreign relations and domestic acceptance. The issue of military deterrence over civilian insurance and public control became the primary ideological battlegrounds between Left and Right when civil defence once more emerged as a policy concern in 1972.

It was clear from the Paper that the move towards home defence as an adjunct of this deterrence that started with Strath had been completed. Civil defence policy had now all but entirely taken an economically-influenced shift away from the expensive, community-based post-war evacuation and shelter policy to a more cost-effective one entirely reliant on self-help and personal preparedness.

Local Authority Dissent and the Anti-Nuclear Movement

The ineffectiveness of civil defence at this time was encapsulated by Conservative politician C.M. Woodhouse who branded it '...a cold, callous, cruel fraud; a policy of mass suicide.'¹⁶⁶ The initial reaction to the publication of the Paper in 1959 had been relatively subdued, but within days Labour-controlled St. Pancras Borough

¹⁶⁵ See Smith, M. (2011) pp.90-96 for more on the debate between public protection and public persuasion.

¹⁶⁶ Woodhouse, C.M. HC Deb, 26 February 1959, vol. 600, cc.1271-2

Council in London recommended that civil defence be stopped because '...in view of the Government's admission in the recent White Paper there is no real defence against atomic and hydrogen bomb warfare, we are of the opinion that to continue with civil defence is a complete waste of money.'¹⁶⁷

St. Pancras was not the first local authority to make their disagreement with government civil defence policy known. In July 1954, Coventry City Council announced that they intended to terminate all their civil defence functions, citing them to be a waste of time and money in the face of recent reports about the devastating nature of the hydrogen bomb.¹⁶⁸ The conflict was resolved by the Home Secretary who appointed three commissioners to discharge those functions in the name of and at the expense of the council. After just over a year in default, Coventry announced in August 1955 that it was prepared to resume all its civil defence functions.¹⁶⁹ Coventry would be just the first example of the Labour-led, local authority defiance of central civil defence policy and anti-nuclear protest that was to last until the end of the Cold War. The St Pancras revolt however was an altogether more pressing problem for the government, representing the most serious dissent against their home defence policies since the development of the hydrogen bomb.

¹⁶⁷ TNA: HO 322/135 *Correspondence from Town Clerk, Metropolitan Borough of St Pancras to the Under Secretary of State 1957*

¹⁶⁸ TNA: HO 322/175 CDJPS Industrial and Commercial Shelter Committee: minutes, papers and first report

¹⁶⁹ TNA: HO 322/1019 *Civil Defence – Use of Statutory Default Powers* (July 1982)

The 1956 local elections returned a hard-left Labour council to St Pancras, including the former Trotskyist John Lawrence who was elected leader of the council later the same year. While the proposals set out in the Sandys White Paper were backed by the leader of the Conservative opposition in the council, Lawrence led the Labour Group into recommending that, as an ideological stand as a Socialist council, that ð...as from 1 June 1957 all Civil Defence Activities in St Pancras be discontinued by the council, the civil defence staff will be absorbed into other departments and all properties used for civil defence be used for urgent housing purposes.ö¹⁷⁰ Lawrence had admitted that stopping work on civil defence ð...was politically motivated and made as a stand in favour of Britain opting out of being a nuclear power.ö¹⁷¹ The St Pancras revolt continued for 18 months; after a change in leadership the council resumed its civil defence duties in January 1959.

The government utilised powers to intervene when a local authority failed to perform its statutory duties by Regulation 4 of the *Civil Defence (Regulations) 1949* which stated:

If the designated Minister is satisfied that any local authority has failed or refused properly to discharge any of the civil defence functions conferred on them as aforesaid he may by order either empower himself to discharge those functions in the name and at the expense of that authority or authorise or require some other authority or person to exercise those functions in the name and at the expense of the authority so failing or refusing.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ TNA: HO 322/135 *St Pancras Metropolitan Borough Council: refusal to perform civil defence functions* 1957

¹⁷¹ TNA: HO 322/1019 *Civil Defence – Use of Statutory Default Powers* (July 1982)

¹⁷² *Civil Defence (General) Regulation 1949* p.7

It was under these regulations that St Pancras' non-compliance, as Coventry's before, was partially resolved with the appointment of a commissioner in June 1957,¹⁷³ sent to undertake the council's civil defence responsibilities at the expense of the borough. The commissioner arranged for the construction of a new civil defence headquarters and increased the staff employed in civil defence from 5 to 9. The borough was charged for all expenditure incurred from these measures without the benefit of grant aid.¹⁷⁴ However the refusal of the council to participate in Civil Defence Activities only came to an end in May 1959, when the electorate returned a pro-civil defence, Conservative majority. Although St Pancras' call for other local authorities to follow its lead was not successful, the revolt was an embarrassment for the government and a clear warning that the language of the Sandys White Paper, which strove to minimise the effect of its conclusion that there was no means of providing adequate protection¹⁷⁵, had not been sufficient to avoid alarm.

As well as inspiring dissent in St. Pancras, the Sandys White Paper was a catalyst for the nuclear disarmament movement which up to this point had been little more than a handful of minority protest groups. The Hydrogen Bomb National Campaign sought an end to the development and testing of nuclear weapons¹⁷⁶ and the Peace Pledge Union campaigned for an end to Britain's nuclear programme¹⁷⁷, but neither

¹⁷³ Woolven, R. (2007) p.6

¹⁷⁴ TNA: HO 322 *Civil Defence Planning Relations Between Central Government and Local Authorities Planning Paper* (28th July 1981)

¹⁷⁵ TNA: CAB 129/86 *Statement on Defence* (1957)

¹⁷⁶ Wittner, L. (2009) p.34

¹⁷⁷ Russell, B. (2003) p.489

organisation was actively campaigning on issues of public protection. Nevertheless, the embryonic peace movement gained considerable momentum from the Sandys White Paper statement of 'no adequate protection'. As civil defence began to become more widely reported peace groups became increasingly influential as their numbers grew.

In 1958 the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was formed and would become a vocal critic of not only successive governments' nuclear weapons programmes, but of their civil defence measures too.¹⁷⁸ Anti-nuclear campaigners doubted that civil defence could have any value on its own, but the real objection came in the form of civil defence as an adjunct to an overall defence policy based on the use of nuclear weapons. Civil defence therefore became a legitimate target for peace groups as well as further underlining the link between civilian protection and deterrence, based, as it was viewed, '...upon an attempt to create an atmosphere of security where there is none, and is thereby concerned with conditioning the mind of the public to the idea of nuclear war.'¹⁷⁹

Faced with this backlash from peace groups and the opposition benches, the government began to stress the 'insurance' aspect of its policy, emphasising the humanitarian function of civil defence:

..although it is our primary aim to prevent such a disastrous war from

¹⁷⁸ Thompson, E.P. (1980) p.4

¹⁷⁹ *CND Peace News*, 28 June 1957

ever breaking out, it is impossible for any Government to rule out of consideration entirely the sort of dangers about which we have been talking tonight, although we hope that they will never come about. Civil defence is an insurance policy against them, and to say that such an insurance policy tends to promote the very dangers against which it is directed is similar to saying that a ship is more likely to be steered on to the rocks because it is carrying lifeboats. No responsible Government could accept such nonsense.¹⁸⁰

The 1959 Defence Paper, however, seemed to contradict the government's conciliatory tone when it stated that "No major change is contemplated in the structure or role of civil defence."¹⁸¹

Home Defence Reviews of the 1960s

Post-Strath, civil defence planning started to move away from traditional ideas of public protection, concentrating instead on plans for the survival and continuation of government and community order. The 1960 Home Defence Review¹⁸² built upon the conclusions of the 1955 Review and comprised a more thorough examination of the range of civil defence provisions and the rationale for such, and presented a detailed account of the value of civil defence expenditure. As in earlier reports, while certain home defence measures were considered to have worth, financial considerations were once again at the forefront of its recommendations and the importance of civil defence as deterrence emphasised:

¹⁸⁰ Woodhouse, C.M. HC Deb, 05 December 1962, vol. 668, cc.1457-68

¹⁸¹ THA: Cmnd.662 *Progress of the five -year British defence plan 1957–1962* (1959)

¹⁸² THA: CAB 134/2041 *Home Defence Review* (1960)

í that some home defence preparations are an integral part of the deterrent policy, primarily because of their potential value in steadying public opinion in support of this policy in a period of tension. Some of the Committee also think that the Government also has a duty to take measures to mitigate the consequences to the civil population in global war, and that home defence preparations are justified in order to increase the chances of survival if war were to come. In practice, measures which would be justified on this latter ground are largely the same as those which would be of value on the former ground, namely to steady public opinion in a period of tension.¹⁸³

The Paper noted that even the 'minority view' represented on the Committee who believed that no effective public defence was possible and all funds currently allocated for civil defence should instead be put towards maintaining the deterrent, ò...nevertheless recognise that it would be politically impracticable to abandon home defence entirely at the present time.ö¹⁸⁴ The Joint Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, later answering questions in the House of Lords on the Paper, stated:

The construction of public shelters for the protection of the population cannot be contemplated and provision on a country-wide scale of less elaborate but specially constructed underground shelters against fall-out would also impose an impossible burden on our resources.¹⁸⁵

By inextricably linking the survival of the government machine with the continuity of the state and emphasising that òí provision should be made for carrying on the

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Bathurst, H. HL Deb, 05 April 1962, vol. 239, cc.282-330

government of this country in nuclear war¹⁸⁶ and stressing the need for control in wartime, 'survival' was increasingly understood to mean the survival of the state rather than the individual. From this Review came the development of sub-regional seats of government, local civil-military headquarters around the country which would be responsible for the administration and distribution of supplies in their region and who would represent central government for an indefinite period post-attack.¹⁸⁷ Responsibility for immediate life-saving measures unofficially fell to the volunteer Civil Defence Corps (CDC) and a decision was made to reorganise and arrange additional training for its 360,000 members. The government stated that the occupants of protected headquarters and regional controls would be '...elected not for their intrinsic merit...but for the help they could give to others,'¹⁸⁸ but it was apparent that state survival was now the primary concern of civil defence as the plans for protection of key personnel but not of the public became known.

The decision to build a British independent atomic deterrent had been taken by a Labour government in 1947¹⁸⁹, and it was known that Attlee supported Churchill's defence policy after 1951 and that the Labour Party followed a broadly bi-partisan defence policy from then until 1960.¹⁹⁰ Since that first Attlee government, the Labour Party broadly supported an evolving defence policy based on nuclear weapons in the context of the Cold War.¹⁹¹ By the mid-1950s however, Labour

¹⁸⁶ THA: CAB 134/2041 *Home Defence Review* (1960)

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid* pp.13

¹⁸⁸ Woodhouse, C.M. HC Deb, 27 June 1963, vol. 679, cc.1834-44

¹⁸⁹ Hennessy, P. (2007) p.48

¹⁹⁰ Gott, R. (1963) p.238

¹⁹¹ George, B. (1991) p.29

politicians were already questioning the Conservative government's nuclear-based defence strategy in terms of civil defence.¹⁹² At this time, however, Labour's position on civil defence was broadly one of support; effective civil defence policy was seen as a necessary foil to the questionable wisdom of a British nuclear deterrent:

Given the Government's foreign policy and strategy, and as they are committing this country to be certainly attacked in the first week of the next war, we must consider what methods we have with which to defend the population.¹⁹³

A minority within the party were in favour of unilateralism and a conventional, rather than nuclear, participation in NATO and it was from this point that ideology began to grow as an important influence on Labour's civil defence policies. Although an opponent of high expenditure on defence and nuclear power, addressing the issue of disarmament at the Labour Party conference in 1957, Shadow Foreign Secretary, Aneurin Bevan encapsulated the Labour Party's dilemma when he controversially dismissed unilateralism;

It is therefore not a question of who is in favour of the Hydrogen bomb, but a question of what is the most effective way of getting the damn thing destroyed. It is the most difficult of all problems facing mankind. But if you carry this resolution and follow out all its implications and do not run away from it you will send a British Foreign Secretary, whoever he may be, naked into the conference chamber. ... And you call that statesmanship? I call it an emotional spasm.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Hughes, E. HC Deb, 05 July 1954, vol. 529, cc.1832-914

¹⁹³ Ede, J. HC Deb, 05 July 1954., vol. 529, cc.1832-914

¹⁹⁴ Aneurin Bevan, *Speech at the Labour Party Conference*, 4 October, 1957 quoted in Foot, M. (2009)

By the time of the 1960 review however, this support for civil defence was beginning to change. In 1960 the Labour opposition tabled an ultimately unsuccessful but politically revealing amendment to the 1960 *Report on Defence* which stated: 'That this House, recognising the need for an adequate policy for collective defence and security, has no confidence in the defence policy of Her Majesty's Government.'¹⁹⁵ Primarily concerned with what it saw as a report which involved '... the nation in further substantially increased expenditure whilst providing no prospect of effective defence,'¹⁹⁶ Labour's opposition also stemmed from what the party considered to be the government's reckless disregard for the civilian population in the event of nuclear war:

The Government's deterrent strategy means that they are prepared to plunge the population of this country into annihilation at short notice or with no notice whatever. They make no attempt at any policy for preserving the lives of the people. At the same time, in order to keep the people happy about this suicidal nuclear deterrent strategy, the Government go in for what the defence correspondent of *The Times* last year called a token civil defence policy. That is to keep the people happy with a lot of fun and games. I think that represents the acme of cynical frivolity and irresponsibility. I think it is quite wicked.¹⁹⁷

While the Review did not seek to restore confidence in the government's plans for public protection as might have been expected, the subsequent 1962 Defence Statement sought to reaffirm the status of civil defence; '...over the next five to ten years it is clear that Civil Defence will play an important part in maintaining the

¹⁹⁵ Brown, G. HC Deb, 01 March 1960, vol. 618, cc.1032-168

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

general preparedness of the whole nation for any emergency¹⁹⁸ This was a statement that was to be tested just a few months later in October 1962. The Cuban Missile crisis is widely regarded¹⁹⁹ as the incident that brought the world closest to nuclear war. Robert McNamara, United States Defense Secretary at the time, stated:

I want to say, and this is very important: at the end we lucked out. It was luck that prevented nuclear war. We came that close to nuclear war at the end. Rational individuals: Kennedy was rational; Khrushchev was rational; Castro was rational. Rational individuals came that close to total destruction of their societies. And that danger exists today.²⁰⁰

The closeness of this threat was also felt in Britain. The British V-bomber force was put on a 15 minute readiness alert,²⁰¹ however at no point during the events were any civil defence plans put into action, the Civil Defence Corps put on standby or the public given any information concerning personal protection against possible attack²⁰². In Prime Minister's Questions on the 25th April 1963, Labour MP Konni Zilliacus asked of Harold Macmillian, the Prime Minister:

Mr. Zilliacus asked the Prime Minister what were the special measures he instructed the competent Ministers to take, for putting the Government's civil defence policy in a state of readiness, at the height of the Cuban crisis last October.

¹⁹⁸ THA: Cmnd. 1639 *Statement on Defence* (1962)

¹⁹⁹ For further discussion on the Cuban Missile Crisis and the threat of nuclear war, see Dobbs, M. (2008) *One Minute to Midnight*, Frankel, M. (2004) *High Noon in the Cold War* and Kennedy, R.F. (1999) *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis*.

²⁰⁰ Robert McNamara, quoted in documentary *The Fog Of War* (2003)

²⁰¹ Woolven, R. (2002) p.7

²⁰² Greenwood, A. HC Deb, 05 December 1962, vol. 668, cc.1457-68

The Prime Minister None, Sir.

Mr. Zilliacus Is it not within the recollection of the Prime Minister that he took special measures to put rockets and V-bombers in a special state of readiness at the time? Does not the Government civil defence policy purport to evacuate 12 million people between the announcement of a state of crisis and the four-minute warning? Has that policy now been quietly dropped as being a complete bluff?²⁰³

Macmillian simply answered that it had not. Lord (Philip) Allen of Abbeydale, Deputy Under Secretary to the Home Office at the time of the crisis is quoted in Woolven (2002) as saying: '...my memory may be unreliable but I have no recollection of the Home Office taking any action in response to the rising international crisis in October 1962.'²⁰⁴ The government had evidently not felt it necessary or advisable to activate civil defence plans in reaction to the threat and the implication appears to be that the government was hoping the problem would go away.

It is possible that civil defence measures were not activated in an attempt to prevent further exacerbation of a delicate situation. However criticisms of this apparent failure in the government's duty of care came readily from the opposition benches, with Michael Foot encapsulating the argument when he posited that '...during Cuba week no measures were taken to put civil defence into operation, presumably because there was no civil defence? Is that the official secret which the Prime Minister is trying to keep?'²⁰⁵ Plans had always centred around the assumptions that there would be a 'precautionary period' of several days before the initiation of a

²⁰³ Zilliacus, K. HC Deb, 25 April 1963, vol. 676, cc.417-22

²⁰⁴ Woolven, R. (2002) p.8

²⁰⁵ Foot, M. HC Deb, 25 April 1963, vol. 676, cc.417-22

nuclear exchange²⁰⁶, but the Cuban crisis came out of nowhere. When Labour MP, Laurie Pavitt, asked Rab Butler, the Home Secretary, „... why British civil defence plans are based on the premise that several days' warning of a nuclear attack will be available in view of the fact that United States plans are based on much shorter warning“²⁰⁷, Rab Butler's response was:

It is important to distinguish between warning of an actual attack and a period of alert at a time of increasing tension which would enable emergency preparations to be made. Information about home defence plans is exchanged with our American Allies, and I have no reason to suppose that there is any fundamental difference between us on this matter.²⁰⁸

This raised the question; if civil defence plans could not be put into action for fear of exacerbating a situation of international crisis, could they be said to hold any humanitarian function at all? As Labour MP Reginald Paget, speaking in the Commons said:

I suppose that the Cuba week-end was, in nuclear terms, a test crisis period. I do not know, and I do not know of anyone who does know, what was the warning that should have been given... This sort of preparation ... indicates the measure not only of our defensive imbalance but our deterrent threat.²⁰⁹

As George Crossley notes,²¹⁰ this also suggests a preoccupation not with gestures

²⁰⁶ Butler, R. HC Deb, 24 April 1961, vol. 639, cc.14-5W

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Paget, R. HC Deb, 01 March 1963, vol. 672, cc.1661-85

²¹⁰ Crossley, G. (1985) p.227

of strength but with domestic compliance.

In the last two years of the Conservative government that followed the Cuban Missile Crisis, civil defence expenditure was increased slightly²¹¹ in order to speed up the provision of buildings and communications for emergency controls. The *1963 Statement on Defence* also asserted that '...the Government have always recognised the importance of informing the public of the effects of nuclear weapons and the steps that could be taken to mitigate these effects'²¹², the result of which was the public release of *Advising the Householder on Protection Against Nuclear Attack*.²¹³ Originally released to the civil defence, fire and police services, this was now made available for the public to buy and contained information that would also have been issued on television and through newspapers if it was ever deemed necessary. The fact that it was offered for sale and not distributed free summed up the government's dilemma with regard to public education on civil defence matters. On the one hand the usefulness of public awareness was recognised but fears about public panic kept the information from reaching as many as it might. As the Joint Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, C.M. Woodhouse informed the Commons:

Some people have suggested, like my hon. Friend, that it ought not to be put on sale: but that it ought to be distributed free to the public.... For a number of reasons, not from fear of scaring the public, we decided that it would not be right to distribute it now in a way which

²¹¹ From £19.7 million in 1963 to £23.01 million in 1964

²¹² THA: Cmnd.1936 *Statement on Defence* 1963

²¹³ See appendix B

would appear to suggest that we were positively suggesting to the public that they ought to take the measures indicated in this booklet now, because we are not doing so, and that for more than one reason.²¹⁴

The booklet offered advice on subjects such as putting out small fires and constructing a fallout room within a house and, like advice given in the 1950s, still maintained that it would be possible for search and rescue teams to come to the aid of the trapped or injured.²¹⁵ This advice was criticised in the eleventh report by the House of Commons Select Committee on Estimates, which commented:

The average householder who reads what to do in the event of an imminent nuclear attack will not form the impression that the civil defence measures taken by the government are of any value whatsoever.²¹⁶

Despite the government's programme of public information stressing the humanitarian function of civil defence, the Municipal Yearbook in 1963 reiterated to civil defence officials that the care of the population at large was no longer their primary concern:

Modern Civil Defence goes far beyond the popular conceptions of the rescue, treatment and removal of casualties and the care and feeding of the homeless. At a time when normal channels of communication would be non-existent or seriously disrupted, the Civil Defence organisation would be needed not only to provide essential supplies and services, but for the restoration of good order

²¹⁴ Woodhouse, C.M. HC Deb, 01 March 1963, vol. 672, cc.1661-85

²¹⁵ Civil Defence Handbook No.10: *Advising the Householder on Protection Against Nuclear Attack* (1963) HMSO/COI p.5

²¹⁶ Quoted in Campbell, D. (1983) p. 86

and local government.²¹⁷

In stark contrast to the soothing advice given in *Advising the Householder on Protection Against Nuclear Attack*, a Home Office Circular²¹⁸ issued in July 1963 outlined the three phases of Home Defence plans. The first was the operational or '...life-saving phase, where civil defence teams under local authority control rescue and evacuate as many people as possible; the second was the survival phase, where the remaining resources are assessed and plans laid for converting their organisation into a survivable social system and the third was the recovery phase, directed from Regional Government headquarters with the aim of the gradual over a period of many years restoration of some society and industry.'²¹⁹ This unequivocally redefined one of the primary tenets of civil defence as the continuation of government in war.

When the Labour Party came to power under Harold Wilson in 1964, it had done so on the back of a campaign against the British nuclear deterrent, Attlee himself now appearing in a party election broadcast in which he stated '... the idea of an independent deterrent is a nonsense. They cannot tell me of any possible occasion on which we ourselves independently should want to use a weapon. Or how you can use it as a threat.'²²⁰ Wilson had previously condemned the purchase of American-made weapons systems as 'the so-called British, so-called independent,

²¹⁷ *Municipal Yearbook* 1963 p.7

²¹⁸ Civil Defence Circular 17/63

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ Buller, D. and King, A. (1965) p.130

so-called deterrent.²²¹ Yet when Wilson became Prime Minister, Labour broadly continued existing deterrent policy in light of the 1965 Home Defence Review which concluded that a policy of deterrence and in turn, civil defence - was still justified as it offered British defence capability and stability since an aggressor who struck first would...suffer unacceptable damage in return.²²²

The election of the Wilson government marked the beginning of a cross-party consensus on the nuclear weapons programme and a change in the Labour party's opposition towards the concept of deterrence previously seen in the parliamentary party since the early 1950s.²²³ Although support for unilateralism continued to be a defining feature of Labour's Cold War defence ideology, it never again posed any significant threat to the British nuclear deterrent²²⁴. Attitudes towards civil defence policy were also changing. Where previously Labour policy in opposition had been to lend support to any civil defence provision on a humanitarian basis, opinion within the party now began to split, between those who considered public protection a reluctant but necessary adjunct to a nuclear-based defence strategy and those who branded it as a public amelioration designed to make the prospect of nuclear war more palatable.

This Labour administration had a different ideological perspective to the preceding Conservative government and this was apparent in policy consultation not only

²²¹ Croft, S. et al. (2001) p.72

²²² THA: Cmnd.2270 *Statement on Defence* (1965)

²²³ Croft, S. *The Labour Party and the Nuclear Issue* in Smith, M. and Spear, J. (ed.) (1992) p.202

²²⁴ George, B. (1984) *Unilateralism's Second Wave: The 1983 Election and After* in *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 55 issue 1, pp.60-71

with regard to the nuclear deterrent but also to civil defence. Crucially, it was at this stage that civil defence planning started to make the subtle shift in the way it dealt with public protection away from 'traditional' concepts of civil defence into the arena of emergency planning, with suggestions that the Civil Defence Corps could be used to aid the victims of industrial accidents and similar domestic crises in the future.²²⁵ The 1965 Defence White Paper reported that while plans for regional controls, law and order and communications had been established, preparations for public protection such as medical services, shelter and food remained at the planning stage.²²⁶

The 1965 Home Defence review expressed the new government's intention of giving high priority to public expenditure of social and economic value. As a consequence, it was necessary to give lower priority to expenditure, including defence expenditure, which did not have social and economic value.²²⁷ However despite a pre-election understanding that Labour would scrap the deterrent, the Review went on to calculate the risk of nuclear attack on the UK, concluding that a policy of deterrence was still justified as it offered certain stability since an aggressor who struck first would...suffer unacceptable damage in return.²²⁸ As a result of this, civil defence was considered to still be of worth, and although noting that, as had been seen in previous Home Defence Reviews, there was an argument that all available resources should be diverted towards the deterrent as what provisions could be made would be of 'little value', it was ultimately decided that

²²⁵ Jenkins, H. HC Deb, 10 November 1964, vol. 701, cc.846-973

²²⁶ THA: Cmnd.2270 *Statement on Defence* (1965)

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

civil defence could potentially save lives and therefore should be maintained.

Speaking at the announcement of the Review to parliament in February 1966, the Home Secretary Roy Jenkins stated '...we have concluded that, despite the reduction in the risk of a nuclear conflict, we cannot discontinue civil defence preparations....But there is a limit to what we can afford by way of insurance against this risk [of nuclear conflict].'²²⁹ Preparations were therefore restricted to those which were considered most likely to make a 'significant contribution' towards national survival and were concentrated around the decentralisation of government and emergencies systems of warning and communication. Tying civil defence policy even more closely with emergency planning, the creation of a 'Home Defence Force', with members drawn from the Territorial Army and intended to provide police with valuable support in the maintenance of law and order in an emergency²³⁰ was announced. When further cuts in the civil defence budget were found to be needed the following year, however, this plan was scrapped and the Civil Defence Corps were reduced in number by around a third.²³¹

By 1967, the provisions for public protection were being further scaled down. The UK Warning and Monitoring Organisation, originally set up in the mid-1950s and made up of 1,500 underground observation posts designed for the detection and monitoring of bomb bursts and post-strike fallout, continued to be developed, as did the Regional Seats of Government. But stockpiles of food and fuel were

²²⁹ Jenkins, R. HC Deb, 02 February 1966, vol. 723, cc.1089-96

²³⁰ The Times, 3rd Feb 1966, quoted in Crossley, G (1985) p.47

²³¹ Jenkins, R. HC Deb, 14 December 1966, vol. 738, cc.458-63

depleted and it was planned to further reduce the Civil Defence Corps to 75,000 members, cutting out the aid and rescue teams entirely.²³²

The Dissolution of Civil Defence

The *Home Defence Review* of 1965 calculated that the risk of nuclear attack on the UK had lessened significantly since the review of 1960. It also argued that while civil defence was ultimately of reduced value, it was still of worth as an adjunct to a continued policy of deterrence.²³³ As discussed in Chapter 3 however, the government was also under considerable financial constraints and after cuts to the civil defence budget were found to be not enough, it was decided that in light of the receding threat of nuclear conflict to reduce civil defence to a care and maintenance basis.

The next Home Secretary James Callaghan also made it clear in a debate on civil defence in the House of Commons in February 1968 that, in addition to the need to make significant budgetary cuts, civil defence provision was being scaled back as the threat it was primarily designed to meet no longer posed any significant danger:

It is the Government's assessment that the risk of nuclear attack on these islands is less now than it was a few years ago. This is one of the considerations which led me to put forward the proposition that I did.

I think that the horrific consequences of a nuclear war are now so well appreciated that it is difficult to believe that any country would

²³² Jenkins, R. HC Deb, 14 December 1966, vol. 738, cc.458-63

²³³ THA: Cmnd.2270 *Statement on Defence* (1965)

willingly provoke such a conflict. Moreover, the recent events in the Middle East and in Vietnam have provided real evidence, in the view of the Government, that the Soviet Union and the United States are determined to avoid direct contact in a war situation.

I would be the last to claim that we have sufficient justification for believing that the risk of nuclear war has completely gone. That would be absurd. There remains the danger, remote as we believe it to be, of accident or miscalculation. But the danger has lessened significantly enough in my view and in the view of the Government to permit us, at a time of extreme financial stringency, to look more closely than ever before at the level of expenditure on civil defence preparations²³⁴ at what I would call the size of our insurance premium.

By 1968 it was evident that these cuts would not be enough. Taking into consideration the earlier conclusions drawn by the 1965 Home Defence Review concerning the significantly lessened risk of nuclear conflict, the Home Defence Committee was asked to recommend how home defence expenditure could be reduced to about a quarter of existing costs. Despite the warning of the Committee that if a reduction to the required expenditure levels of between approximately £7 and £8 million was to be obtained, it would not be possible to:

...maintain in a state of immediate operational readiness even those preparations retained on a care and maintenance basis; and it would be understood that months of intensive effort would be required to restore to the country the same level of capacity to face an immediate crisis as it [now] possesses.²³⁵

Despite this, in the first month of 1968 Prime Minister Harold Wilson announced to

²³⁴ Callaghan, J. HC Deb, 29 February 1968, vol. 759, cc.1784-896

²³⁵ TNA: HO 322/793 *Implications of reduced expenditure on civil defence as a result of 'care and maintenance' policy* (21 August 1969)

the House of Commons that: '...we have decided to reduce Home Defence - Civil Defence - to a care and maintenance basis, with a saving of about £14 million in 1968, and £20 million in 1969 and in subsequent years.'²³⁶ It is clear that economic concerns were of the greatest influence on policy at this time. In response to questioning following the announcement, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department David Ennals stated that financial circumstances and the risk of nuclear attack were the reasons for the reduction in civil defence measures.²³⁷ Once again using the official metaphor of insurance in his language, he acknowledged the shortcomings of civil defence policy: 'if we have reduced our premium, and we recognise that the cover has also been reduced.'²³⁸ This was privately accepted by Home Secretary James Callaghan who said that as it stood: 'if the maintenance of civil defence in this country on the existing scale was not a significant element in the deterrence of nuclear aggression.'²³⁹

By the end of the decade, the superpowers were enjoying a period of more relaxed relations. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons²⁴⁰ which came into force on 5 March 1970 and sought to limit the spread of nuclear weapons was one of the first building blocks of this period of détente. The incoming 1969 Nixon administration in the US also saw talks begin between the West and the Warsaw Pact towards limiting the nuclear capabilities of the two superpowers. This ultimately led to the signing of Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT1) in

²³⁶ Wilson, H. HC Deb, 16 January 1968, vol. 756, cc.1577-620

²³⁷ Ennals, D. HC Deb, 15 February 1968, vol. 758, cc.1551-5

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ TNA: CAB 128/43 (January 1968)

²⁴⁰ *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (22nd April 1970)

<http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc140.pdf> (accessed 15 February 2013)

1972.²⁴¹

The government believed that the ratification of SALT1 was an indication that a worthwhile reduction in international tension was on the point of being achieved.²⁴²

It was considered that there would be sufficient warning of any Soviet political intention to attack the United Kingdom to allow time for civil preparedness to be brought to readiness before the end of an assessed period of three or four weeks' warning of Soviet preparations commencing.²⁴³ Declining to ascribe more weight to either reasons of economics or external influences, financial limitations or détente, Callaghan went on to state that while the danger from accident or miscalculation could never be completely removed, reducing civil defence provisions was a decision inextricably based on a risk of nuclear war that had been calculated to be negligible.²⁴⁴

Criticism of this proposal focussed on the apparent contradictions in government policy, contrasting this with the results of the 1966 Home Review which concluded that:

The risk of a major war arising out of direct conflict between East and West can be almost entirely excluded as a result of the present state of nuclear deterrence; nevertheless we must maintain our guard

²⁴¹ *Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-ballistic Missile Systems* (26 May 1972)
<http://www.state.gov/www/global/arms/treaties/abm/abm2.html> (accessed 15 February 2013)

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Home Defence Review 1980 – The Current State of Civil Preparedness* (17 March 1980)

²⁴⁴ Callaghan, J. HC Deb, 29 February 1968, vol. 759, cc.1784-896

as there is always a risk of war arising out of misunderstanding or miscalculation.

We must maintain an effective civil defence policy as a measure of insurance against an unlikely event. With proper preparations much could be done to save lives, relieve suffering and help millions survive.²⁴⁵

Critics demanded to know the government's basis for change in policy concern, accusing the government of using improving international relations as a cover for spending cuts or arguing that policy should not be dictated by the possibility of détente alone.²⁴⁶ The year after this significant reduction in provision, the Labour government at the time privately acknowledged that civil defence arrangements as they now stood were not fit for purpose in the event of a nuclear incident of any cause.²⁴⁷ In a memo to the Prime Minister, Cabinet Secretary Sir Burke Trend, while reiterating the inadequacies of home defence policy, stated that it could not be maintained that the risk of an attack on this country is such as to justify, in our present economic situation, the premium needed to insure against it on the scale which was accepted up to January 1968.²⁴⁸

In less than a decade civil defence policy had changed from being heralded as a vital and integral part of British nuclear deterrent posture that served an important if secondary humanitarian function to being a prohibitively expensive political

²⁴⁵ TNA: CAB 134/2634 *Cabinet Civil Defence Committee Memorandum* (21 January 1966)

²⁴⁶ Hogg, Q and Blaker, P. HC Deb, 29 February 1968, vol. 759, cc.1784-896

²⁴⁷ *Review of the Effect of the Care and Maintenance Decision on Arrangements for Government in War* (HMSO) 1969

²⁴⁸ TNA: CAB 322/793 *Memo to the Prime Minister from Sir Burke Trend* 9 July 1969 p.1

afterthought that could not claim to serve either deterrent or humanitarian purpose. Preparedness, and in particular the specifically life-saving aspects of civil defence, were wound down. Expenditure was cut from £22.5 million to £7.2 million.²⁴⁹ The Civil Defence Corps and other auxiliary services were disbanded the same year, local authority bunkers were to be put into care and remaining stockpiles of equipment dispersed, and the government, publicly ignoring the advice from the Home Defence Committee, stated its policy to keep the civil defence organisation in a state from which it could be reactivated if needed.²⁵⁰ Only the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation (UKWMO) was kept at a state of readiness.

In the months following the official stand-down, concerns were expressed from within the government that the decision to discontinue civil defence provisions had been ill-informed and left Britain vulnerable not only to foreign attackers but to domestic saboteurs.²⁵¹ While some ministers cautiously welcomed further review,²⁵² the Chancellor of the Exchequer Roy Jenkins stated that he saw 'no real evidence' for a change in the basis of policy concerns. The *1969 Statement on Defence Estimates* set out only the minimum expenditure that would allow civil defence to continue at the barest levels that would permit active preparations to resume if need be.²⁵³ However at the same time, an assessment commissioned by the Home Defence Committee who had been reviewing the decision to place civil

²⁴⁹ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Home Defence Review 1980 – The Current State of Civil Preparedness* (17 March 1980)

²⁵⁰ Ennals, D. HC Deb, 15 February 1968, vol. 758, cc.1551-5

²⁵¹ Jenkins, R. HC Deb, 28 March 1968, vol. 761, cc.1738-811

²⁵² Woolven, R (2007) p. 18

²⁵³ THA: Cmnd.3927 *Statement on the Defence Estimates* (1969)

defence on a care and maintenance basis in 1968, concluded that the threat to law and order during a period of tension had been underestimated. In a memo to the Prime Minister, Cabinet Secretary, Sir Burke Trend, summarised the results of this assessment as follows:

The results suggest that our home defence arrangements are now seriously deficient and that, as things stand, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to activate an effective home defence organisation within the period of warning which we may expect, or even within a much longer period.²⁵⁴

The Conservatives at their party conference in 1969 promised a review of civil defence when next in power, but when the party under Edward Heath was returned to government in 1970 they did not seek a return to civil defence as had occurred under their last administration. Cold War relations were enjoying a period of détente and this coupled with ongoing financial concerns meant that issues appertaining to civil defence issues were not a priority for policymakers. In 1969, the official Home Defence Committee finished its first review of home defence since it was placed on a care and maintenance basis in 1968. It disclosed that there were serious deficiencies in the current arrangements for home defence, and that home defence organisations could not be mobilised to an effective standard within the expected warning time of attack.²⁵⁵

It was against the backdrop of the following decades of economically-constrained

²⁵⁴ TNA: CAB 322/793 *Memo to the Prime Minister from Sir Burke Trend* (9 July 1969) p.1

²⁵⁵ *Review of the Effect of the Care and Maintenance Decision on Arrangements for Government in War* (HMSO) 1969

administrations that civil defence fought against competing claims on a restricted budget. The dichotomy at the heart of civil defence planning was clear from the immediate-post war years as Clement Attlee, addressing the Cabinet Committee on Civil Defence in 1948, had spelled out:

[it was] essential to avoid a situation in which the government would be driven to devote resources to civil defence on a scale which would cripple the national economy, detract from our power of offence and alienate our allies in Europe...the government was not prepared to devote resources to passive defence at the expense of weakening our striking force or impeding our economic recovery.²⁵⁶

The peak era for expenditure on traditional civil defence measures ó against a foreign, primarily nuclear-armed, aggressor ó came in the early 1950s and predated the arrival of the H-bomb in Britain. In the early 1960s however, the Conservative government of Harold Macmillan struggled with the difficulties of trying to curtail spiralling inflation without hampering economic growth,²⁵⁷ a period that Economist Nicholas Crafts asserts was one of failure of the government caused by poor understanding of economic theory, short-termism and a failure to confront interest groups.²⁵⁸ A solution could not be found by Labour after they were returned to power in 1964 and eventually in 1967 Harold Wilson was forced to devalue sterling. Practical civil defence provisions dwindled rapidly in this decade concurrent with a decline in spending until in 1968 civil defence measures were placed on a care and maintenance basis.

²⁵⁶ TNA: CAB 130/41 (GEN 253) *Civil Defence: Papers 1-2* 1st meeting, 1st October 1948

²⁵⁷ Tomlinson, J. (2002) *The British 'Productivity Problem' in the 1960s* in *Past and Present*, vol. 175 issue 1, pp. 188-210

²⁵⁸ Crafts, N. (2002) p.334

The results of the Home Defence Committee's inquiries, published in 1969 as the *Review of the Effect of the Care and Maintenance Decision on Arrangements for Government in War*, concluded that it would not be possible to achieve a satisfactory home defence organisation within the current spending limit of £8 million per year²⁵⁹, a direct correlation between economics and efficacy of policy. Sir Burke Trend recommended that for an additional expenditure of between £5 and 6 million per year, the basic essentials of effective civil defence preparations could be achieved.²⁶⁰ Acknowledging the government's inability to abandon home defence entirely, the Home Defence Committee stressed that appropriate Ministers should consider '...in the context of the current review of public expenditure, whether it would be justifiable to spend a little more on making them [home defence organisations] minimally effective.'²⁶¹ This was a view shared by Minister of Power, Roy Mason, who in a memo to the Prime Minister wondered whether '...despite the general situation on public expenditure, it seems to me that we must consider whether we have cut expenditure in these fields too ruthlessly, and whether it is practicable to do something to make our arrangements minimally effective.'²⁶²

The Treasury disagreed with both the Home Defence Committee's conclusions on both the threat from inadequate home defence provision and the suggestion of the

²⁵⁹ *Review of the Effect of the Care and Maintenance Decision on Arrangements for Government in War* (HMSO) 1969

²⁶⁰ TNA: CAB 322/793 *Memo to the Prime Minister from Sir Burke Trend* (9 July 1969) p.3

²⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.2

²⁶² TNA: CAB 322/793 *Memo to the Prime Minister from Roy Mason* (21 July 1969) p.1

benefits of an additional £6 million expenditure.²⁶³ In a memo to the Prime Minister in 1969, the Treasury's position on the findings of the Home Defence Committee stated:

I have no reason to think that the £8 million a year which we already spend could be more effectively distributed.

In our present economic circumstances, I would find it extremely difficult to agree to any substantial addition to the present expenditure on Home Defence.²⁶⁴

Home Secretary James Callaghan was in agreement with Burke Trend in principle, however, stating that although he had considered abolishing civil defence altogether, for the relatively small 'insurance premium' suggested by Trend, "we can avoid raising unhelpful speculation in this country, and we can put something of an account to our NATO allies"²⁶⁵. The Prime Minister therefore suggested that the involved Ministers take stock of the situation to determine whether the additional expenditure proposed could reduce risk sufficiently to be warranted. While a fresh review of home defence was welcomed by many ministers concerned,²⁶⁶ both the Chancellor, Roy Jenkins, and Home Secretary, were not in favour, with Callaghan acknowledging the gaps in home defence already noted but questioning the validity of such a review if the additional expenditure could not be found:

²⁶³ TNA: CAB 322/793 *Implications of reduced expenditure on civil defence as a result of 'care and maintenance' policy* (23 July 1969)

²⁶⁴ TNA: CAB 322/793 *Implications of reduced expenditure on civil defence as a result of 'care and maintenance' policy* (4 August 1969)

²⁶⁵ TNA: CAB 322/793 *Memo to the Prime Minister from the Home Secretary* (29th July 1969) p.2

²⁶⁶ TNA: CAB 322/793 *Note by the Home Secretary* p.5

The stringent economies we are having to make in many fields as a result of the public expenditure review can have left little scope in departments for further cuts in their expenditure forecasts to find room for home defence; I for one cannot see where further reductions could be made in Home Office expenditure to counterbalance the extra sums which the Home Office Civil Defence Vote would have to bear.²⁶⁷

It would be through the move away from traditional models of home defence and a broadening of policy remit to encompass civil preparedness and emergency planning that allowed the rebirth of civil defence as an active policy concern in 1972.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the genesis and development of post-war civil defence policy was subject to various determining factors in the years before 1968, some of which had far-reaching repercussions that were to influence policymakers and shape policy until the end of the Cold War. The influence of economic factors, ideology and external actors can clearly be identified in the policy process and thus prefigures how these would come to affect later policy development. However it is also possible to see the effects of other influences, such as the rapid development of weapons technology which, in the form of the hydrogen bomb, was a significant policy driver in the rapid shift of civil defence planning away from the model of

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p.7

shelter and evacuation seen in World War Two.

In 1945 the world came to the end of a conflict which had lasted for six years, and great hope was held for a new era of peace between the US and the USSR. Yet in less than two years the world had been plunged into a new conflict between the former Allies that would become a source of continuing confrontation for the next four decades. During the Berlin Blockade of 1948, war with the USSR seemed a real possibility and from this point forwards, Britain's base for US air forces combined with existing Anglo-American alliances and Britain's geographical importance meant the country was consequently thrust into the forefront of the Cold War. This provoked the most important external influence for the revival of civil defence policy which, having been disbanded at the end of World War Two, was revived a short three years later in 1948 due to the perceived threat of these new world tensions. Continuing the policies of mass evacuation, dispersal and shelter that had served the country during World War Two, it retained the humanitarian wartime focus of public welfare and rescue and was organised along similar recovery and recuperation lines. The purpose, scope and practical application of civil defence as defined by the 1948 *Civil Defence Act* changed so significantly in the two decades between its creation and its stand down however as to render it almost unrecognisable.

The influence of external actors in the form of scientific and technological advances continued to be seen as the World War Two model of civil defence

suffered a crucial blow when the full destructive capability of the hydrogen bomb became known by the early 1950s and defence policy as well as civil defence policy underwent a degree of change to meet the new threat to the public as laid out in the Strath Report. With the advent of fall-out, policy was forced for the first time to meet a threat not contained within the World War Two model. As the scale of potential annihilation and the economic factor of severely limited funds available to deal with it was realised, in the years following the publication of the Report much of the rhetoric surrounding civil defence became increasingly couched in terms of 'deterrence' and 'insurance' and less in terms of public protection. Ideological concerns as experienced by the effects of the creation and maintenance of the nuclear deterrent and financial considerations started to become the defining influences on civil defence policy. Though the government was broadly in favour of the shelter and evacuation plans recommended in the report, the competition for expenditure from the nuclear deterrent and the need to make budgetary cuts meant that only those aspects of civil defence policy which complemented and enhanced the deterrent were put into practice.

The notion of civil defence serving as an insurance policy was stated frequently throughout the 1950s and 1960s as the cementing of civil defence policy as a subsidiary to Britain's deterrent posture became more firmly entrenched. The Sandys White Paper of 1957 publicly recognised that no adequate protection for the public could hope to be provided in the event of a nuclear exchange and so the government's focus was now on preventing a war rather than surviving one, and

civil defence measures became increasingly concerned with the survival of the government machine.

With the increasing public knowledge of the extent of the threat to life from the hydrogen bomb and the seemingly inadequate provisions for public protection, the government began to come under heavy criticism from both the opposition and peace groups which saw their membership dramatically swell in response to the perceived nuclear threat. It can also be seen that although policy in the early 1960s reflected concerns over state survival and crisis management, manifestations of civil defence were notably absent during the Cuban Missile Crisis which caused much criticism of both civil defence policy and the foundations of deterrence on which it rested. Despite active and vocal groups campaigning against government policy, external actors' opposition to the deterrent and criticism of protection policies had little effect on their development at this time.

By the mid-1960s, civil defence policy was concentrated around those measures that were considered to contribute the most significantly towards state survival; national warning systems and regional seats of government control. The new Labour government had historically looked favourably upon the British nuclear deterrent although it was economic rather than ideological concerns that meant that civil defence policy under Wilson was considerably limited in what it provided in the way of public protection. The traditional civil defence policy model began to move increasingly towards one of emergency planning and within a few years,

economic forces combined with the external influence of détente and a considerably reduced risk of nuclear conflict led to increasing cuts to civil defence provision year after year until further development of civil defence policy was mothballed in 1968.

At various times during the two post-war decades, the influences of external actors and world events can be seen on policy making as can the impact of ideological concerns as expressed by civil defence's inextricable link with the development of the nuclear deterrent, though not one can be singled out as a primary determinant. It is also vital to recognise the influence of rapidly developing technological advances in the post-war years as a significant factor in the shift in policy concern, one unique to the hurriedly evolving nature of nuclear weapons seen during this period. However the overarching motivation of most policy development was rooted in economic considerations; financial concerns were found to repeatedly surpass recommendations on civil defence provision found in reports such as Strath, and ultimately, policy was shaped to fit the expenditure available rather than the other way around.

Chapter 3

Economic Influences

This chapter is the first of three chapters concerned with the three main areas of potential policy influence and will focus on the impact of economic influences on civil defence policy making. The first part of the chapter, *The revival of Civil Defence*, analyses the measures by which civil defence re-emerged as a policy concern with a broadened remit in 1972. *A Review of Civil Preparedness* concentrates on the policy significant, review of civil defence conducted by the incoming Conservative government in 1979. It examines the third party influences behind the government's change in policy concerns and the resulting shift from community-based policy making to a self-reliant, cost-effective model of civil defence. Criticism of government policy is explored, with specific reference to practical measures for public protection, the independent nuclear deterrent and British defence policy.

This is followed by *Civil Protection and Military Spending*, which focuses more closely on the relationship between civil defence policies. The policy of civil defence as an adjunct to overall defence strategy is examined in light of criticism levelled at the gulf between expenditure on military defence and civil protection. In *Local Authority Responsibilities and the 1983 Civil Defence Regulations*, the devolution of many civil defence responsibilities to local authorities and the resulting budgetary difficulty is analysed. The economic constraints facing local authorities in discharging these duties are examined and the chapter ends with a consideration of the financial influences and implications of the 1986 *Civil Protection in Peacetime Act*.

The Revival of Civil Defence

In 1970 the new Conservative Home Secretary Reginald Maudling recommended to the Ministerial Committee on home defence that expenditure on civil defence be reviewed once more, expressing his concerns over the viability of home defence under its current funding arrangements. Despite stating that '...I do not think that additional expenditure on home defence should be a high priority and I certainly do not think that there is a case to return to pre-1960 levels of expenditure, or anything like it'²⁶⁸ he proposed that a new examination of home defence provision should be undertaken:

Prior to January 1968, when the previous administration decided to put home defence on a 'care and maintenance' basis, expenditure was of the order of £24 million a year. Major savings were achieved by the disbandment of the Civil Defence Corps (£6 million), TAVR [Territorial Army] (£3 million) and Auxiliary Fire Service (£1 million). The impact of other savings tended to be arbitrary because, in general, home defence preparations were not only far from complete but at different stages of completion. The £8 million a year now devoted to home defence is spent primarily on preserving capital assets such as buildings and equipment, and on maintaining a minimum amount of knowledge and special skills. It does not allow the existing systems to be maintained at a consistent state of readiness or to be improved; and there must be doubt about the viability of the present arrangements and whether we are getting real value for the expenditure involved.²⁶⁹

With this analysis, Maudling proposed a review to examine the effectiveness of civil defence measures. This time, with the Home Secretary in favour of a review to

²⁶⁸ TNA: HO 322/798 *Ministerial Committee on Home Defence, Chairman's Note to members* (3 November 1970)

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

look again at home defence policy, the proposal was a success. The resulting 1971 Home Defence Review acknowledged the financial shortcomings of existing civil defence policy, stating that:

If the programme remains on the present care and maintenance basis, the Government could not fulfil the four aims of home defence; in particular virtually nothing could be done to mitigate the effects of nuclear war on the public or to enhance the basis for national recovery.²⁷⁰

The review considered the effectiveness of various measures amounting to no more than £15 million per year, and recommended the completion of the Sub-Regional control network in England and Wales, the maintenance of emergency and wartime broadcasting services at current levels of readiness and the upgrade of the UK warning and monitoring organisation but crucially, no programme of mass public education or shelter building. The Review advised instead that 'public protection will be based on keeping families together'²⁷¹ which was to form that basis of the 'stay-put' policy that lasted until the end of the Cold War. Home Office Permanent Secretary, Phillip Allen, stated what could be achieved without additional expenditure on civil defence in a meeting with Maudling in July 1971:

It would be misleading to claim that a credible system could be created. The current aim was to provide warning of an attack, so that people could take what shelter they could, and the survival of some form of government after an attack. This was not civil defence as it was known in the last war.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ TNA: CAB 322/799 *Official Committee on Home Defence* 26 May 1971

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² TNA: HO 322/798 *Minutes of a Meeting between Phillip Allen, Reginald Maudling and Sir Burke*

Tellingly, the Review acknowledged openly that the overall aim of civil defence was not only to mitigate the effect of an attack on Britain and enhance the basis of post-attack recovery but to ensure the continuation of government and protect the UK from any internal threat.²⁷³ Faced with severe economic constraints, however, the the proposals laid out in the Review were rejected and local authorities were informed that ‘...regarding public protection and shelter ó we are unable to find sufficient savings to finance local authority expenditure in this area.’²⁷⁴

Importantly, the review sought to redefine the scope of civil defence in line with renewed concerns over domestic security to include for the first time the provision to ‘secure the UK against any internal threat.’²⁷⁵ 1970 and 1971 had seen major strikes from miners, Post Office workers and various other groups and this combined with the deteriorating situation in Northern Ireland meant that internal disputes were considered by the Review as an increasing threat to Britain, potentially more so than foreign aggressors. It was evident, however, that civil defence was intended to meet an external threat that it currently was not capable of doing.

In 1972, two years after the Conservative government had come to power, Maudling reported that, in light of recent difficulties in industrial relations the

Trend (27th July 1971)

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ TNA: CAB 322/817 *Home Defence Review – follow up action* (5 August 1971)

²⁷⁵ TNA: CAB 322/799 *Official Committee on Home Defence* (26 May 1971)

government had been 'clearly right'²⁷⁶ to relate home defence measures more directly to civil emergencies, advising that '...I should like to make our preparations for nuclear war the tail and our preparations for civil emergencies the dog; and I should like now to move openly to an orthodox position in which the dog would wag the tail.'²⁷⁷ He also noted, however, that current civil defence policy did not take the threat from nuclear attack seriously enough:

Although the report represents the best that can be done within the limit of the existing ceiling on expenditure related to home defence, it is stretching credibility to suppose that the very limited preparations which that ceiling permits would be significant in a situation of nuclear war. The fact is that, under the compulsion of successive reviews on public expenditure, we have allowed civil defence measures to be downgraded to a point at which they no longer make sense in relation to the particular kind of emergency for which they are supposed to cater.²⁷⁸

This was not necessarily a view borne out by contemporary threat assessments. In 1972 there was little change from the 1968 assessments and assumptions regarding the nature of Soviet aggression and as such, priorities could only be adjusted to within current total expenditure, which amounted to about £10 million, primarily to provide planning guidance based on those 1968 assumptions.²⁷⁹

Prime Minister Edward Heath understood that given the economic constraints

²⁷⁶ TNA: PREM 15/790 *Home Defence Review* (1971)

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ TNA: PREM 15/790 *Home Defence Review* (1971)

²⁷⁹ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Home Defence Review 1980 – The Current State of Civil Preparedness* (17 March 1980)

under which they were operating, civil defence was making best use of the funds available. In a 1972 memo to the Home Secretary, Heath acknowledged the results of the review, which concluded there should be no increase in civil defence expenditure and that existing expenditure ought to be considered for reallocation, primarily towards civil emergencies.²⁸⁰ He expressed concern however over the limitations on policy decisions that financial constraints were dictating, stating that:

I understand that we have now done all that we can to ensure the best possible use of the existing funds; but I am concerned that our present civil defence measures hardly make sense in relation to the particular kind of emergency which they were originally designed to meet.²⁸¹

As a result of this, it was agreed that planning for home defence would be reviewed, in order to consider whether any further cost ö...would be justified by putting us in a stronger position than at present to face emergencies, whether they arise in peace or in the shadow of approaching war.ö²⁸² Although his was a financially troubled government, Heath was evidently still keen to be seen as providing civil defence and in 1972 civil defence emerged once more as a policy concern with the objectives that were to remain until the end of the Cold War.

The resulting review was carried out under the proviso that any recommended expenditure should not be increased above the level required to keep preparations

²⁸⁰ TNA: T 331/850 *Preparations for civil defence and civil emergencies: general papers* (1972)

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² TNA: T 331/850 *Cancellation of contracts and requisitions under the defence programme: 3 year production programme 1960-1961 - 1962-1963*

on a 'care and maintenance' basis adopted at the time of the devaluation measures in January 1968. Be that as it may, the results of the review concluded that there was not much scope for improving civil defence measures under such conditions,²⁸³ and so policy concerns turned to the re-appropriation and redistribution of existing funds, with a primary focus on domestic emergencies.

The conclusions of the review led to the setting out of *Home Office Circular No. ES 1/1972*. Now referred to as 'home defence', civil defence policy's new objectives as evident in the 1971 Home Review were laid out in 1973's *Home Defence Planning Assumptions*:

- to secure the United Kingdom against any internal threat;
- to mitigate as far as practicable the effects of any direct attack on the United Kingdom involving the use of conventional, nuclear, biological or chemical weapons;
- to provide alternative machinery of government at all levels to increase the prospects of, and to direct, national security;
- to enhance the basis for national recovery in the post-attack period.²⁸⁴

This document went largely unnoticed and created little political debate, but continuing the trend for civil defence as an adjunct to an overall British defence policy first seen in the 1960s it placed civil defence firmly within the context of emergency planning, creating an inexorable link between war planning and the preparations required for and the organisation appropriate to a major peacetime

²⁸³ TNA: CAB 255/845 016D

²⁸⁴ Home Office Circular No. ES 3/1973 p.4

emergency or natural disaster.²⁸⁵

The general disinterest in civil defence by all but the most dedicated advocates during these years can be seen as a mixture of response to low-risk threat assumptions and increasingly severe competition for ever more limited funds. A Treasury minute of January 1973 on the public expenditure position relating to civil emergencies spending confirmed the precarious financial position faced by civil defence policymakers:

The growth rate for public expenditure agreed by the cabinet was barely compatible with tax policies; the (increased) Contingency reserve is largely mortgaged; there are signs that the pressure on resources may begin to appear more quickly than previously expected.

The terms in which the Chancellor will report to the cabinet clearly make most unwelcome proposals for civil emergencies, involving extra expenditure of about £70 million over the next few years. If approved, the reduction in programmes to be sought in this year's public expenditure would have to be increased by an equal amount.²⁸⁶

Upon seeing these minutes the Chief Secretary commented to the Treasury that there were '...alarming expenditure implications in all this & these items are truly 'Contingency reserve', if only there were any Contingency reserve left!²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Home Office Circular No. ES 1/1972 p.2

²⁸⁶ TNA: T 331/850 *Cancellation of contracts and requisitions under the defence programme: 3 year production programme*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

There was a good deal of policy continuity under the Labour government 1974-79. Operational matters were conducted in accordance with the previous administration's guidelines, civil defence policy developing by what one commentator has called 'a dual process of the development of ideas and the provision of guiding advice.'²⁸⁸ The Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, Dr Shirley Summerskill, confirmed the Labour government's agreement with previous administrations' reluctance to plan for shelter provision on the grounds of cost, stating in 1976 that '...this country could not afford to provide a network of public underground shelters which would give considerable protection against the effects of a nuclear explosion.'²⁸⁹ Robin Woolven agrees with this summary of the effects of the government's precarious financial position on civil defence at this time, noting how economics eventually triumphed over ideological motivations:

Regardless of the ideological motivation of policy advisors and policy makers, all parties acknowledged the need to provide some level of public protection or perhaps just something to better help survivors survive - but all had to realise that if there was not sufficient funding to back their ideas, then they were merely shouting into the wind.²⁹⁰

The Labour government also agreed with its predecessors that public shelters were economically untenable in that nothing should be done for civil defence purposes

²⁸⁸ Buckley, J. (1982) p.33

²⁸⁹ Summerskill, S. HC Deb, 11 May 1976, vol. 911, cc.420-8

²⁹⁰ Interview with Dr Robin Woolven, former Intelligence Officer with the Security Service 1980697, 23 August 2013

which would add directly or indirectly to the cost of housing in the public or the private sector. In the same year the Standing Advisory Committee on Home Defence comprised of over 100 scientific advisers was disbanded²⁹¹. The government stated that this was due to economic reasons, but some commentators critical of what they considered the government's ineffectual and deceptive civil defence policy argued that this was a move designed to remove the well-informed, independent advisers who might be critical of government policy.²⁹²

Additionally, revised planning assumptions in 1977 took account of the changing assessment of possible warning times preceding attack and concluded that while the general threat of nuclear confrontation remained, initial hostilities could be prolonged and be of a conventional nature.²⁹³ This marked the beginning of a shift in NATO policy that would trickle down into British policy making, from that of a model of 'tripwire' defence to one embracing a more graduated response to the increased Soviet military capability.

The government's term of office was marked by severe economic restraints and expenditure cuts and while civil defence spending bore its full share of reductions in public expenditure, the primary effect of this on home defence provision was in terms of stockpiles of equipment and manpower.²⁹⁴ The reduction in overall civil

²⁹¹ Crossley, G (1983) p. 53

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Home Defence Review 1980 – The Current State of Civil Preparedness* (17 March 1980)

²⁹⁴ Jenkins, R. HC Deb, 19 March 1976, vol. 907, cc.646-8w

defence expenditure was severe, from £27.2 million in 1974-75 to 14.6 million in 1978-79.²⁹⁵ In the five years up to 1978-79, Government spending on civil defence halved in real terms. This was the culmination of a period in which the subject had been almost entirely ignored, and in the eight years to 1976, only one debate took place on the subject in the House of Commons.²⁹⁶

The 1979 Review of Civil Preparedness

In the Conservative Election Manifesto for 1979 significant increases in defence spending were promised, emphasising the importance of ensuring the continuing effectiveness of Britain's nuclear deterrent.²⁹⁷ In May 1979, NATO ministers also stressed that civil defence was an essential part of deterrence, defence and détente and that weaknesses in civil protection could have damaging effects on the defence of the Alliance military posture.²⁹⁸

When the Conservatives were returned to power in 1979, they announced a review of civil defence. A briefing paper for the Home Secretary dated July 1980 concerning the proposed financial implications of the review indicates the government's focus on the importance of spending on civil defence as an adjunct to a strong military posture and not necessarily directly on the means of public protection:

²⁹⁵ Whitelaw, W. HC Deb 29 November 1979, vol. 974, cc.723-4w

²⁹⁶ Waller, G. HC Deb, 24 July 1985, vol. 83, cc.1188-215

²⁹⁷ *Conservative Election Manifesto 1979* p.12 <http://www.conservative-party.net/manifestos/1979/1979-conservative-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 4 September 2008)

²⁹⁸ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Home Defence Review 1980 – The Current State of Civil Preparedness* (17 March 1980)

The total package, costing at 1979 prices about £108m over the five years 1981 to 1986, is vital to the enhancement of our civil preparedness and to the general credibility of the approximately £8,000m annually to which we are now committed for military defence. The proposed measures must be viewed as a whole, including those which may not, at first glance, appear to be directly related to the physical protection of the population.²⁹⁹

It was crucial that something be seen to be being done about civil defence, though Home secretary William Whitelaw was aware that the most effective response to the threat might be to enhance our offensive capability. But this would be insufficient to reassure the public of the Government's supporters in parliament.³⁰⁰ Whitelaw subsequently asked the Treasury for permission to draw from the government's Contingency reserve, intended for national emergencies.³⁰¹ It was with an eye to criticism of the neglect of civil defence from both the public and political opponents (both from Labour and within the Conservative party) that the increased spending was approved. The Treasury cautiously approved the proposed review, but with a proviso that amendments were made, the inclusion of which were calculated to avoid any assumption that significantly greater expenditure on civil defence was needed:

While the Treasury appear not to dispute the need for further studies, they attach emphasis to the importance of ensuring that the studies concentrate on the cost-effectiveness of options going beyond the immediate measures to be announced. In particular they are anxious

²⁹⁹ TNA: HO 322/941 *Memorandum OD(80)50 on Civil Home Defence Policy* (July 1980)

³⁰⁰ TNA: CAB 148/190 *Memo from William Whitelaw to members of Defence and Overseas Policy Committee* (20 March 1980)

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

lest public awareness of, for example, a review of shelter and dispersal policies might make it difficult for the government to announce subsequently that there was to be no radical change if, in the event, the study indicated that alternative policies were unlikely to be feasible or economic.³⁰²

The Treasury was explicit that a deliberate increase in expenditure on civil defence was not a proper charge to the existing Contingency reserve, and that as the government was '...determined to keep total public expenditure within the limits set in Cmnd. 7841, additional money for home defence could only be found at the expense of other items in departmental programmes.'³⁰³ William Whitelaw recognised the Treasury's resistance but made clear his intentions to proceed with the review, indicating that he would handle any issues with the Treasury '...by making a personal approach to the Chancellor.'³⁰⁴

Suggesting that a comprehensive plan of protection for the public may not have been the primary motivating reason in announcing the review, a Home Defence Review briefing paper notes that '...taking account of current financial restraints, I think that the proposed programme (i.e. the full package costing about an extra £20m a year) is a reasonable and defensible one, which should go some way to satisfy critics of our present state of preparedness.'³⁰⁵ This attitude can also be seen in a Home Office memorandum dated 7^h July 1980, which clarifies the government's position on the rationale for increased spending on home defence, recommending

³⁰² TNA: HO 322/1024 *Civil Preparedness for Home Defence* (6 May 1980)

³⁰³ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Home Defence Review* (18 April 1980)

³⁰⁴ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Home Defence Review and Ministerial Statement* (17 April 1980)

³⁰⁵ TNA: HO 322/941 *Home Defence Review* (30 June 1980)

that the proposals for increased spending as determined by the review is put to Cabinet: 'To do otherwise must raise doubts about the credibility of the very expensive measures we are taking in relation to other aspects of defence policy, and it may also raise serious political problems for us.'³⁰⁶

Whitelaw believed, however, that it was necessary to '...be more forthcoming in order to allay public and party criticism while recognising the current constraints on public expenditure.'³⁰⁷ Consequently, in his statement to the House of Commons in August 1980 concerning the results of the review, he stated that '...the Government decided to accord high priority to the defence of the nation; and a review of civil preparedness for home defence was set in train so that this important element of our defence strategy could be considered as part of the improvement of our general defence effort.'³⁰⁸ As such, certain measures 'ó the modernisation of the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation, increasing the civil defence responsibilities of local authorities and the increased involvement of government departments and the emergencies services in civil defence planning and training ó were announced.³⁰⁹ As the Home Office memorandum suggested, however, these measures included no immediately obvious increase in provision for the physical protection of the population.

The total cost of these measures over three years was estimated at a total of £45 million, a rise of 60% by 1983 ó 84 from £27 million a year before the review; from

³⁰⁶ TNA: HO 322/941 *Home Defence Review* (7 July 1980)

³⁰⁷ TNA: HO 322/939 *Ministerial Meeting on 15 May 1980* (21 May 1980)

³⁰⁸ Whitelaw, W. HC Deb, 07 August 1980, vol. 990, cc.790-804

³⁰⁹ Whitelaw, W. HC Deb, 07 August 1980, vol. 990, cc.790-804

65p to 83p per head.³¹⁰ Whitelaw proposed that this additional expenditure would be covered by a reallocation of resources within existing programmes and without adding to the total of public expenditure.³¹¹ This also reflected a feature of the Conservative administration which favoured increased defence spending.³¹² However as a proportion of defence spending this additional expenditure allocated to civil defence was minimal, from 0.237% in 1980 to 0.308% in 1983 and the 1980-81 expenditure levels after the review still amounted, in real terms, to less than was spent under the Labour administration from 1974 to 1977.³¹³

When questioned by the opposition as to whether the Review contained any plans to initiate a programme of public shelter construction in key target areas, Whitelaw answered 'the provision of public shelters through the government would be enormously costly and something which we could not contemplate.'³¹⁴ This conclusion was the result of the findings of a 1977 Working Party on shelter policy led by scientist James Cotterill which concluded that to provide shelters for each of the 10 million households in Britain would cost between £60 and £80 billion, or roughly £1,000 to £1,500 per head, over three times the cost of the entire defence budget.³¹⁵ The government's reasoning behind the apparent reluctance to provide what might have reasonably been argued to be an essential part of a strategy for public protection was carefully explained in the publicly available 1980 HMSO

³¹⁰ Guardian, (5 June 1980), p.9

³¹¹ Whitelaw, W. HC Deb, 07 August 1980, vol. 990, cc.790-804

³¹² Mullard, M. and Swaray, R. (2006) *The politics of public expenditure from Thatcher to Blair* in Policy & Politics, vol.34, no. 3. pp. 495-515

³¹³ THA: Cmnd. 7439 *The Government's Expenditure Plan 1979-80 to 1982-83* (January 1979)

³¹⁴ Whitelaw, W. HC Deb, 07 August 1980, vol. 990, cc.790-804

³¹⁵ De Groot, G. (2004) p.319

leaflet *Civil Defence: why we need it*:

The risk of war is at present considered so slight that the enormous expense of providing shelters to every family in the land could not be justified. It would cost billions of pounds. As it is, more is being spent on civil defence than previously ó about £45 million a year by 1983/84.³¹⁶

The same publication also made clear that there would be no revival of the pre-1968 volunteer Civil Defence Corps, as it ò...would cost an unjustifiable amount of money.ó³¹⁷ Critics of this policy were quick to highlight what was seen as an equally unjustifiable dereliction of the government's duty of care towards the public on insupportable economic grounds. Arguing for greater civil defence spending in a House of Commons debate in March 1983, the Conservative MP and vice president of the National Council for Civil Defence John Loveridge stated:

The pamphlet states that, as it is, about £45 million a year is due to be spent in 1983ó84. That is less than £1 a year per head of the population. That is under £1 a year for the insurance of a child's life for civil defence. Is that enough? We should examine the costs. It has been said time and again that we cannot afford this insurance to safeguard our families. However, this country believes in looking after people.

£500 billion will be spent [during the next 10 years] on health and social services. If we spent 2 per cent only of that sum, itself only a part of Government spending, on [civil defence] it would be a cheap insurance. The figures cannot be more than estimates but it has been said that such expenditure might well increase the survival rate in these islands from a low threshold of nuclear attack, with one, two or more bombs, from 15 million to 30 million survivors. Those lives are

³¹⁶ *Civil Defence: why we need it* (1980) HMSO

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

worth an insurance premium.³¹⁸

As Stafford notes, the military and political context in which the renewed interest in civil defence was taking place was very different to those seen in the post-war period.³¹⁹ While the early Cold War model of civil defence saw campaigns to encourage public participation in British defence in the form of the Civil Defence Corps³²⁰, the post-1972 focus was on self-reliance and personal responsibility. In a continuation of the shift away from community-based policy making to the self-reliant model of civil defence first seen in the Strath Report, Whitelaw was keen to assure the public that this economic concern would not negatively affect public survival in the event of a nuclear exchange, stating that “Most houses in this country offer a reasonable degree of protection against radioactive fallout from nuclear explosions and protection can be substantially improved by a series of quite simple do-it-yourself measures.”³²¹ Part of this open-market, individualistic approach to personal protection came in the form of the 1981 HMSO publication *Domestic Nuclear Shelters*, which gave some information on various domestic shelters that could be built by the householder.³²² The booklet outlined several types of shelter, ranging from a basic trench dug in the garden to an indoor brick shelter and a permanent, fully-sunk blast proof shelter.³²³

³¹⁸ Loveridge, J. HC Deb, 24 March 1983, vol. 39, cc.1083-99

³¹⁹ Stafford, J. (2012) p.384

³²⁰ See appendix A

³²¹ Cox, J. (1981) p.229

³²² *Domestic Nuclear Shelters* (1981) HMSO

³²³ See appendix D

Advice on implementing the recommendations was circulated to local authorities, establishing the government's position on shelters:

There are no specially-designed communal fallout shelters in the United Kingdom. Successive governments have taken the view that it would not be feasible to provide a system of purpose-built shelters, partly because of the shortage of suitable sites sufficiently close to major centres of population, but also because of the prohibitive cost.

³²⁴

It was suggested, however, that in light of this financial constraint local authorities promote *Domestic Nuclear Shelters* as an alternative to communal facilities. Whitelaw's plan for householder-led protection schemes never became popular, however, either with local authorities or individuals. A 1982 episode of the BBC science programme QED, *Nuclear War: A Guide to Armageddon*³²⁵ imagined the scenario of a 1 megaton nuclear weapon dropped over London and constructed a garden shelter built to the specifications of one in *Domestic Nuclear Shelters* to test what protection it would afford. The shelter was found to easily flood, provided unverifiable protection against blast and took several times longer to construct than stated, with the living conditions inside cramped and unsanitary. The failure of home shelters was primarily due however to their prohibitive costs - the largest, most sophisticated designs outlined in *Domestic Nuclear Shelters* could cost anything up to £20,000, often more per head than it was estimated it would cost for the government to provide public shelter places.³²⁶

³²⁴ TNA: CAB 322/1012 *Scottish Office Circular ES (SCOT)/1981*

³²⁵ QED – *Nuclear War: A Guide To Armageddon* (26 July 1982) BBC

³²⁶ Campbell, D. (1983) p.375

Critics of the government's position on public shelter provision were vocal, and centred around the government's apparent refusal to consider the cheaper option of mass, public shelters³²⁷ while continuing to make available the means for the protection and continuation of government and the large sums of money spent on Britain's new nuclear deterrent, Trident. Labour's former Foreign Secretary David Owen encapsulated the arguments when he denounced the government's civil defence policy in his work *Negotiate and Survive*:

Having decided that home defence must be geared to what the country can afford, and yet having decided that it can afford £5000 million for Trident, the Government should not be unduly surprised to find a considerable measure of scepticism about the genuineness of their intentions to protect against nuclear attack ó or as a result of that scepticism ó opposition to their defence policy.

The Home Secretary reveals the paucity of his approach [and] goes on to advocate spending to ensure that the ruling establishment survive ó the Royal Family, central government and local government politicians, the admirals and generals and air marshals and senior administrators all survive. But millions of others lose their lives. Money is to be spent on Sub-Regional Headquarters; the governors will go underground, the governed will stay on top.³²⁸

Despite these criticisms, the government consistently argued in favour of the specific distribution of the additional civil defence expenditure, stating that spending on civil defence was not necessarily linked with any escalation in nuclear armaments.³²⁹ Proponents of increased civil defence spending often cited the worth of civil defence using the example of Scandinavian countries who, despite being

³²⁷ *Ibid.* p.111

³²⁸ Owen, D. (1980) p.20

³²⁹ The Times, September 1982

considerably less of a target than Britain in any nuclear exchange, nevertheless provided comprehensive civil defence protection for the majority of their populations.³³⁰ Additionally, critics of the lack of government expenditure on civil defence on both sides of the House of Lords were quick to seize on the continuing promotion of civil defence as an adjunct to Britain's deterrent. They argued that the USSR also had a sophisticated and widespread civil defence organisation and shelter programme reputed to cost over £500 million annually³³¹, and Britain's place as one of the lowest spenders on civil defence amongst all the NATO countries showed a lack of commitment to home defence that weakened the deterrent posture.³³² Peter Goodwin, writing in 1981 on why Russian and Chinese plans for civil defence were much more advanced than those seen in Britain and the US, touches upon the core dichotomy at the heart of a Conservative civil defence policy based on the concept of deterrence:

It is interesting to speculate why the same devotion to civil defence expenditure is not followed in the West. The answer may be that the democratic system of government necessarily submits any proposed civil defence expenditure to greater public scrutiny in the West. This would very probably lead to the whole concept of deterrence being severely questioned if a government stresses the need for any expensive programme of protective measures for the public. And of course it might encourage stronger criticism of military expenditure. Since Western governments hope and believe that deterrence will keep the peace, they are understandably reluctant to jeopardise their means to engage in it or to acknowledge that the policy might not be ideal by arguing for a big civil defence programme.³³³

³³⁰ Thorne, N. HC Deb, 24 March 1983, vol. 39, cc.1083-99

³³¹ Murton, O. and Clifford, L. HL Deb, 05 March 1980, vol. 406, cc.260-386

³³² Boston, T. HL Deb, 07 August 1980 vol. 412, cc.1617-32

³³³ Goodwin, P. (1981) p.75

This highlights a major contradiction inherent in any civil defence policy created by a government at the head of a nuclear-armed state not faced by those countries with neutral foreign policies. The state cannot be seen to increase expenditure on civil defence as a large amount of spending on such implies an uncertainty about the reliability of a deterrence policy by admitting the possibility that such a policy could fail. As such, some critics denounced the government for spending any money on public protection at all, considering civil defence policy as a process which legitimised certain military and economic policies which would only exacerbate the likelihood of nuclear war.³³⁴ A *Times* editorial in March 1980, commenting on civil defence spending warned ‘...for far less expenditure the enemy could make a mockery of all this by increasing the number of attacking weapons, especially against a country so small, centralised and densely populated as Britain.’³³⁵ Spending on civil defence in the case of nuclear war was, the government insisted, perfectly justified. Minister of State for Home Affairs, Patrick Mayhew, said at the annual conference of Civil Defence and Emergency Planners in 1981 that:

We cannot have an effective home defence policy unless and until we carry with us the majority of people in this country in believing it to be a wise and a necessary insurance. I make no bones about it. I wish we had much more money to use.³³⁶

³³⁴ Boyes, R. and Haynes, F. HC Deb, 21 June 1984 vol. 62, cc.468-9

³³⁵ The Times (26 March 1980)

³³⁶ Guardian, (4 July 1981) p.4

The government had made it clear; civil defence policy would be dictated not by what was needed *but by what could be afforded*. As Leon Brittan, then a Minister of State at the Home Office, stated in a debate in the House of Commons just prior to the publication of the Review:

But, of course, civil preparedness costs money, just as much as military preparedness.... In our review we ask the fundamental question of what is the right level of expenditure, both in absolute terms and in terms of what the country can afford now. That is a question which must be answered by anyone who advocates that more attention be paid to civil defence. Let there be no doubt about it - any significant enhancement of the state of our preparedness will cost money. The debate on this subject is not so much about what extra preparedness is needed as about whether the money can be found and, if so, at the expense of what other area of expenditure it is to be found.³³⁷

During a meeting of the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Civil Defence Policy on the 16th June 1980, the sub-committee noted that there would be an inevitable element of self-evacuation but ò...agreed that there was no effective alternative to the 'stay put' policy but there was a need to educate the population and restore confidence.ö³³⁸ The sub-committee also concluded, however, that it did not ò...view with favour government financial assistance to the general public for the installation of domestic shelters.ö³³⁹ Fulfilling the sub-committee's remit for increased public education, although perhaps not in restoring confidence, the series of public information that would be known as Protect & Survive would urge the

³³⁷ Brittan, L. HC Deb, 20 February 1980, vol. 979, cc.619-30

³³⁸ TNA: HO 322/941 *Note of Ministerial Sub-Committee Meeting on Civil Defence Policy* (30 June 1980) p.1

³³⁹ *Ibid.* p.2

public to remain at home:

No place in the United Kingdom is safer than any other. The risk is as great in the countryside as in the towns. No one can tell where the safest place will be. So you are just as safe in your own home area as anywhere else. In fact, you are far better off at home because it is the place where you know and where you are known. So, stay where you are.³⁴⁰

In August 1980 the Cabinet's Home Defence Committee established the Working Group on Shelter and Evacuation, led by civil servant Robert Wade-Gery of the Cabinet Office. The remit of the Working Group was to '...consider and make recommendations on the future direction of the Government's shelter policy and on ways of improving the public perception of the 'stay put policy'.'³⁴¹ As the private government view was that there was '...no prospect of large public expenditure on either,'³⁴² in practical terms the concerns of the Working Group were mostly firmly fixed on the latter. The 'stay put' policy on evacuation was in itself one that had been approved by NATO in October 1977, designed principally to restrict cross-border, uncoordinated movement of populations. Britain's version was one that was justified by the argument that no place in the United Kingdom would be safer than any other, both from the direct effects of nuclear weapons and the resulting radioactive fallout. Despite this, the conclusion of the Working Group was that '...under present policy the proportion of casualties from the direct effects would be very much higher than those from fallout; protection against fallout may be

³⁴⁰ *Protect and Survive* (1980) *Stay At Home*

³⁴¹ TNA: HO 322/958 *Working Party on Shelter and Evacuation Policies* (29 August 1980)

³⁴² TNA: HO 322/984 *Oral Statement on Home Defence Review* (6 August 1980)

obtained much more simply than protection against blast.³⁴³ In March 1981, a progress report of the Working Party noted that:

There has been no public provision of purpose-built communal or domestic shelters since World War II, and there is no current intention of making such provision. The risk assessment is very low and the cost would be very high. Public provision of reasonably effective domestic shelters...would be likely to cost at least £1000 per family.³⁴⁴

In January 1982, a research paper entitled *Population Response To War* by Sally Leivesley and Jane Hogg at the Home Defence and Emergency Services Division of the Home Office summarised government thinking on evacuation and shelter planning, echoing the concerns of prohibitive costs and issues of population control that could be seen running through civil defence policy until the end of the Cold War:

Evacuating the population from high-risk areas in the expectation that a strike is imminent, only to find that this expectation was a false alarm, would cause massive social disruption and lower the public's positive response to future warnings. An alternative policy which has the merit of minimising the social disruption is to urge the population to take shelter.

If it is likely [that] the build-up of the threat will be such that a nuclear strike and its timing can be predicted with considerable certainty, then an evacuation policy driving the population away from high-risk areas is clearly preferable to a shelter policy. Otherwise the relative desirability of evacuation and shelter must depend on the circumstances prevailing, politically, socially and economically, and upon the weight of the attack.³⁴⁵

³⁴³ TNA: HO 322/958 *Shelter and Evacuation – History and Progress to Date* (26 March 1981)

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁵ TNA: HO 322/1008 Leivesley, S. and Hogg, J (1982) pp. 8-9

An interim report of the Working Group in October 1982 on evacuation agreed with the Leivesley and Hogg paper when it argued in favour of an evacuation policy, stating that: 'The 'stay-put' policy is largely discredited in the public mind and is impossible to justify to people living in obvious target zones,'³⁴⁶ and recommending '...a change of policy from 'stay-put' to the evacuation of some 14 million people from prime target areas.'³⁴⁷

When presented with the results of the Working Group's recommendations in the form of a feasibility study, various government departments made their objections known. The recommendation was a cause for alarm for the Ministry of Defence, who foresaw 'considerable problems of public presentation'³⁴⁸, especially in the areas earmarked for possible evacuation. It had been expected that the Ministry of Defence would raise objections '...on the grounds that it will make people think that we expect such an attack and so undermine our policy of relying on deterrence'³⁴⁹ but it also directly contradicted the line given by the Ministry of Defence that the whole of the United Kingdom would be a target in the event of East-West conflict and was the opposite of the advice in *Protect and Survive* which stated that no area in the United Kingdom was safer than anywhere else.

The Department of Health and Social Security responded by stating that in their '...considered view there is no point in attempting to work out the logistics and

³⁴⁶ TNA: HO 322/1011 *Interim Report – An Official Evacuation Scheme* (4 October 1982)

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ TNA: HO 322/1011 *Working Group on Shelters and Evacuation* (September 1982)

³⁴⁹ TNA: HO 322/1011 *Civil Preparedness – Evacuation Feasibility Study* (12 March 1982)

implications for a proposal which is impossible to pursue.³⁵⁰ A similar response from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food stated that '...it would be impossible to feed adequately a dispersed population of some 31 million'.³⁵¹ Despite on-going advice on the desirability of an evacuation procedure in certain circumstances, the government continued until 1983 to support a policy of no evacuation, the reality of the logistical and financial impossibilities seeming to outweigh the humanitarian benefits. This reinforced critics' beliefs that civil defence continued to lack the crucial humanitarian function that would distinguish it from a policy purely designed to bolster the effectiveness of Britain's deterrent posture.

Civil Protection and Government Spending

During their opposition years from 1974 to 1979, the Conservatives made it clear that one of their highest priorities on returning to government would be an increase in defence spending, stating as one of their top five tasks of their 1979 manifesto their intention to '...strengthen Britain's defences and work with our allies to protect our interests in an increasingly threatening world'.³⁵² Margaret Thatcher's view was that the defence budget was one of the few elements of public expenditure that could truly be described as essential; 'This point was well-made by a robust Labour Defence Minister, Denis (Now Lord) Healey, many years ago: 'Once we have cut expenditure to the extent where our security is imperilled, we

³⁵⁰ TNA: HO 322/1011 *Evacuation Study: Feasibility of Population Dispersal Scheme* (30 March 1982)

³⁵¹ TNA: HO 322/1011 *Evacuation Study: Feasibility of Population Dispersal* (12 March 1982)

³⁵² *Conservative Election Manifesto 1979* <http://www.conservative-party.net/manifestos/1979/1979-conservative-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 4 September 2008)

have no houses, we have no hospitals, we have no schools. We have a heap of cinders. ³⁵³ As Duncan Campbell argues, many members of the Conservative party, both in the constituencies, local associations and the parliamentary party, supported civil defence as a companion to a strong military and the budgets of the early to mid-1980s reflect this.

Table 1 compares the amount spent on defence with civil defence from the revival of civil defence in 1972 until 1986 and illustrates the proportion of the defence budget allocated to civil defence.

³⁵³ Thatcher, M. (2002) p.44

Table 1: Civil Defence spending as proportion of defence spending 1972-1986

Year	Defence spending (£ million)	Civil Defence spending (£ million)	Civil Defence spending as proportion of Defence spending
1972	3477	9	0.258
1973	4106	11	0.267
1974	4747	13	0.273
1975	5836	11	0.188
1976	7275	28	0.384
1977	8184	12	0.146
1978	9563	16	0.167
1979	11319	40	0.353
1980	13491	32	0.237
1981	14574	27	0.185
1982	16730	35	0.209
1983	16200	50	0.308
1984	17400	67	0.385
1985	19100	69	0.361
1986	20100	80	0.398

Source: ukpublicspending.co.uk and Hansard

With the exception of 1982-1983, the defence budget is shown to increase year on year, although spending on civil defence as a percentage of the overall defence budget is shown to have not increased proportionately, remaining much more variable. Civil defence spending declines in 1974-5, 1976-7 and 1979-81 and as a proportion of defence expenditure it almost halved between 1979-81 (from 0.353% to 0.185%). The invasion of Afghanistan followed by the cruise missile problem in 1979 and the growing unease caused by Soviet expansionism helped to reinvigorate the issue of nuclear defence as a policy concern, and in 1979-80 this translated into

a spike in both defence and civil defence expenditure, but civil defence expenditure did not see sustained year on year increase until the review of 1981.

Table 2 and 3 compare the amount spent of civil defence compared with total government expenditure and nominal GDP respectively between 1972 and 1986.

Table 2: Civil Defence spending as proportion of total government spending 1972-1986

Year	Total government spending (£ million)	Civil Defence spending (£ million)	Civil Defence spending as percentage of total spending
1972	26390	9	0.034
1973	30546	11	0.036
1974	39218	13	0.033
1975	51524	11	0.021
1976	58464	28	0.047
1977	61867	12	0.019
1978	71949	16	0.022
1979	85166	40	0.046
1980	103858	32	0.030
1981	116060	27	0.023
1982	128044	35	0.027
1983	132700	50	0.037
1984	140500	67	0.047
1985	150900	69	0.045
1986	158600	80	0.050

Source: ukpublicspending.co.uk and Hansard.

As a proportion of total government spending, civil defence expenditure rises consistently in the three years following the revival of civil defence as a policy concern in 1972. However, as with spending on civil defence as a proportion of overall defence spending, no sustained growth is seen until 1982. As a percentage of nominal GDP however, the numbers do not correlate in a similar way. The proportion of GDP represented by civil defence expenditure fluctuates between 0.008% and 0.022% throughout the fourteen year period, with no sustained period of growth from 1982 as seen in the previous two tables.

Table 3: Civil Defence spending as proportion of nominal GDP 1972-1986

Year	Nominal GDP (£ million)	Civil Defence spending (£ million)	Civil Defence spending as proportion of GDP
1972	64631	9	0.013
1973	74545	11	0.014
1974	84513	13	0.015
1975	106717	11	0.010
1976	126274	28	0.022
1977	146973	12	0.008
1978	169344	16	0.009
1979	199220	40	0.020
1980	233184	32	0.013
1981	256279	27	0.010
1982	281024	35	0.012
1983	307207	50	0.016
1984	329913	67	0.020
1985	361758	69	0.019
1986	389149	80	0.020

Source: ukpublicspending.co.uk, Hansard and measuringworth.com

Table 4 shows civil defence expenditure 1972-1986 in real terms, adjusted for inflation.

Table 4: Civil Defence spending adjusted for inflation 1972-1986

Year	Civil Defence spending (£ million)	Real terms inflation adjusted ³⁵⁴ spending (£ million ³⁵⁵)	Average inflation rate for the year
1972	9	86	7.1%
1973	11	96	9.2%
1974	13	98	16.0%
1975	11	66	24.2%
1976	28	146	16.5%
1977	12	56	15.8%
1978	16	66	8.3%
1979	40	146	13.4%
1980	32	99	18.0%
1981	27	75	11.9%
1982	35	89	8.6%
1983	50	122	4.6%
1984	67	156	5.0%
1985	69	151	6.1%
1986	80	169	3.4%

Source: ukpublicspending.co.uk, Hansard and the Office of National Statistics

In real terms, civil defence expenditure rises consistently in the three years 1972-1974 under Edward Heath's Conservative government following its reactivation as

³⁵⁴ Adjusted to 2013

³⁵⁵ Figures are rounded up or down to the nearest million

a policy concern. During the years of Labour government under Harold Wilson and James Callaghan which saw inflation average 16.1% during the five year term, expenditure declines in 1974-5, 1976-7 but rises 1975-1976, 1977-1978 and again from 1978-79. The economic crises faced by the Labour government of this period was at the front of policy maker's minds as they sought to curtail unnecessary expenditure, but given the variability in spending on civil defence during this period it seems likely that other variables other than economic factors alone were making an impact. In real terms it is also shown that while the Conservatives' home defence review in 1981 produced a marked increase in real terms spending, it was not a continuous year on year increase as seen when compared to overall government spending or GDP. Although the overall economic conditions in the 1970s were worse than in the 1980s, in real terms civil defence expenditure in the 1970s was higher.

The discrepancy in civil defence spending against total defence expenditure was seized upon by critics of the government's policy as proof that civil defence was the poor relation of Britain's defence forces³⁵⁶ and opponents were quick to recognise that arguments about the risk of war could also be applied to proposed military spending.³⁵⁷ There were calls from within the Conservative party for an increase in civil defence spending, as the gap between expenditure on military defence and civil protection was such that, it was argued, it was difficult for the government to be seen to be seriously considering using its force. This made the decision to

³⁵⁶ Thorne, N. HC Deb, 29 July 1982, vol. 28, cc.1422-33

³⁵⁷ Holland, S. HC Deb, 26, October 1983, vol. 47, cc.336-74

replace or modernise the British independent deterrent ÷...no more than a very expensive bluff.ö³⁵⁸ As Lord Elystan-Morgan argued in a House of Lords debate in 1982:

The Government, it seems, have no plans for seeing to it that a substantial proportion of the people of Britain are provided, either communally or privately, with deep shelters. If the Government say that the risk of nuclear war is negligible, then, of course, I accept that it would be folly to commit ourselves to the vast expenditure that such a project entails. But if the risk of nuclear war is negligible, why should Her Majesty's Government commit Britain to the expenditure of £8,000 million upon the Trident scheme?³⁵⁹

The government sought to reassure opponents of its policy that spending on defence was closely interconnected with the humanitarian functions of civil defence, as increased expenditure on defence would serve to prevent war and therefore negate the need for civil defence. Speaking in the House of Commons, Conservative MP and former Minister of State at the Home Office, Patrick Mayhew argued against the opinion held by many in the opposition that civil defence spending increased the chances of war.³⁶⁰ He justified the government's spending on military defence by emphasising the need for Britain to contribute towards NATO: ÷We must all the time remember that we are putting our protective money on the membership of NATO and the maintenance of our deterrent.ö³⁶¹ But he further justified this by saying this policy would limit Britain's defence capabilities

³⁵⁸ Guardian, June 30 1980 p.4

³⁵⁹ Elystan-Morgan, D. HL Deb, 23 June 1982, vol. 431, cc.1072-106

³⁶⁰ Mayhew, P. HC Deb, 24 July 1985, vol. 83, cc.1188-215

³⁶¹ Mayhew, P. HC Deb, 24 March 1983, vol. 39, cc.1083-99

to trying to protect the population from a war that the government would be seen as having done nothing to prevent. He stated:

I believe not only that civil defence is a humanitarian duty but that those who say that civil defence has a part to play in the [defence] considerations that have been mentioned in this debate are right. Our total defence programme will cost between £14 billion and £15 billion this year.³⁶²

Debate on civil defence expenditure as an adjunct to overall defence strategy also centred around one of the inherent contradictions of civil defence planning, as illustrated by the government's civil defence response (or lack of it) to the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, where despite considerable perceived threat to Britain, no civil defence measures were activated. Both Conservative and Labour supporters of limited civil defence funds in proportion to the overall defence budget argued that to accord greater expenditure and effort to the national civil defence programme would in itself create international tensions and undermine the concept of deterrence. This is illustrated by Labour MP Clive Soley, speaking in a House of Commons debate in July 1985:

If the whole Western world raised expenditure and intensity of effort in relation to civil defence to a level that made the Soviets think we were planning to fight and survive a nuclear war, the deterrent theory becomes even less meaningful. If one goes about it in such a way as to make one's opponent think that one is planning to win and survive a nuclear war, again, one increases the chances of it happening.³⁶³

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ Soley, C. HC Deb, 24 July 1985, vol. 83, cc.1188-215

The average estimated expenditure per head of population on civil defence was £0.89 in 1982 - 83 and £1.20 in 1983 - 84.³⁶⁴ The government also faced criticism from both Labour MPs and some of its own backbenchers who, while broadly supporting the party's defence spending and objectives, nevertheless saw Britain's defence posture weakened by the government's apparent refusal to consider the potential outcomes of this strategy and believed that if the government undertook the risk then they must provide the expenditure for public protection. As Neil Thorne, a Conservative MP and outspoken critic of the government's lack of spending on civil defence policies, stated in a House of Commons debate on the Defence Estimates in June 1985:

In other countries, as much as 3 per cent of the total defence budget is allocated to civil defence measures, but in this country we spend less than half of 1 per cent on that. There is a great difference. If we are to work towards the type of result that the strategic defence initiative may produce, we must be ready for what might happen at the end of the day. It would be a costly exercise to try to make the necessary arrangements in a hurry, whereas if it were done over a period of 10 or more years there could be a series of phased developments, particularly in the sphere of shelters.³⁶⁵

For a government whose strategy was so heavily dependent on the theory of deterrence, an economic commitment that might possibly invoke the spectre of

³⁶⁴ Mayhew, P. HC Deb, 20 January 1983, vol. 35, cc.184-5W

³⁶⁵ Thorne, N. HC Deb, 13 June 1985, vol. 80, cc.1068-115

failure of this posture was a dangerous one, especially if it called into question defence spending levels. Once again, Neil Thorne MP, speaking in a 1983 parliamentary debate on the issue of civil defence, asked:

One of the most vital and controversial questions about civil defence is protecting the civil population from nuclear attack by means of deep shelters. Other nations, such as Sweden and Switzerland, which I have already mentioned, do that successfully, so why can we not do so? The answer must be that the cost of providing that on a full scale would be economically impracticable with our existing defence commitments.³⁶⁶

The response of the Home Secretary, Patrick Mayhew, was in keeping with his government's policy of deterrence when he stated that it: "is better to put one's money into preventing a war than to restrict one's activities to trying to provide for the population all possible protection against the risks of a war that one has done nothing to help to prevent."³⁶⁷

Local Authority Responsibilities and the 1983 Civil Defence Regulations

The total civil defence budget during the 1970s amounted to an average of £15-20 million per annum, out of which around £2-3 million was earmarked for local authority use, to be spent primarily on emergency planning, regional control

³⁶⁶ Thorne, N. HC Deb, 24 March 1983 vol. 39 cc.1083-99

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

bunkers and communication networks.³⁶⁸ The Conservatives' review of home defence in 1980 considerably increased the civil defence responsibilities of local authorities, however. Acknowledging that '...effective civil defence arrangements depend upon co-operation between central Government and local government,'³⁶⁹ the Review proposed to double the money available for civil defence provision at a local level and promised to consult with local authority associations about the allocation of additional resources for local planning and training. *Home Office Circular No. ES 1/1981* issued to local authorities after the review stated that:

The government recognises that in present financial circumstances it will be difficult for local authorities to find additional resources for even the comparatively modest measures listed above. For this reason they intend to continue for the time being to pay specific civil defence grant at the rate of 75% of approved expenditure. For the purposes of the 1981/82 rate support grant settlement it has been assumed that the additional expenditure incurred by authorities during that year on these and related measures will be £4.4m (at November 1980 pay and price levels). Total local authority expenditure eligible for civil defence grant in 1981/82 will be in the region of £9m. The Government hope that local authorities will take full advantage of the opportunities offered by these extra resources.³⁷⁰

The grant-aided rate of 75 per cent still often amounted to a significant financial obstacle, given that the local authorities now bore primary responsibility for the discharging of civil defence duties in their area. Following the 1980 review of home defence, local authorities were expected to expand their preparations to encompass not only nuclear but conventional warfare and also be able to maintain

³⁶⁸ Campbell, D. (1983) p.121

³⁶⁹ Whitelaw, W. HC Deb, 07, August 1980, vol. 990, cc.790-804

³⁷⁰ Home Office Circular No. ES 1/1981 p.6

these plans at a considerably shortened period of readiness. Scottish Office Circular ES (SCOT)/81 lays out the increased burdens on local authorities, couched in the rhetoric of deterrence:

The government does not regard war as inevitable. They are firmly committed to the promotion of peace, and they believe that a sensible state of preparedness, civil as well as military, will make war less likely. Changes in strategic thinking mean we must be prepared for conventional as well as nuclear attack on this country, and for the possibility of hostilities occurring at short notice. In future, emergency plans will have to be maintained at a higher state of readiness and be capable of dealing with a variety of forms of attack...for planning purposes it should be assumed that there may be as little as seven days warning of attack, and the basic essentials of plans should be capable of implementation within 48 hours.³⁷¹

This commitment to the essential nature and purpose of civil defence as an adjunct of deterrence not only highlights the essential dichotomies in the government's civil defence policy - with which even the local authorities who were supportive of government policy struggled ó but the conflict between civil defence and other policy concerns. The government freely acknowledged the difficulties these expectations placed upon authorities whose budgets were already tightly stretched and were aware of the difficulties of central government interfering in the budgets of local councils:

Each of the associations, whatever their political colouring, is opposed to specific guidance on local government expenditure by central government. This position is recognised in government statements on local government expenditure which invariably take

³⁷¹ TNA: HO 322/1012 *Scottish Office Circular ES (SCOT)/1981*

the view that it is for individual local authorities to decide their priorities in light of local needs and conditions. I think that we should be open to a charge of being extremely insensitive to the present financial difficulties of local government if we pressed individual authorities to incur additional expenditure at a time when each authority is being required...to reduce its overall expenditure by over 5% and may be penalised by the loss of government grant for failure to do so.³⁷²

The government remained unambiguous in their expectations, however, as a letter from the Home Secretary to the Chairman of Metropolitan Authorities shows:

Ministers are, of course, aware of the difficulties the individual authorities may face because of the economies they have been asked to make in the current year. I They are free to increase expenditure in any particular service. But if they do so it must be as a result of a conscious decision, and any such expenditure must be compensated for by counter-balancing savings elsewhere.³⁷³

The result was that the challenge of the expectations facing local authorities ó even those whose administrations fully backed the government's civil defence policy ó to bring their sometimes non-existent plans into readiness was often economically and practically insurmountable.³⁷⁴ As a briefing note provided for Home Secretary William Whitelaw in March 1981 notes, the Association of County Councils generally endorsed the aim of the government to increase civil defence preparedness, but found it difficult to reconcile further expenditure with the pressures placed by the government to reduce expenditure and staff. It was also noted that ò...complex political cross-currents within both the Association and its

³⁷² TNA: HO 322/944 *Local Authority Civil Defence Expenditure* (12 March 1981)

³⁷³ TNA: HO 322/1012 *Proposed amendment of Civil Defence (Grant) Regulations 1953* (1982)

³⁷⁴ Campbell, D. (1983) p.123

county membership, and the strong prevailing resentment of central government interference, compound their reservations.³⁷⁵

It was recognised by the government that '...if we are to do anything effective it is going to require more money, and the Treasury will strongly oppose it.'³⁷⁶ In order to encourage local authorities to increase their spending on civil defence it was proposed in a 1981 report by the Emergency Planning Division that the grant should be raised:

It is doubtful if a modest increase – say, to 80% - would produce any marked improvement in view of its trivial effect on an authority's contribution. A county council spending £100,000 on civil defence would achieve a saving of only £5,000 on its present contribution of £25,000. So it is unlikely to be worthwhile seeking to increase the rate to less than 90%. We could, alternatively, go the whole hog of full central government reimbursement of all approved civil defence expenditure. Again, some authorities would be more willing to spend if it involved no direct cost to them.³⁷⁷

However as expected and like the other initiatives put forward in this report for increasing local authority engagement with central government policy, this request for further funding was rejected. The inability or refusal to participate in civil defence planning and training was not wholly born of financial constraints; many Labour controlled councils had ideological opposition to central government policy

³⁷⁵ TNA: HO 322/944 *Draft Brief for the Meeting between the Home Secretary, the ACC. and AMA* (2 March 1981)

³⁷⁶ TNA: HO 322/1021 *Exercise Hard Rock and Civil Defence Policy* (23 June 1982)

³⁷⁷ TNA: HO 322 *Civil Defence Planning Relations Between Central Government and Local Authorities Planning Paper* (28 July 1981)

and cause and the influence of ideology on policy making decisions will be detailed in chapter 4.

The extent of the local authorities' non-compliance was outlined by Conservative MP Robert Banks in a House of Commons debate in July 1982:

It is highly regrettable that only £620,000 of the original £3.3 million made available to build and improve wartime headquarters and other civil defence measures was taken up in 1981⁶⁸² by local authorities. The proportion of the further sum of £3.3 million taken up by local authorities for planning and training is, unfortunately, not identifiable. But it means that many opportunities and jobs have been lost and considerable delay has been occasioned in implementing new civil defence measures.³⁷⁸

In 1982, continued non-compliance by local authorities forced the cancellation of the *Hard Rock* civil defence exercise, the aim of which was to practice civil and military plans and procedures for civil defence in conventional and nuclear war.³⁷⁹

As a result of this, the government was forced to re-evaluate its policy on home defence with specific reference to the devolution of civil defence responsibilities.

At a meeting between the Home Office and the Association of District Councils in March, 1983, it was agreed that if '...civil defence were to take off the ground [the] grant should be paid at 100% for all civil defence purposes'.³⁸⁰ In October 1982 Baroness Young, leader of the Conservative party in the House of Lords, wrote to

³⁷⁸ Banks, R. HC Deb, 29 July 1982, vol. 28, cc.1422-33

³⁷⁹ Openshaw, S. and Steadman, P. (1983) p.193

³⁸⁰ TNA: HO 322/979 *Letter from J. Rowlands to J.A. Howard* (11 March 1983)

William Whitelaw to express her support for new regulations which allowed for a 100% reimbursement in local authorities civil defence planning expenses. Significantly, her assent to these changes were based not on the ability of local authorities to provide for public protection but to enable them to participate in future training exercises, avoiding further embarrassment for the government:

The new regulations are an obvious necessity and I feel that the extra expenditure involved in introducing a measure of 100% reimbursement would be well justified if it serves to improve future co-operation between local authorities and the Government on civil defence matters. In view of our commitments in this area, we cannot afford a repeat of the situation which led to the postponement of exercise Hard Rock earlier this year.³⁸¹

Not all members of the government were supportive of the increase in civil defence grant, however. In June 1980, Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine wrote to William Whitelaw, expressing his doubt about the new regulations suggesting: 'If we are in earnest about civil defence the only credible approach seems to me to give authorities unambiguous statutory duties and pay them in full to act as out agents.'³⁸² Nevertheless, the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations³⁸³ came into force in December 1983, reimbursing local authorities for 100% of costs incurred in planning for civil defence and compelling them to participate in future exercises.

³⁸¹ TNA: HO 322/979 *Letter from Baroness Young to W. Whitelaw* (4 October 1982)

³⁸² TNA: HO 322/940 *Letter from M. Heseltine to W. Whitelaw* (16 June 1980)

³⁸³ *The Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983*
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/1993/1812/contents/made> (accessed 9 October 2009)

The budget for civil defence was increased to £69 million for 1984 ó 85, of which £11 million was allocated to local authorities, and the balance of which to the national warning system and the sub-regional government controls.³⁸⁴ The 1983 regulations removed the grant-aided limit of 75% for some items in order to promote local authority compliance with policy, including communication equipment, training programmes for volunteers and participation in training exercises. Grants were not available for building work and administration, making local authorities still responsible for 25% of main Civil Defence Activity costs.³⁸⁵ Despite this, it was estimated that by 1984 only 10% of local authorities were discharging their full civil defence duties as obliged,³⁸⁶ and applications for grant aid remained considerably less than the money available.³⁸⁷

Opposition to the regulations came primarily from those on both sides of the House who were in favour of a more comprehensive civil defence policy. Critics accused the government of failing to grasp the fundamental problem of the inadequacies of the 1948 *Civil Defence Act* as providing a framework for modern home defence, and cited both the financial burden upon local authorities as an unacceptable imposition that was preventing them from implementing central government policy³⁸⁸ and the fact that ð...local authorities as a whole have very little confidence in the fact that they are able to use that money usefully and in the provision of an

³⁸⁴ Renton, P. (1985) p. 47

³⁸⁵ GLAWARS Commission (1986) p.259

³⁸⁶ Renton, P. (1985) p. 47

³⁸⁷ Elton, R. HL Deb, 21 March 1985, vol. 461, cc.645-6

³⁸⁸ Carlile, A. HC Deb, 26 October 1983, vol. 47, cc.375-93

effective civil defence service.³⁸⁹

By 1985, civil defence expenditure had reached £80 million³⁹⁰ and despite the continuing need to maintain control over public expenditure³⁹¹, the government's stated aim was to maintain this over the next three years, with planning for peacetime emergencies receiving increasing attention. The Conservative party had already announced in their 1983 election manifesto that they would introduce legislation to enable civil defence resources to be used in peacetime emergencies by proposing to '...amend the *Civil Defence Act* 1948 to enable civil defence funds to be used in safeguarding against peacetime emergencies as well as against hostile attacks'³⁹² and this was followed in 1984 by the issuing of comprehensive emergency planning guidance to local authorities. This was a consolidation and revision of existing guidance setting out the expanded planning assumptions which particularly emphasised the possibility of conventional attack and the government stated the intended aims of expenditure on civil defence as to facilitate '...a humanitarian response to all emergencies, military and civil, which may threaten our people.'³⁹³

In 1986, as the nuclear threat began to recede, the Conservative Party's 1983 election pledge became the *Civil Protection in Peacetime Act* which permitted the use of civil defence planning resources in peacetime emergencies. As a piece of

³⁸⁹ Jenkins, H. HL Deb, 21 March, 1985, vol. 461, cc.645-6

³⁹⁰ Shaw, G HC Deb, 04 July 1985, vol. 82, cc.230-1W

³⁹¹ Shaw, G HC Deb, 24 July 1985, vol. 83, cc.1188-215

³⁹² *Conservative Party Election Manifesto 1983* <http://www.conservative-party.net/manifestos/1983/1983-conservative-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 4 September 2008)

³⁹³ Shaw, G HC Deb, 24 July 1985, vol. 83, cc.1188-215

legislation it was essentially permissive, rather than directive, in nature³⁹⁴ and while it sought to encourage the use of civil defence personnel and equipment in domestic disasters but was ð...not a measure that will release new resourcesö³⁹⁵ and had no significant financial policy implications. Of the £80 million allocated to civil defence in this year, between £11 million and £13 million was available to local authorities in the form of a grant and such expenditure was, as stated by Giles Shaw, Minister of State for the Home Office, ð...related to the [local authority] regulations that were published in 1983 and formally issued last year.ö³⁹⁶

By the end of the 1980s however, events on the world stage were making their influence felt on British civil defence policy. The signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in December 1987 and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan beginning in 1988 was the beginning of the end for the Cold War and the need for a policy of public protection against the possibility of nuclear war was significantly lessened. The move from a civil defence policy based on defence against an external, nuclear threat to one based on domestic emergency preparedness that had been put into motion two decades ago was complete, and the causes and effect of this will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

³⁹⁴ Rockett, J.P. (1994) p.48

³⁹⁵ Shaw, G HC Deb, 21 February 1986, vol. 92, cc.587-627

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

Financial constraints were frequently and openly stated by governments as reasons for the limited development or early termination of policy, and it is often assumed that the correlation of budget to provision can be easily traced. Questioning the reasons civil defence policy developed as it did, Robin Woolven asserts that the economic dimension was a primary consideration:

Economics in its broadest interpretation is surely the basic reason why, with technological advances in the threat causing changes in our defence posture (hydrogen bombs, deterrence and if that fails then survival rather than protection) all in an increasingly grim economic environment from the mid-1950s.³⁹⁷

The revival of civil defence in 1972 is an example of the incrementalism that characterised civil defence policy making during the later Cold War. This was not a policy shift indicative of a national response to significant threat but an incremental change in the nature and scope of the policy itself borne of financial constraint, where funding could only be considered if civil defence was gradually adapted and developed to encompass domestic emergencies in addition to the threat of nuclear attack.

Between 1972 and 1986 it is often possible to draw parallels between the nature and scope of civil defence policy and economic situation. However, it can be

³⁹⁷ Interview with Dr Robin Woolven, Intelligence Officer with the Security Service 1980697, 23rd August 2013

demonstrated that civil defence expenditure does not automatically correlate either with the state of the economy or the economic ideologies of the party in power. As Table 4 demonstrates, despite the perilous economic circumstances faced by the Labour government 1974-1979, civil defence expenditure rose three times. This indicates that while cost-cutting measures were undoubtedly making their influence felt across policy, other concerns were causing expenditure on civil defence to increase. This Labour government were not the first to openly acknowledge that providing public shelters for the population would be economically untenable. Mass public protection of this kind had been rejected on the grounds of it being prohibitively expensive since the 1950s. As such, despite periods of increased spending seen under Labour during this period, policy itself remained unchanged.

It can therefore be argued this it is in the nature rather than the scope of civil defence where economic factors have been most influential. Despite civil defence as it existed in its 'care and maintenance' state falling below standards of even minimal efficacy, it was considered that further reductions in Home Office expenditure could not be found in order that the budget for civil defence might be increased. The Heath government acknowledged in 1972 that civil defence was not fit for purpose, however operating under the severe economic constraints of spiralling inflation, increasing unemployment and widespread industrial action, demanded that in order to justify additional funds, the brief of civil defence be stretched to fit domestic peacetime emergencies as well as the threat of nuclear war. The need for economic restraint fundamentally changed the nature of civil defence policy; the coat was cut to fit the cloth and this caused policy to shift from one

primarily of wartime protection to that which encompassed additional responsibilities of domestic security.

The civil defence review of 1981 resulted in year on year increased expenditure after two years of spending stagnation at the beginning of the Conservatives' first term, which in turn exercised considerable influence on the nature of policy itself. The subsequent significant increases in civil defence spending seen under successive Conservative governments flew in the face of the economic backdrop of the early 1980s recession, reflecting instead the ideology of the party in government's belief in civil defence as a necessary adjunct to a strong defence strategy. With the increase in budget came increased civil defence duties for local governments, devolving the responsibilities for civil defence planning to the local level and reinforcing the self-reliant, cost-effective approach to public protection. The financial burden that the increased responsibilities placed upon the local authorities resulted in widespread non-compliance and as such, this approach directly caused the change to policy seen in the Civil Defence Regulations of 1983, developed in order to compel recalcitrant local authorities to comply with policy.

Chapter 4

Ideological Influences

This chapter is the second of three chapters concerned with the three main areas of potential policy determinants and will focus on to what extent ideological and party political factors influenced policy making decisions. The first part of this chapter, *Civil Defence and Deterrence*, introduces the argument that civil defence policy was influenced by defence policy, specifically by the theory of deterrence, exploring the pre-1972 history of civil defence as an adjunct of a deterrent posture. It examines the lasting effects of the Strath report's conclusions on the necessity of a nuclear deterrent on the aims and objectives of civil defence policy and explores the changing attitudes towards the role of civil defence in Britain's overall defence strategy and the defining debate of 'insurance' versus 'deterrence'.

The second part of the chapter, *The Labour Party and Civil Defence*, offers a brief historical appreciation of the Labour Party's position on the nuclear deterrent and the basis for change in policy concerns. Labour's attitude towards the value and effectiveness of civil defence as a complementary defence policy is analysed. The disarmament policy of Labour in opposition during the 1980s is reviewed and the divisions within the party over the issue of unilateralism and defence are explored in light of successive election defeats.

The third part of the chapter, *The Conservative Party and Civil Defence*, examines the ideological attitudes of the Conservative party from 1955's Strath report until the end of the Cold War. It begins with a concise analysis of the party's policy position pre-1972 and examines how civil defence policy first became intertwined

with the Conservatives' position on defence and how civil defence as a policy concern was revived in 1972. Finally, the Conservative election victory in 1979, the Home Review of 1980 and the effect of subsequent ideology-driven Thatcher administrations on civil defence policy are explored

Civil Defence and Nuclear Deterrence

Throughout the Cold War the strategic rationale underpinning Britain's possession of an independent nuclear force was designed to meet two related goals; to enhance deterrence by providing a second centre of decision within NATO while maintaining the capability to act independently if supreme national interests were threatened.³⁹⁸ The desire to maintain this balance between alliance cohesion and independent action was a central and constant aspect of British nuclear policy.³⁹⁹ In 1981, an official government publication described civil defence as '... an 'insurance premium' against the remote risk that NATO's continuing deterrent policy might fail'⁴⁰⁰ and it was this concept above all others that came to define civil defence policy in the last two decades of the Cold War. In the nuclear-armed Britain of the 1970s and 80s, planning for civil defence was intimately related to both the existence and operational needs of the nuclear deterrent. In contrast with the humanitarian rationale of civil defence, the deterrence rationale is primarily concerned with strategy; a policy created not to mitigate the effects of an attack but to deter the attack itself.

³⁹⁸ Holdstock, D. and Barnaby, F. (2003) pp.16-18

³⁹⁹ Paterson, R. (1997) p. 24

⁴⁰⁰ *Civil Defence: why we need it* (1981) HMSO p. 2

In the broadest terms, deterrence as a military strategy means using the threat of action in order to compel an adversary or enemy state to do, or prevent them from doing, something that a particular state desires. The strategy is one based on the threat of massive-scale retaliation if attacked by aggressors, one that would have such severe consequences for the aggressor that they are deterred from action unless they are willing to accept significant damage as a result. As Richard Brody states:

Deterrence refers to the attempt by decision-makers in one nation or group of nations to restructure the set of alternatives available to decision makers in another nation or group of nations by posing a threat to their key values. The restructuring is an attempt to exclude armed aggression from consideration.⁴⁰¹

The theory of deterrence as a military strategy did not originate in the Cold War, but it was during this time that it gained significance in relation to the use of nuclear weapons and it figures prominently in the history of both British nuclear defence and civil defence policy. American military strategist Bernard Brodie asserted in 1959 that a credible nuclear deterrent must always be at the ready but never used.⁴⁰² A strategy of nuclear deterrence was closely interwoven with British thinking on military defence throughout the Cold War and this was to have significant and far-reaching influence on civil defence policy making and subsequently considerable consequences for civil defence planning.

⁴⁰¹ Brody, R. (1960) *Deterrence Strategy: An Annotated Bibliography* Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol.4, no.4 pp. 443-657

⁴⁰² Brodie, B. (1959) *The Anatomy of Deterrence in Strategy in the Missile Age*, pp. 264-6304

Civil defence as an adjunct of a deterrent posture was a concept found in political debate as early as the immediate post-war years as evidenced in a House of Commons debate in 1948. Conservative backbenchers, displaying the party political and ideological support for the link between a strong military and civil defence that would come to characterise the debate in later years, asked the government whether it would '... accept the principle that if Civil Defence is in a proper state of preparedness it can, in fact, act as a deterrent to war, and have an effect before war begins?'⁴⁰³ It was the advent of nuclear weapons however, especially the realisation of the widespread destructive capability of the hydrogen bomb in the mid-1950s, which precipitated the shift in emphasis of civil defence policy as it moved from a rationale of protection to one of deterrence.⁴⁰⁴ The Conservative government's 1954 *White Paper on Defence* proposed the concept of civil defence as deterrence when it stated '... the emergence of the thermonuclear bomb has overshadowed all else. Nevertheless our problem is still fundamentally a dual one. We have to prepare for the risk of war and so prevent it.'⁴⁰⁵ The subsequent 1955 *White Paper on Defence* went on to preface the deterrence versus insurance rationale that would form a key debate at the heart of civil defence for the next four decades: '... the knowledge that aggression will be met by overwhelming nuclear retaliation is the surest guarantee that it will not take place.'⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ Legge-Bourke, H. HC Deb, 22 March 1948, vol. 448, cc.2648-705

⁴⁰⁴ Churchill, W. HC Deb, 01 March 1955 vol. 537 cc.1893-2012

⁴⁰⁵ TNA: Cmnd. 9075 *Statement on Defence* (1954)

⁴⁰⁶ TNA: Cmnd. 9391 *Statement on Defence* (1955)

As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the defence review of 1957 led by the Minister for Defence, Duncan Sandys, was a critical point in British civil defence policy making, cementing the move away from the World War Two model of civil defence to one as a subsidiary of the deterrent posture: '... the central aim must be to prevent war rather than to prepare for it. In present circumstances the only way to deter nuclear aggression is to possess the means of retaliating in time.'⁴⁰⁷ The subsequent 1957 report *Defence: Outline of Future Policy* made clear the government's attitude towards the role of nuclear deterrence in Britain's defence strategy and the part that civil defence policy had to play in that defence posture:

While comprehensive disarmament remains among the foremost objectives of British foreign policy, it is unhappily true that, pending international agreement, the only existing safeguard against major aggression is the power to threaten retaliation with nuclear weapons. While available resources should as far as possible be concentrated on building up an active deterrent power, it would be wrong not to take some precautions to minimise the effects of nuclear attack, should the deterrent fail to prevent war. Civil defence must accordingly play an essential part in the defence plan.⁴⁰⁸

It was clear from the Paper that policy makers were to allow civil defence policy to be shaped by other defence considerations. The Conservative government at the time, led by Churchill 'a strong proponent of Britain as an international power' and later Anthony Eden, had set defence as a primary concern, as evidenced by the Conservative Election Manifesto of 1955 which stated that their '...interest and

⁴⁰⁷ TNA: CAB 129/86 *Statement on Defence* (1957)

⁴⁰⁸ TNA: Cmnd.124 *Defence: Outline of Future Policy* pp. 2-3

duty is to make war less likely by building up, with our allies, the most powerful deterrent to aggression we can achieve.⁴⁰⁹ *Defence: Outline of Future Policy* not only inextricably tied together the success of British nuclear defence policy with that of civil defence but laid the foundations for what would become an ideological battleground between Conservative policy makers and Labour opposition on the issue of civil defence.

In the years that followed, much of the debate surrounding civil defence became increasingly expressed in terms of 'deterrence' and 'insurance'. The model of civil defence seen during World War Two, with civil defence's primary function being one of protecting the population against nuclear attack, was a policy of insurance aimed at mitigating the consequences of war. The deterrence model, one that became increasingly dominant as the Cold War continued, was based on the idea of civil defence as part of an overarching defence strategy, useful inasmuch as it made the military defence more credible, making the threat of Britain's nuclear weapons more credible and, as critics of this model would latch on to, making the idea of a nuclear war seem survivable.

In 1956, the insurance model of civil defence was one favoured by the Home Office and in particular the Home Secretary, Gwilym Lloyd-George who criticised the view that civil defence was only useful in terms of the deterrent when he said

⁴⁰⁹ *Conservative Party Election Manifesto 1955*
<http://www.conservative-party.net/manifestos/1955/1955-conservative-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 4 September 2008)

that '... a reduction in home defence expenditure....can be justified only if it is the government's considered view that the global war can be discounted altogether, which obviously would carry implications in much wider fields than that of home defence.'⁴¹⁰ While the humanitarian function of civil defence was still stressed, critics of the increasing link between public protection and foreign policy argued that the language used betrayed the government's intent, however. In 1956, a report by the Home Defence (Ministerial) committee stated that the government's objective '... is to maintain a level of defence preparations which will contribute to preventing war by ensuring that the Russians are not led to believe that they can destroy us without being destroyed themselves: but not to insure against the failure of the deterrent.'⁴¹¹

Left-leaning commentators such as Duncan Campbell have critiqued the deliberately homely political use of such language, stating that the insurance analogy was a false one, as '... insurance premiums are paid to an insurer whose task it is to provide the resources for reconstruction after loss.'⁴¹² Ideological concerns as engendered by the effects of the creation, maintenance and opposition to the nuclear deterrent started to assert their influence on civil defence policy. It was a move to a model of civil defence that drew increasing criticism and opposition both from peace groups and Labour in opposition, who saw the essential humanitarian functions of civil defence discarded in favour of a policy supporting

⁴¹⁰ TNA: CAB 134/1245 *Home Defence Policy: Note by the Secretary of State for the Home Department* (6 June 1956)

⁴¹¹ TNA: CAB 134/1245 HD(M)4 *Defence expenditure by Civil Departments: Report by the Home Defence Committee* (29 June 1956)

⁴¹² Campbell, D. (1983) p.1

an aggressive defence posture and as a factor in deciding to decrease spending on public protection measures such as shelters. Labour MP Konni Zilliacus voiced criticisms typical of more left-wing opponents in a 1959 House of Commons debate on civil defence:

...is it not the fact that the Government's policy is to resort to nuclear weapons against a major attack on any allied country by conventional arms without any attempt to defend the civil population against the consequences of that policy? Will not the Government make clear the measures they propose to take to burn, bury or otherwise dispose of the tens of millions whom they propose to immolate on the altar of their nuclear deterrent strategy?⁴¹³

Civil Defence and Ideology in the Labour Party

The decision to place civil defence on a 'care and maintenance' basis in 1968 was made by a Labour administration, ostensibly "in the light of economic and international circumstances"⁴¹⁴ given the perceived reduced risk in the likelihood of war. This apparent abandonment of civil defence met with expected criticism both politically and from the public and the government's ideological opponents viewed the winding down of civil defence as a weakening of Britain's defence posture that would leave the country open to aggressors.⁴¹⁵ While Labour MP and CND member Hugh Jenkins congratulated the government on ending a policy of 'mass deception'⁴¹⁶ and expressed the hope that Britain's nuclear arms would follow suit, the opposition denounced the disbanding of civil defence as having party political

⁴¹³ Zilliacus, K. HC Deb, 26 February 1959, vol. 600, cc.1271-2

⁴¹⁴ Ennals, D. HC Deb, 24 October 1968 vol. 770 cc.335-6W

⁴¹⁵ Jones, A. HL Deb, 27 March 1968 vol. 290 cc.1003-115

⁴¹⁶ Jenkins, H. HC Deb, 18 January 1968, vol. 756, cc.2093-104

motivations, typified by comments such as:

We can afford vast sums of money running into several hundred millions of pounds in order that the Party opposite can carry out their old fashioned Marxist dogma of more nationalisation but we cannot afford 2d a week per head of the population to maintain civil defence.⁴¹⁷

When questioned by the opposition in a House of Lords debate on the disbanding of civil defence as to whether the government's assessment of the credibility of the deterrent no longer relied significantly on a strong civil defence policy, Foreign and Commonwealth Minister, Allan Gwynne Jones, belied the ideology-led social priorities inherent in Labour's attitude towards defence:

We must put the whole of this matter of defence and deterrence into an even wider context, and decide how much of our limited national resources we can apply to them without damaging the whole quality of life of our people. It has been said before in your Lordships' House, and it will bear saying again, that while the Government are, of course, responsible, and must be, for the security and safety of these Islands and the people in them, it is no good assuring that safety and security at the cost of constantly lowered standards of education, health and living standards in general.⁴¹⁸

In contrast, a House of Commons debate on the 1972 Defence Estimates four years later when civil defence was once more an important subject for political debate. The divisions within the Labour Party on the value and effectiveness of civil defence as a complementary defence policy can clearly be seen in the comment by

⁴¹⁷ Beamish, T. HC Deb, 28 March 1968, vol. 761, cc.1738-811

⁴¹⁸ Jones, A. HL Deb, 27 March 1968, vol. 290, cc.1003-115

Frank Judd MP:

The credibility of that deterrent must depend upon the fear of our potential enemies that we are prepared to use it. This must mean that we have to convince those potential enemies that we are prepared to take the retaliatory holocaust which would inevitably follow from our pushing the button. If we are to convince them of that, surely a comprehensive civil defence system is an indispensable element of a deterrent policy.

I here hasten to say, before it is said from the other side of the House, that I have never been altogether satisfied about policy on this front since the original decision was taken by the previous Government to run down drastically the civil defence programme. Why do the present Government stick to this policy? It seems to be a serious gap in our credibility.⁴¹⁹

The Wilson and Callaghan governments from 1974 to 1979 struggled with the problem of how to reconcile increasing defence commitments with a parliamentary party that was largely unsympathetic to nuclear weapons. In October 1974, Labour continued in office with a manifesto commitment renouncing any intention of acquiring a new generation of strategic nuclear weapons and outwardly at least, Labour was a strong advocate for disarmament.⁴²⁰ The strongly Callaghan-influenced party manifesto of 1979 represented the last moderate, pro-US defence position that would be seen by the Labour Party for the best part of a decade, with its reiteration of the importance of détente, arms control negotiations and limiting the move towards production of nuclear weapons rather than disarmament.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁹ Judd, F. HC Deb, 24 February 1972, vol. 831, cc.1513-655

⁴²⁰ *Labour Party Election Manifesto 1974* <http://www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1974/Oct/1974-oct-labour-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 4th September 2008)

⁴²¹ *Labour Party Election Manifesto 1979*

During this period in government, Labour outwardly supported the strategy of civil defence as part of an overall deterrent posture, a policy consistent with that of the previous Conservative administration. In commenting that the government did not see any need for significant changes of policy from that maintained by successive governments, this view was reiterated by Home Office junior minister Dr Shirley Summerskill in 1977:

As long as there are large nuclear arsenals in the world, civil defence must be mainly, if not solely, concerned with the possibility of a nuclear war. We and some of our NATO allies have nuclear weapons to deter aggression and for no other purpose. Our civil defence planning must also be directed towards deterrence. It must be sufficient to persuade any potential aggressor that, in defence of our freedom, we shall not give in to nuclear blackmail.⁴²²

The general election defeat of 1979 and the 1980 election of Michael Foot - a founder member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament - to leader accelerated a rejection of this moderate stance and heralded Labour's adoption of a policy that did not rely on British nuclear weapons and which would see Labour contest the 1983 general election on a radical platform of non-nuclear defence.⁴²³ This policy was not universally supported within the party however and loomed large as an illustration of the deep ideological divisions within the party itself. As one writer notes:

<http://www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1979/1979-labour-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 4 September 2008)

⁴²² Summerskill, S. HC Deb, 07 April 1977, vol. 929, cc.1468-80

⁴²³ Croft, S. *The Labour Party and the Nuclear Issue* in Smith, M. and Spear, J. (ed.) (1992) p.203

[the Labour Party] had long been embroiled in a row over nuclear weapons which, at various stages, had threatened to tear it apart. Some supported Britain's nuclear deterrent, others bitterly opposed it. The latter group was divided between hard line advocates of unilateral disarmament and those that wanted a nuclear free Britain but realised that to campaign for it would be political suicide. Civil defence exacerbated this bitter wrangle.⁴²⁴

The disarmament policy of the Labour opposition in the 1980s was tightly bound with the political conditions of the party at the time and as such its policy on nuclear weapons and civil defence was both a cause and consequence of internal developments. However Labour adopted unilateral nuclear disarmament as policy at its 1980 conference and increasingly decried the escalating promotion of civil defence as, according to Robin Cook MP, "an attempt to foment a war psychosis í making the population more willing to contemplate war."⁴²⁵ In June of 1981 a party policy statement denounced the government's civil defence policy as a scandalous waste of resources and stated Labour's policy:

For a densely populated country like Britain, there can be no effective civil defence against nuclear attack. The only effective civil defence is to ensure that Britain is not involved in a nuclear war, and to oppose all nuclear weapons and nuclear war preparations by Britain or any other country.⁴²⁶

The government answered these criticisms by seeking - in the absence of plans for mass public shelter or evacuation - not to place emphasis on the incontrovertibly

⁴²⁴ DeGroot, G (2004) p.320

⁴²⁵ Campbell, D. (1983) p. 122

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

humanitarian functions of civil defence but to further link the successful defence of the realm with the execution of a credible civil defence policy. This is evident in a House of Commons debate on the 1980s Defence Estimates where the subject of the perceived inadequacies of the government's civil defence policy was raised again and again and was answered in the same way each time:

Our possession of the nuclear deterrent is less effective as a deterrent if it is not associated with a credible civil defence policy? The two lock together. If possession of the deterrent is to deter a potential aggressor, that aggressor must believe that we would be prepared to use it and that involves an effective civil defence programme.⁴²⁷

At the same time, the government was similarly not immune to criticism from its own backbenchers. Dissenting right-wing view was often of the opinion that current policy did not extend far enough and civil defence should be expanded and managed not by the Home Office *but the Ministry of Defence* with a military-trained civil defence 'army' demonstrating ð... that this country has the will to survive.ö⁴²⁸

As can also be seen in the actions of local authorities as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, Labour's ideological distaste for the nuclear deterrent and what it viewed as the government's corruption of civil defence to fit its hawkish defence agenda could clearly be seen in its support for the Labour-controlled authoritiesø fight against participation in central government civil defence exercises and their

⁴²⁷ Hogg, D. HC Deb, 28 April 1980, vol. 983, cc.995-1113

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

declaration as 'nuclear-free zones'. In June 1981, the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party issued an advice note in response to requests for guidance by local authorities. It not only offered advice in dealing with civil defence duties imposed by central government but also unequivocally established Labour's ideological position on civil defence, one that was diametrically opposed to the Conservative government's:

The Labour Party does not believe that the small civil home defence measures proposed by the government can in any significant way provide protection for the people of Britain against the consequences of nuclear war.

We believe that the government's proposals are a fraudulent waste of scarce resources – resources which could be much better used in expenditure on education, housing and peacetime emergency planning such as improving the fire service.

'Civil defence' in the sense of protecting the civilian population from the effects of nuclear war does not exist. The government's plans are in fact more concerned with 'Home Defence' designed to protect a small government and military elite. The fact that the civilian population is told to stay at home, and that essential supplies and all major communications routes are to be reserves for the military means that the government anticipates the death of a very high proportion of the population living in cities or in rural areas near military bases, communication centres and other targets.⁴²⁹

At the same time, ideological motives were evidently apparent and making their influence felt even within the ostensibly united Association. As well as attacking the apparent ideological motivations behind local authority non-compliance, the government also criticised Labour's support for these actions as an attempt to detract from an unworkable policy of non-nuclear defence:

⁴²⁹ TNA: HO 322/1019 *Advice Note: Civil Defence, Home Defence and Emergency Planning* (June 1981)

The truth is that the Labour Party has finally given up any attempt to find a realistic and responsible policy for defence and disarmament. A perpetual protest march is no substitute; nor is hysterical anti-Americanism. Encouraging local authorities to declare nuclear-free zones is a diversion from the real business.⁴³⁰

In 1979 only 2% of the electorate thought defence was a major issue compared to 38% in 1983.⁴³¹ Defence, and the question of nuclear disarmament and deterrence in particular, emerged as one of the most important issues of the 1983 election.⁴³² Civil defence policy was also of critical importance to the changes that occurred in the Labour Party on the interconnecting levels of policy and political ideas. The 1983 election manifesto of the Labour Party had no reassurances about civil defence to offer the electorate however, emphasising its commitment to collective defence, maintaining its support for NATO but rejecting the nuclear option and choosing instead to focus its efforts on a renewed call for disarmament. It stated:

Labour's commitment is to establish a non-nuclear defence policy for this country. This means the rejection of any fresh nuclear bases or weapons on British soil or in British waters, and the removal of all existing nuclear bases and weapons, thus enabling us to make a direct contribution to an eventually much wider nuclear-free zone in Europe.⁴³³

The Conservatives seized upon the Labour Party's arguably weak position on

⁴³⁰ Pym, F. HC Deb, 11 November 1981, vol. 12, cc.545-633

⁴³¹ Heseltine, M. and Tuzo, H. (2008) p.5

⁴³² George, B. and Marcus, J. (1986) p.60

⁴³³ *Labour Party Election Manifesto 1983*

<http://www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1983/1983-labour-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 4 September 2008)

national security, objection to nuclear deterrence and calls for unilateral disarmament, equating it with having no defence policy at all, placing Britain in the 'greatest jeopardy'.⁴³⁴ Their victory in the general election allowed the Conservatives to claim a mandate for their defence, and therefore their civil defence, policies, and gave Labour the opportunity to draw lessons on the need for a more credible defence policy based on an agreed position.

Much of the parliamentary Labour Party remained of the opinion that the inadequacies of central government policy could only be explained in terms of the purpose of civil defence being a public relations exercise, primarily concerned with getting the general public to accept the likelihood of war, therefore reducing public pressure on the government to reduce the risks of nuclear war.⁴³⁵ Some also argued that by spending any money on civil defence at all, the government was effectively preparing for war and knowingly deceiving the public about the survivability of a 'limited' nuclear exchange when in reality, as concluded by the Greater London Area War Risk Study,⁴³⁶ there was no way that affordable civil defence could be made effective.⁴³⁷ In debating the *Civil Defence (Grant) (Amendment) Regulations 1983*, opposition criticism of the draft regulations touched frequently on the dichotomy at the heart of a defence policy based on deterrence:

Civil defence preparations and these regulations are trying to get the British people to think the unthinkable. If deterrence worksô as long

⁴³⁴ *Conservative Party Election Manifesto 1983* <http://www.conservative-party.net/manifestos/1983/1983-conservative-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 4 September 2008)

⁴³⁵ Greene, O. et al. (1982) p.97

⁴³⁶ GLAWARS (1986) p.11

⁴³⁷ Tucker, A. and Gleisner, J. (1982) p.58

as that is the policy of this country, we must all hope that it does work — there is no necessity for civil defence, because deterrence will prevent a war and therefore we shall not need civil defence. The emphasis now — the new emphasis, I stress, since 1971 on civil defence in these regulations means that the Government appear to be losing confidence in their own deterrence policy. I wonder whether the Ministry of Defence is aware of that. The Government may laugh at this, but I believe that it is a matter of pure logic: if one believes in deterrence, one does not need a civil defence policy.⁴³⁸

Roy Hattersley, the newly-elected Deputy Leader and a more moderate voice within the Labour Party on the subject of disarmament, who would later go on to claim that nuclear deterrence worked during the Cold War,⁴³⁹ criticised the politicisation of civil defence after the 1983 election and accused the government of using civil defence as an ideological weapon with which to achieve unrelated objectives:

It is entirely undesirable that the preparation of civil defence and the promulgation of civil defence regulations should be used as a vehicle for arguments about defence and disarmament.

However, if civil defence has been politicised, it has not been because of the actions of those who take the unilateral nuclear disarmers' view. When the preceding regulations were promulgated two years ago, the Government regarded the civil defence debate as part of their campaign for Britain's defence, the Alliance of which Britain is a member, and their attack on some forms of local government autonomy and independence.

í the Minister of State said ... that our civil defence policy is part of our defence strategy. They do not want to argue it in terms of compassion, protection, defending or looking after those who might be at the periphery of some unintentional nuclear horror; they want to address themselves to the general strategic considerations that the

⁴³⁸ Deakins, E. HC Deb 26 October 1983 vol.47 cc336-74

⁴³⁹ Hattersley, R. *A Complete Fantasy* in Guardian (9 December 2006)

Minister and his colleagues have introduced into the debate.⁴⁴⁰

The Conservative party in turn accused Labour of attempting to block central government policy with a mixture of 'non-co-operation, obstruction, rhetoric and hysteria.'⁴⁴¹ They referenced Labour's close ties with peace groups, in particular CND, which had considered that aligning with Labour during the 1983 election campaign as an opportunity to directly influence government policy, as an example of more entrenched ideological opposition to civil defence than that which stemmed from a distaste for the nuclear deterrent:

It would be a mistake to think that opposition to civil defence from the extreme Left arises only from opposition to nuclear weapons. There are deeper reasons, too. For example, in the current journal of CND, called *Sanity*, there is an appeal to members to campaign against the latest civil defence exercise, called Wintex. It is in these terms: The systems which already exist for use in a 'civil emergency' were developed during the 1970s in response to industrial disputes; the Regional Emergency Committees were first set up during the 'winter of discontent' in 1978 to deal with the road haulage strike. The most recent example is the development of Police Support Units at the moment being used in the miners' strike". There is no mention at all anywhere in this article, this appeal for campaigning, of nuclear questions. Opposition to nuclear deterrence is one reason for CND's obstruction of civil defence, but support for strikes is another reason, as one would expect in an organisation which is so vulnerable to manipulation by the hard Left.⁴⁴²

This criticism had its roots in the 1971 *Home Defence Review*, which sought to redefine the scope of civil defence in line with renewed concerns over domestic

⁴⁴⁰ Hattersley, R. HC Deb, 26 October 1983, vol. 47, cc.336-74

⁴⁴¹ Mayhew, P. HL Deb, 06 February 1985, vol. 459, cc.1086-95

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

security, but despite these concerns, civil defence legislation was never used in industrial disputes and Labour did not campaign against it on this basis.

Labour continued to campaign on disarmament and for a conventional, non-nuclear defence policy⁴⁴³ though the party's defeat in the 1987 election cannot be attributed to a single factor or policy decision. As Croft (1992) states, while Labour's leader Neil Kinnock showed outward loyalty to the idea of unilateralism, it became clear to the leadership of the party that for both electoral reasons and for the sake of genuine policy reappraisal unilateral disarmament was no longer tenable and a re-evaluation of defence policy was undertaken.⁴⁴⁴ The move away from unilateralism reflected changes in the personal convictions of Kinnock, the internal state of the party and improving international developments which rendered the need for civil defence policy as an adjunct to the nuclear deterrent obsolete.

Civil Defence and Ideology in the Conservative Party

In the early 1970s civil defence continued to be seen by the Conservative parliamentary party as a necessary adjunct to the overall defence policy of a nuclear-armed state, related both to the existence and operational needs of nuclear weaponry. In 1972, two years after a Conservative government came to power, civil defence was once again on the political agenda. The 1971 Home Defence Review

⁴⁴³ *Labour Party Election Manifesto 1987*

<http://www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1987/1987-labour-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 4 September 2008)

⁴⁴⁴ Croft, S. *The Labour Party and the Nuclear Issue* in Smith, M. and Spear, J. (ed.) (1992) p.208

had acknowledged the shortcomings of existing civil defence policy⁴⁴⁵ and the Heath administration, while broadly in agreement with the preceding government's assessment about the reduced risk of war, were still keen to be seen as strong on defence and saw an opportunity to both strengthen Britain's defence position and redefine the scope of civil defence in line with renewed concerns over domestic security.

1973's *Home Defence Planning Assumptions*, with its emphasis on 'securing the UK against any internal threat' and providing 'alternative machinery of government at all levels to increase the prospects of, and to direct, national security'⁴⁴⁶ introduced a new theme in civil defence policy making. This change in the focus of civil defence policy drew criticism from the Labour opposition amid fears that civil defence measures would be used by the Conservative government not only for strikebreaking and other industrial disputes but also as a means of controlling the population not only after an attack but in the possible periods of instability if an attack looked imminent.⁴⁴⁷ Critics seized upon the no shelters, no evacuation 'stay put' policy as evidence of the government's fundamentally ideology-driven policy making, dismissing civil defence in its new guise as emergency planning as a thinly-veiled cover for increased powers of population control and government survival.

The contention within this policy dichotomy was highlighted in a letter from the

⁴⁴⁵ TNA: CAB 322/799 *Official Committee on Home Defence* (26 May 1971)

⁴⁴⁶ Home Office Circular No. ES 3/1973 p.4

⁴⁴⁷ Mayhew, P. HL Deb, 06 February 1985 vol. 459 cc.1086-95

Association of Municipal Councils, stating pointedly that local government would perhaps regard survival as the main aim and the machinery of government as a necessary measure and not an aim in itself.⁴⁴⁸ Duncan Campbell, writing a decade later, typifies the arguments of the Left when he argues that the Conservative civil defence policy of the time was fundamentally undemocratic:

The one event that would undoubtedly turn a mass of people against the government would be the imminence, or perceived imminence, of nuclear conflict. ... In this context, a policy of nuclear deterrence places an impossible strain on democracy. If you wish nuclear weapons to deter, then you must be ready, willing and able to use them, whatever the strength of public opinion against a nuclear deterrence in a late stage of political crisis or conventional military conflict. Planning for home defence thus places a primary emphasis on the control of the civilian population.⁴⁴⁹

Despite the redefining of the aims of civil defence, the concept of public protection as an adjunct to nuclear defence remained a primary concern to the Conservative party during their time in opposition in the 1970s, a policy in which they were broadly supported by Labour. This can be seen in the 1977 Home Office *Manual for Scientific Advisers*:

No defence policy based on deterrence can be convincing if it fails to include an element for home defence. A potential attacker must be persuaded that the nation is ready to accept and survive an attack, at least to the extent of being able to retaliate.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸ TNA: HO 322/849 *Correspondence from the Association of Municipal Councils to F.D. Buttery* (9 May 1973)

⁴⁴⁹ Campbell, D. (1983) p. 3

⁴⁵⁰ *Manual for Scientific Advisers* HMSO (1977)

Objections to government civil defence policy from the right often stemmed not from ideological or moral objections to the concept of deterrence that was inextricably linked to civil defence or from, as the government later sought to style it, a refusal to believe in the humanitarian capabilities of civil defence, but rather from the belief that current civil defence provisions were inadequate and untenable. This was an argument that persisted throughout subsequent Conservative administrations up until 1986; Conservative MP Patrick Thompson was typical of the objections from Conservative backbenchers when he asked in 1984 if civil defence '...deserves and should command more widespread support. We are spending on civil defence only one tenth of 1 per cent of the money that we spend on the major Departments.'⁴⁵¹

After five years of relative silence, concern over civil defence from some quarters of the Conservative party was renewed with the publication in August 1978 of *Britain's Home Defence Gamble*,⁴⁵² written by two Conservative MPs. The publication fundamentally disagreed with party policy on no shelters or evacuation and criticised the assumption on which home defence policy hinged, that there would be a long enough period of escalating tension before a nuclear exchange to allow operations to be organised and implemented.⁴⁵³ It urged the Conservatives that within the policy framework of a strong military defence:

⁴⁵¹ Thompson, P. HC Deb, 17 May 1984 vol. 60 cc.496-8

⁴⁵² Hodgson, R. and Banks, R. *Britain's Home Defence Gamble* (1978)

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.* p.10

... measures should be taken to protect the nation in case or war not only because it is the duty of a Conservative government but also because taking steps to protect the nation the effectiveness of our deterrent forces in increased.⁴⁵⁴

Such internal party pressures helped to ensure that when the Conservatives came to power in the following year, civil defence reform received serious consideration. The Conservative election victory in 1979 under Margaret Thatcher coincided with the end of détente. A year later, the election of Ronald Reagan, who with Thatcher would go on to cultivate a close political and personal relationship, heralded a fundamental political change. Reagan's election saw the issue of nuclear deterrence and civil defence become more politicised, ideologically influenced and polarised than at any other time during the Cold War as the issue of defence shifted to the Right.⁴⁵⁵ This hard line foreign policy was foreshadowed in a speech made in January 1976 in which she made a scathing attack on the Soviet Union in which she accused it of being "bent on world dominance, and they are rapidly acquiring the means to become the most powerful imperial nation the world has seen. The men in the Soviet *Politburo* do not have to worry about the ebb and flow of public opinion. They put guns before butter, while we put just about everything before guns."⁴⁵⁶

Thatcher became closely aligned with the policies of Reagan and in her own words

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p.4

⁴⁵⁵ Kelly, J.T.K. *Thinking the Unthinkable: The Civil Defense Debate in the 1980s* Talk presented at the 26th Annual Conference for the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations at Ryerson Polytechnic University, Toronto, Canada (June 23, 2000); Blanchard, B. (1986) *American Civil Defense 1945-1984 : The Evolution of Programs and Policies*; Garrison, D. (2006) *Bracing for Armageddon*

⁴⁵⁶ Thatcher, M. *Speech at Kensington Town Hall* (19 January 1976)

...believed in so many of the same things.⁴⁵⁷ Most significantly for British civil defence and deterrent policy she believed that the way to peace was through strength, both ideologically and militarily.⁴⁵⁸ Reagan took a hard-line ideological stance towards the USSR⁴⁵⁹ and the result of this was close transatlantic cooperation between the US and the UK, especially on issues related to defence and the Soviet Union which was reflected in domestic policy on the nuclear deterrent and civil defence.

The new Conservative government fully supported the British independent nuclear deterrent and embraced the concept of deterrence in its defence policy making⁴⁶⁰ and accepted the criticism by NATO that the disparity between Britain's military and civil preparedness weakened the country's deterrence posture.⁴⁶¹ It was acknowledged that ...the cumulative effect of political disinterest, shortage of funds and the absence of any national plan⁴⁶² meant that the general state of civil defence planning fell far short of the ability to put Britain on a war footing within 7-10 days. This was an unacceptable state of affairs for a Conservative government with an unyielding ideological belief in a strong military defence:

In a sudden crisis this would cause severe political embarrassment, possibly distract from the credibility of deterrence and, in conventional war, jeopardise our ability to sustain the economy and

⁴⁵⁷ Thatcher, M. *Reagan's Leadership, America's Recovery* in *National Review* (30 December 1988)

⁴⁵⁸ Dorman, A. (2002) p.43

⁴⁵⁹ Njølstad, O. (2004) p. 160

⁴⁶⁰ Pym, F. *HC Deb*, 15 January 1980 vol. 976 cc.1412-3

⁴⁶¹ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Home Defence Review 1980 – The Current State of Civil Preparedness* (17 March 1980)

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*

so maintain support for our own and allied military forces.⁴⁶³

The Conservatives believed that ð...in an era of nuclear supremacy a low level of civil preparedness and protection could be argued to indicate confidence in the effectiveness of nuclear deterrenceö⁴⁶⁴ and a widespread review of civil defence was announced in 1979. It was acknowledged that a significant influence in bringing about the political will for a review of civil defence did not necessarily lie with a balanced assessment of the external threat but from ideological pressures within the government's own party. In a Home Office meeting held in May 1980, William Whitelaw remarked upon ð...the growing feeling in an influential part of the Conservative party that a substantial new set of actions would be needed, going beyond budgetary and other limitsö⁴⁶⁵ and the influence of this political manoeuvring could clearly be seen in the civil defence strategic planning document later the same month:

Although a strong feeling had emerged...that the present state of home defence preparedness was inadequate, this owed more to back-bench pressure than to an objective reassessment of the threat and the measures required to counter it.⁴⁶⁶

The results of this review ó the most significant investigation into civil defence seen in the last two decades of the Cold War - were announced to the House of

⁴⁶³ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Home Defence Review 1980 – The Current State of Civil Preparedness* (17 March 1980)

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁵ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Home Secretary's Morning Meeting Held on 12 May 1980* (12 May 1980)

⁴⁶⁶ TNA: HO 322/939 *Review of Home Defence* (19 May 1980)

Commons in August 1980 by Whitelaw.⁴⁶⁷ He opened his statement with the confirmation that the review was both inextricably linked with party political view on defence and closely tied to an overall defence strategy, the new government having decided '... to accord high priority to the defence of the nation; and a review of civil preparedness for home defence was set in train so that this important element of our defence strategy could be considered as part of the improvement of our general defence effort.'⁴⁶⁸

Protect and Survive

Despite no official information for the public being published until 1980, Home Office memoranda seem to suggest that a booklet for public consumption had already been discussed. A letter from the Central Office of Information, dated 12 March 1974 requested information from the Home Office for inclusion in a proposed booklet, with the assumption that it would '...form the text of the Official Announcement and that what Probert is discussing with your Information Division is the production of a booklet on public advice.'⁴⁶⁹ This request was replied to three days later by the Home Office, clearly stating that such a booklet was being produced, and that they were also targeting the same information at television and that it was likely that '... a basic booklet will be produced...we expect rather more attention to be paid to the dissemination of this advice through other media, in

⁴⁶⁷ Whitelaw, W. HC Deb, 07 August 1980 vol. 990 cc.790-804

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁹ TNA: HO 322/775 (CDA 71 92/1/2) *Wartime broadcasting service: recorded announcements* (1974)

particular television.⁴⁷⁰ Parts of the advice contained within *Protect and Survive* had come to light in a string of leaks before it was published in series of critical articles in The Times in January 1980, one of which characterised civil defence as a 'lethal failure of duty'⁴⁷¹ and this publicity caused Home Office minister Leon Brittan to stress to parliament that:

This was not a secret pamphlet. There was no mystery about it. It had been available to all local authorities and chief police and fire officers. It had not been published for the simple reason that it was produced for distribution during a grave international crisis when war was imminent. It was calculated that it would have the most impact then.⁴⁷²

It was noted in a Cabinet and Overseas Policy Committee meeting in March 1980 however that the information contained within the pamphlet was recognised to be of such inadequacy that it might be 'unwise to actively promote sales of *Protect and Survive*'⁴⁷³ after it was published. Brittan may have sought to limit the damage caused by placing the image of nuclear war into the public sphere, but as Shaw states, unlike the debate surrounding the nuclear issue of the 1950s and 1960s, it was significantly less easy to control public and media discussion around the realities of nuclear conflict in the 1980s.⁴⁷⁴ Both The Times and the BBC⁴⁷⁵ were openly critical of civil defence planning and the arguments surrounding public protection were increasingly shaped by deeply-rooted ideological and political

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷¹ Evans, P. 'Civil defence-1: Government to give greater priority to protect millions of people' The Times (16 January 1980) p. 4

⁴⁷² The Times *Revision of pamphlet on UK civil defence* (22 February 1980) p. 10

⁴⁷³ TNA: CAB 148/149 *Minutes of Cabinet and Overseas Policy Committee* (20 March 1980)

⁴⁷⁴ Shaw, T. (2006) p. 1361

⁴⁷⁵ See The Times articles 1-4 January 1980 and the BBC programmes *QED – Nuclear War: A Guide to Armageddon* (26 July 1982) and *Panorama - If the Bomb Drops...* (10 March 1980)

agendas, raising, as Stafford puts it, fundamental questions about the relationship between the state and the individual in the thermonuclear age.⁴⁷⁶

The manifestation of this policy of self-reliance and personal responsibility for protection, *Protect & Survive*⁴⁷⁷ was published in May 1980 by HMSO and priced at 50p and accompanied by a series of short films, to be shown on television in the event that a nuclear strike became inevitable. There is minimal change in the tone or content behind information here and the advice given in a 1938 publication titled *The Protection of Your Home Against Air Raids*⁴⁷⁸ and a later series on information published in 1964 titled *Advice To Householders*.⁴⁷⁹ This was not necessarily borne of ideological considerations but one that recognised the overwhelming destructive power of the nuclear arsenal held by the Soviet Union. As John Preston notes:

Geopolitics and the number of nuclear weapons made it very difficult for the UK to do anything other than to basically adapt previous advice in the 'Advice to the Householder' campaign. If you look at the history of public information on civil defence there is little difference between 'Advice...' and 2004's 'Preparing for Emergencies'.⁴⁸⁰

The production of *Protect and Survive* is essentially incrementalist rather than

⁴⁷⁶ Stafford, J. (2012) p.386

⁴⁷⁷ Appendix E

⁴⁷⁸ *The Protection of Your Home Against Air Raids* (1938) HMSO

⁴⁷⁹ *Advice to the Householder on Protection Against Nuclear Attack* (1964) HMSO

⁴⁸⁰ Interview with Professor John Preston, Professor of Education at the University of East London, 13th August 2013; *Preparing For Emergencies* (2004)

http://www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_176618.pdf (accessed 25 August 2011)

rational, a move away from the idea of civil defence as the immediate life-saving response to an air raid to one where the priority was the protection and preservation of national institutions. There were implicit assumptions made about who should be protected, based on the deeply held assumptions by policy makers which, as John Preston notes, were ideologically beyond question in their focus on the protection of public property and societal roles.⁴⁸¹ However, these ideological assumptions were not necessarily just the preserve of a Conservative government; while the focus on self-reliance and not the protection of a larger society were undeniably Thatcherite, *Protect and Survive* was initiated under a Labour government and the ideology it displays could be argued to also be a product of its time.

Protect & Survive was primarily concerned with informing the public on how to make an improvised shelter in their own homes; as the Working Group on Shelter and Evacuation progress report put it, '...the hasty construction in crisis from household materials of a 'core shelter' in a 'fall-out room'.⁴⁸² *Protect and Survive* was complimented by two booklets published in 1981 regarding the construction of personal protection shelters: *Domestic Nuclear Shelters*⁴⁸³, with techniques for building a home shelter, and *Domestic Nuclear Shelters - Technical Guidance*.⁴⁸⁴

Unlike its US counterparts and to a limited extent, earlier British films such as *The Waking Point*, *Protect and Survive* offered no political or community rallying or

⁴⁸¹ Interview with Professor John Preston, Professor of Education at the University of East London, 13 August 2013

⁴⁸² TNA: HO 322/958 *Shelter and Evacuation – History and Progress to Date* (26 March 1981)

⁴⁸³ HMSO *Domestic Nuclear Shelters* (1981)

⁴⁸⁴ *Domestic Nuclear Shelters - Technical Guidance* (1981) HMSO

appeals to unite behind desirable facets of national character and the moral dimension so inextricably intertwined with survival in US films is in every respect absent. In the face of mutually assured destruction all advantageous concepts of national identity were stripped away; survival of the nation dependent not on the population but on the continuity of state apparatus. Also absent, however, are any mentions of what happens to the surviving state in a post-attack landscape. As John Preston notes:

The ideology was certainly to secure continuity of the state and to keep people in their homes to wait for information. In contrast, policy in the US was about maintaining civil society. In my discussion with Home Office scientists they were concerned about what was the 'bare minimum' for survival ó calories rather than exercise classes. The pragmatic rather than the political.⁴⁸⁵

This message of pragmatism is reinforced by the absence of human intervention or detailed representation of life or society in the films. At the end of each film the *Protect and Survive* logo is imposed, a homogenous nuclear family removed of all identity, simultaneously protected and isolated by the white shield of government advice. British civil defence measures during the cold war were wholly reliant on the fundamentally self-governed preparations of private citizens and offered no state shelters or evacuation policy, but gave greater emphasis to the responsibilities of the individual to protect themselves and placed special value on the role of the family as an agency of the state.⁴⁸⁶ This was not always a direct result of ideology;

⁴⁸⁵ Interview with Professor John Preston, Professor of Education at the University of East London, 13 August 2013

⁴⁸⁶ Shaw (2001) p.133

as John Preston argues, the creation of *Protect and Survive* was influenced in its message and direction by the ideologies of society and successive governments, but its production itself was hampered by other means:

if the money given to civil defence was small (divide the *Protect and Survive* production budget by number of households and it is tiny - I calculated this once) and so there was a limit to what could be done. Add this to the ad hoc nature of productionif and it is not always possible to draw a direct link from ideology to production.⁴⁸⁷

Protect and Survive reflected the extremely limited nature of policy and, as Churcher and Lieven note, presented a series of oversimplified images and assumptions based on an unrealistic, contradictory and distorted view of both the ease of cost-limited protective measures and the landscape of post-attack Britain.⁴⁸⁸ As the only official advice for the public on the subject of civil defence, these booklets were widely lampooned⁴⁸⁹ and counter-publications promoted by organizations such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The result of this internal confusion was a civil defence policy with internal security and the continuation of government at its core that was derided as elitist and ineffective for the population at large by its many detractors. John Preston highlights the structural and ideological issues inherent in attempting to translate a chaotic policy process into concrete public advice:

Firstly, there are issues about the authorial intent and ownership of

⁴⁸⁷ Interview with Professor John Preston, Professor of Education at the University of East London, 13 August 2013

⁴⁸⁸ Churcher, J. and Lieven, E. (1983) p.121

⁴⁸⁹ Appendix F

policy which, in its formations, does not necessarily reflect the views of the authors. A desire to play with the new animation format and distrust between scientists and policy makers make *Protect and Survive* less useful than it might have been in terms of providing clear information. Secondly, there are issues about conflicting objectives. In this case, national security and (political desire for) support for nuclear weapons rather than the safety of the population led to a conflict of interest. The decision to distribute information (at least from politicians) was about winning consensus rather than ensuring survival. Thirdly, policy science makes assumptions about the subject of policy and their ownership of property and resources. Fourthly, policy documents and 'social science fiction' and not necessarily written for a 'reality' of practice.⁴⁹⁰

Ideological assumptions within the civil defence policy are very much in evidence within the actual facts the government chose to make available to the public. The gross oversimplifications regarding likely nuclear scenarios and unrealistic expectations of public behaviour seen in publications such as *Protect and Survive* betray what Churcher and Lieven term the 'ideological web'⁴⁹¹ that civil defence planners created and ultimately found themselves caught within. In order to be truly humanitarian, a more realistic picture of nuclear war combined with the government's willingness to open the issue of civil defence to political debate was needed but, as Churcher and Lieven go on to argue, this was prohibited by the ideological fear 'of that they might not be able to carry the public with them in support of Britain's role as a nuclear state, and [an] anti-democratic paternalism that informs much of the structure of democratic politics in this country.'⁴⁹²

⁴⁹⁰ Preston, J. (2012) p.51

⁴⁹¹ Churcher, J, and Lieven, E. (1983) p.118

⁴⁹² *Ibid.* p.130

It is these assumptions that in their turn reinforced and justified certain aspects of civil defence policy and planning such as the focus on secrecy, plans for police and military control of a post-nuclear Britain and the identification of anti-nuclear subversives and potential subversives.⁴⁹³ Stafford argues that given the limited financial constraints, it made sense for policy makers to recommend the survival of machinery of government over improvements to civil defence preparation as these would bring 'only marginal benefits to most citizens'⁴⁹⁴ and that *Protect and Survive* was in itself dictated by the need for it to 'induce some sort of compliance with the imperatives of national survival'.⁴⁹⁵ Peace groups however - whose criticism focused extensively on the preparations for government survival and the civil liberties implications of the internal policing role of this 'home security' - argued that the government should put effort into preventing nuclear war rather than preparing for it.⁴⁹⁶ A nation forced for the first time to consider a threat they perhaps would previously have preferred to ignore breathed new life into CND and various other anti-nuclear activist groups throughout the country and civil defence became a central symbol in the nuclear disarmament debate.

The Conservative Election Manifesto for 1979 had promised 'significant increases' in defence spending and the importance of ensuring the continuing effectiveness of Britain's nuclear deterrent was stressed.⁴⁹⁷ This promise was evident in the 1979 home defence review, with its pledges to increase spending on civil defence and

⁴⁹³ Bolsover (1982) p.49

⁴⁹⁴ Stafford, J. (2012) p.391

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ Thompson, E.P. (1982) p.13

⁴⁹⁷ *Conservative Election Manifesto 1979* p.12 <http://www.conservative-party.net/manifestos/1979/1979-conservative-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 4 September 2008)

Whitelaw's reiteration of the belief that effective civil defence is an 'essential feature' of making war less likely.⁴⁹⁸ As a consequence of this belief, the Government considered that '... an expanded civil defence programme is both prudent and necessary to achieve an appropriate balance in our defence capability'⁴⁹⁹ and various modifications to policy were rubber-stamped. The role of civil defence as deterrence was argued in a letter to *The Times* in January 1980 by historian Michael Howard:

An initially limited Soviet strike would have the further objective, beyond limiting weapons based in this country aimed at their own homeland, of creating conditions here of such political turbulence that the use of our own nuclear weapons, followed as this could be by yet heavier attacks upon us, would become quite literally 'incredible'. Civil defence on a scale likely to give protection to a substantial section of the population in the event of such a 'limited' strike is thus an indispensable element of deterrence.⁵⁰⁰

In addition to the strengthening of the deterrent posture, the Thatcher administration sought to further bolster the overlapping plans already in place for the provisions of internal security and civil defence, making them considerably more homogeneous. A 1981 Home Office circular⁵⁰¹ later redefined civil defence as an integral part of *home defence*, with the latter's official aims of securing the UK against domestic threats and providing alternative machineries of government at all levels. Thus the primary concern of Conservative civil defence policy continued with the strong administrative bias seen in home defence strategy since the early

⁴⁹⁸ HC Deb, 07 August 1980, vol. 990, cc.790-804

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁰ *The Times* (13 January 1980)

⁵⁰¹ Civil Defence Circular 134(1981)

1960s; the first priority being the continuation of government. A considerable emphasis was placed on the mitigation of internal threats and it has been suggested by commentators on the Left that the civil defence provision of this time was not primarily about protecting the country from foreign aggression, but about protecting the government from the civilian population in situations of extreme national emergency.⁵⁰²

Supporters of the Conservatives' renewed, security-focussed civil defence policies were vocal in the face of increasing opposition from Labour and peace groups as to the value of not only civil defence itself but of what its critics saw as the potentially dangerous use of civil defence legislation for protection against subversion.⁵⁰³ In order to ameliorate public opinion, the government made sure to stress the elements of its policy that provided for public protection. Patrick Mayhew, answering questions in November 1981 from Conservative backbenchers as to whether government civil defence spending was enough, replied:

The Government are equally concerned to make the point that the case for civil defence is a humanitarian one and that one can be wholly committed to unilateral disarmament and at the same time be very firm for proper civil defence.⁵⁰⁴

The Conservatives were keenly aware of the public's growing interest in defence matters. In 1981 the Government had published a leaflet entitled *Civil Defence*:

⁵⁰² Campbell, D. (1983) p.131

⁵⁰³ Cathcart, A. HL Deb, 03 December 1980, vol. 415, cc.397-405

⁵⁰⁴ Mayhew, P. HC Deb, 26 November 1981, vol. 13, cc.983-4

*why we need it*⁵⁰⁵ which explained that the increase in civil defence spending was
... an 'insurance premium' against the remote risk that NATO's continuing
deterrent policy might fail.⁵⁰⁶ In assessing the threat to the UK from the Soviet
Union, the Government continued to use the language of insurance and risk seen in
civil defence policy since the end of World War Two:

...the risk of a war in Europe leading to air or missile attack on the
United Kingdom must be considered unlikely. If, therefore, the
danger of war is low or if for no other reason than the West, including
the United Kingdom, has already paid a high price by way of
deterrence or then it might be concluded that the premium to be paid
by way of home defence insurance should similarly be low.⁵⁰⁷

Recognising the increased importance of civil defence as an election issue, the
Conservatives dedicated a section of their 1983 manifesto to reassure the public in
the face of accusations of elitism of their commitment to civil defence for the
population at large and its necessary partnership with a strong military and strategic
deterrent, both nuclear and conventional.

Our overriding desire and policy is to go on preserving peace.
However, no responsible government can simply assume that we
shall never be attacked. To plan for civil defence is a humanitarian
duty or not only against the possibility of nuclear but also of
conventional attack. That is why we must take steps to provide the
help that could be vital for millions. To proclaim a nuclear-free zone,
as some Labour councils have, is a delusion. The Conservative
Government has accordingly carried out a thorough review of civil
defence, brought forward new regulations to require local authorities

⁵⁰⁵ See appendix C

⁵⁰⁶ *Civil Defence: why we need it* (1980) HMSO

⁵⁰⁷ TNA: HO 322/1003 *Home Defence Objectives* (1981)

to provide improved protection, strengthened the UK Warning and Monitoring Organisations, and nearly doubled spending on civil defence. We propose to amend the Civil Defence Act 1948 to enable civil defence funds to be used in safeguarding against peacetime emergencies as well as against hostile attacks.⁵⁰⁸

Conservative defence planning at the beginning of the 1980s was based on the assumption that a limited nuclear war was survivable and therefore planning of civil defence was not merely a matter of deterrent posturing but of justifiable national value, based on membership of NATO and the ability to respond to '...aggression at any level'.⁵⁰⁹ However the only reference in the 1983 regulations regarding the protection of the public was contained solely within the assertion that any emergency plans should consider the utilization of 'such buildings, structures, excavations and other features of land which are suitable for use for the purpose of providing civil defence shelters for the public'.⁵¹⁰ In the absence of a shelter or evacuation plan for the general populace the emphasis was placed on the need to retain the means for regeneration after a nuclear attack, which by implication necessitates the need for the maintenance of state apparatus.

Ideological objections to government policy also came from within the Conservative party. In June 1980, a memorandum published by the Home Affairs Standing Committee of the centre-right Conservative think tank The Bow Group was highly critical of what it perceived to be the failure of the government to

⁵⁰⁸ Conservative: *Election Manifesto 1983* <http://www.conservative-party.net/manifestos/1983/1983-conservative-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 4 September 2008)

⁵⁰⁹ Ganzoni, J. HL Deb, 05 March 1980, vol. 406 cc.260-386

⁵¹⁰ *Civil Defence Act 1983*

provide a strong nuclear deterrent by under investing in civil defence:

The United Kingdom defence budget is currently running at over £8000 millions a year in providing a contribution to NATO deterrence. But only £26 millions a year is allocated to civil defence. ⁵¹¹ . As a result of this abysmally inadequate financial support which in real terms is less than a third of the 1968 civil defence expenditure, and because there is no shelter policy no effective national civil defence plan, our population is defenceless against the effects of a nuclear attack, and, knowing that the public is unprotected, what British Government could possibly maintain the will to resist such an attack or even the threat of attack? And without such a will to resist, what is the use of the £8000 millions a year spent on a deterrent?⁵¹¹

The view of civil defence as a vital and necessary adjunct to a strong military and deterrence posture first and as humanitarian aid second can be seen in right-wing objections typified by critics of government policy from within the Conservative party. The Conservative Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Civil Defence circulated a questionnaire to every member of the parliamentary party who signed an early day motion on the subject of civil defence. The results of the questionnaire discovered that while parliamentary party members considered '...an adequate Civil Defence structure is essential if our deterrent forces are to be credible,⁵¹² this put them at odds with official government policy of 'no evacuation, no shelters' as it was believed that '...the evacuation element of CD is inseparable from the deterrent aspect, because an orderly evacuation at a crucial stage of negotiation prior to

⁵¹¹ TNA: HO 322/941 *Bow Group Standing Committee memorandum* (June 1980)

⁵¹² TNA: HO 322/941 *Report of the Conservative Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Civil Defence* (1980) p.1

hostilities would evidence of serious intent.⁵¹³

Despite this pressure on the Government during the early 1980s from both right and left wing sources, Conservative civil defence policy did not waver from the ideological direction it had taken since 1979, balancing the belief in deterrence with increasing economic pressures. Nuclear deterrence was considered stable and preferable to attempting to maintain sovereign security in a Cold War world without it; British disarmament could not be countenanced, regardless of Soviet policy. Home Secretary, Patrick Mayhew, whilst telling the House of Commons in March 1984 that "we must all the time remember that we are putting our protective money on the membership of NATO and the maintenance of our deterrent"⁵¹⁴ still reiterated the importance of civil defence to that deterrent posture:

All the Government's efforts in defence and in foreign policy are bent to avoiding any risk of attack and to doing our best to avoid a breach of the peace in Western Europe that has been maintained for the past 38 years. But none of us can guarantee that such a horrific event will not occur, and it is against that possibility a low risk at present that we must provide appropriate civil defence.⁵¹⁵

The *Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations* of the same year legally compelled recalcitrant local authorities to make and review civil defence plans and was ostensibly introduced by the government on the basis that while Britain was better off with the deterrent, "if there is to be civil defence it

⁵¹³ *Ibid.* p.2

⁵¹⁴ Mayhew, P. HC Deb, 24 March 1983, vol. 39, cc.1083-99

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

might as well be effective.⁵¹⁶ The Labour opposition was quick to pick ideological holes in the regulations however, seizing upon what Roy Hattersley condemned as the new regulations' concerns '...with the Government's philosophy rather than the principle on which the regulations should be based,'⁵¹⁷ an accusation of overt and undue ideological influence on policy making.

During the second half of the 1980s, Conservative foreign and defence policy continued to exhibit full belief in the need for an independent British nuclear deterrent. Thatcher showed how entrenched the nuclear way of thinking was to the Conservative parliamentary party when she stated: 'Conventional weapons alone do not deter, and two world wars in Europe have already proved that. We want a war-free Europe, and we need to keep nuclear weapons to achieve that.'⁵¹⁸ an ideological position that had been cemented in the *Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987*:

It is easy to forget that in the first half of this century the world was twice plunged into immensely destructive global war... In the last century Europe was torn asunder by several major wars. By contrast, in the...40 years of nuclear deterrence - there has been no war in western Europe, either conventional or nuclear, in spite of deep ideological hostility between East and West.⁵¹⁹

However, the threat that this hard-line stance was designed to meet was slowly receding. Despite continued belief in the deterrent, government civil defence policy

⁵¹⁶ Hurd, D. HC Deb, 26 October 1983, vol. 47, cc.336-74

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁸ Thatcher, M. HC Deb, 04 March 1988, vol. 128, cc.1280-95

⁵¹⁹ *Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987* p.13

was developing into an 'all-hazards' approach not solely focussed on either humanitarian protection from a foreign aggressor or as an adjunct to deterrence and with this policy change a new consensus between the parties would be achieved. In a House of Lords debate on the *Defence Estimates 1985*, the conciliatory mood between the parties on the previously tense issue of civil defence was highlighted by Labour peer Lord Graham of Edmonton who stated that there was ð... a powerful case for what is called the all-hazards approach - an attempt to depoliticise the civil defence issue, so that the believers in deterrence and disarmament alike can agree upon civil defence measures without prejudice to their different standpoints on military policy."⁵²⁰ In 1986, the Conservative Party's 1983 election pledge became the *Civil Protection in Peacetime Act*⁵²¹ which permitted the use of civil defence planning resources in peacetime emergencies. This signalled not only the decline of both the Cold War model of civil defence as nuclear protection and the party political and ideological involvement in public protection policy making.

Conclusion

It is the influence of ideology in policy making which can be mostly clearly seen 'once-removed' in policy development. The creation of British civil defence policy was not always influenced by the ideological or party political beliefs of policy makers but was more often shaped by the impact of policies of defence and deterrence that were themselves ideologically driven.

⁵²⁰ Graham, E. HL Deb, 03 July 1985, vol. 465, cc.1199-270

⁵²¹ *Civil Protection In Peacetime Act* (1986) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/22/contents> (accessed 30 September 2008)

Until the consensus that dominated British politics until the economic crises of the 1970s came to an end, post-war British politics did not often present the voter with a polarising choice between Left and Right and it was within this context that Cold War civil defence policy was developed. Rhetoric concerning civil defence changed in response to the party in power but could not be said to be a solely 'Labour' or 'Conservative' issue until the Conservative election victory of 1979. As Lawrence Vale notes, civil defence was an issue where the party in opposition almost always carried the strongest argument for reform⁵²² and consensus was not always reached within the parliamentary party itself.

During the last two decades of the Cold War, the argument in favour of civil defence as an adjunct to nuclear defence made by those in favour of the British deterrent was primarily argued by those on the Right and was born of no less logic than the arguments from the Left. The advocates for civil defence as a complementary defence policy argued that any potential foreign aggressors who observed that the object nation had taken no measures for civil protection would consider the credibility of that nation's deterrent as being low, regardless of the capability of the nuclear deterrent itself. The aggressor would be tempted to assume that the deterrent was a bluff by a country that has no intention of fighting for survival. But if measures for public protection have been taken then the credibility of its deterrent posture is enhanced and the power to deter increased accordingly.

⁵²² Vale, L. (1985) p.244

The ideological belief in a strong military and defence posture was crucial to the Conservative government's development of civil defence policy during their time in power. Subsequent Conservative administrations have, from the time of the Strath report's conclusions about the destructive power of the hydrogen bomb in 1955, argued that the primary defence responsibility of government should be to prevent war and that this was most effectively done by spending time and money on an effective method of deterrence. The conclusions of the *Sandys Defence White Paper* of 1957 first embraced civil defence as a subsidiary of Britain's nuclear defence posture and from that point until the end of the Cold War, decisions on civil defence policy were highly influenced by their perceived effectiveness as an aid to defence.

After civil defence's revival as a policy concern in 1972, two ideological influences on policy making could clearly be seen. The first was the results of the 1973's *Home Defence Planning Assumptions* which sought to redefine the aims of civil defence in order to direct national security. This change in focus drew intense criticism from the Conservative party's ideological opponents who argued that this change in civil defence policy was simply cover for increased powers of population control. Despite this, the concept of public protection as an adjunct to nuclear defence remained a primary concern to the Conservative party and as such, the second major influence was a continuation of the Conservative belief in a strong, nuclear-armed state. This intensified under the successive governments of Margaret Thatcher as détente came to an end and signalled the beginning of a hard line foreign policy that saw the issue of nuclear deterrence and civil defence become

more politicised, ideologically influenced and polarised than at any other time during the Cold War.

The most significant critics of this link between military and home defence were on the Left of the political spectrum and their objections stemmed from an ideological distaste for nuclear weaponry and from the apparent use of civil defence as a bolster to the deterrent posture. Their most fundamental objection was one born of the argument that any civil defence policy which includes provision for public protection implies uncertainty about the reliability of nuclear deterrent policy by admitting the possibility of failure. And if the nuclear deterrent failed, ran the argument, the nuclear-armed state faces destruction to the extent that the state would have been better off without nuclear weapons. Critics of the government's civil defence policy labelled it a fraud, one that the public was actively encouraged not to think too closely about lest it damage the support for the nuclear deterrent.

In the early years of the Cold War the Labour Party had been supporters of Britain obtaining a nuclear deterrent and this decision was to have long-lasting influence on the shape of civil defence policy until the end of the Cold War. Despite the party's rejection of this decision by the mid-1950s and its slow move towards a policy of disarmament, Labour in opposition continued to broadly support the government's policy of civil defence as a necessary insurance policy against the failure of the British nuclear deterrent. By the time Labour were returned to power in 1964 on the back of a campaign against the deterrent this had changed and splits began to be seen in the parliamentary party between those who reluctantly

considered a policy of public protection necessary and those who viewed civil defence as an ultimately useless public relations exercise. During this time, however, issues of party politics and ideology were not a significantly contributing factor towards the development of civil defence policy and a cross-party consensus on the nuclear weapons programme and civil defence was often in evidence.

It was the parliamentary party's ideological move towards unilateralism and a growing disbelief in the guarantees given by the nuclear deterrent that proved to be the greatest influence on civil defence policy made by Labour in opposition during the 1970s and 80s when they put ridding Britain of nuclear weapons at the top of their political agenda. The election defeat of 1979 and the election of CND member Michael Foot to leader heralded Labour's formal adoption of a non-nuclear defence policy with its resultant effects on official attitudes toward civil defence, though internal divisions within the party on the issue of nuclear weapons and defence were still evident. It proved much easier to convince both party members and the public of the destructiveness of nuclear weapons than it was that Britain should give up the right to that power altogether; as such, public support for unilateralism had fallen to just 15% of the population by 1983⁵²³

An ideological distaste for the nuclear deterrent, and what the party considered to be the government's corruption of civil defence to fit its hawkish defence agenda, was in evidence in the party's support for the nuclear-free local authorities and their non-compliance with civil defence exercises. The government's increasingly

⁵²³ Butler, D. and Kavanagh, D. (1984) p.282

coercive amendments to civil defence legislation could be said to be the most significant example of Labour's ideology influencing central government policy making; though not in the direction they had hoped.

Chapter 5

External Influences

This chapter focusses on the external influences on national civil defence policy of international relations, world events, local government and non-governmental agencies. The first of the two major external factors that this chapter examines is the influence of détente and international relations. It explores the fears of Soviet expansionism during the 1970s that led to criticism of government policy as inadequate and short sighted and analyses the factors contributing to the end of détente in 1979, and investigates the effects of the increasingly 'all-hazards' approach and move away from the traditional nuclear model of civil defence.

The second influence to be examined is the effect on central government policy of local authority dissent. It explores the legislation that was constructed in the 1970s to oblige local authorities to make plans for civil defence and analyses the seeds of local authority dissent that were sown during this period. The 1979 Home Defence Review is taken as a starting point for a more detailed analysis of local authority non-compliance and the genesis and development of the nuclear-free zones movement of the 1980s is explored together with the effects of the authorities' refusal to plan for civil defence on government. Finally, the cancellation of the civil defence exercise Hard Rock is examined as the largest example of local authority action directly influencing government policy, along with the influence the dissenting local authorities had on policy creation.

A brief analysis of the role of the Scientific Advisory Branch as independent advisors to the government in the development of practical protective advice to the

public is provided, before the chapter concludes with an examination of the influences of peace groups with particular reference to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It explores the anti-civil defence position of such groups and investigates to what extent the existence and activities of such groups could be said to have a direct influence on either the development or early termination of policy.

International Relations and Détente

In the early 1970s the UK, along with the USA and Canada, continued to move away from specific planning for nuclear war towards more generalised contingency planning. Despite a period of relative international harmony, however, underlying tensions still remained between the US and the Soviet Union. In the UK, fears were raised about the continued growth of Soviet military strength and of the increasingly unfavourable military balance between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, especially in light of the reduction in defence spending outlined in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1976.⁵²⁴ Critics of government policy from within the Conservative party asked questions not only about military disparity but also what meaning could be implied by the gulf in provision for public protection, as Stephen Hastings MP stated:

It is not mentioned in the White Paper, but I understand that the Soviet spending on civil defence is over \$1,000 million a year. That is not necessary for sabre-rattling. That is only there as an earnest of absolute intent to survive in actual war. Of course, we have abandoned our civil defence altogether. But what sort of interpretation do the Government place on this figure?⁵²⁵

⁵²⁴ THA: Cmnd. 6432 *Statement on the Defence Estimates* (1976)

⁵²⁵ Hastings, S. HC Deb, 01 April 1976, vol. 908, cc.1591-722

Growing concern about the uneasy relationship between the Soviet Union and the West was evident in the objections of the Conservative opposition to the Government's inadequate civil defence policy; Nicholas Winterton MP in a debate in the House of Commons on the defence estimates in April 1976 stating:

We have no civil defence in this country. It is extraordinary that the Soviet Union has allocated more than £300 million for civil defence within its own boundaries. There is one rule for them and another for us. They are prepared to plan, but we are not. We delude ourselves and think that a few worthless signatures from the Soviet Union on the same piece of paper as the signatures of President Ford of the United States or of the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary enable us to ignore the growing future Soviet threat.

It is against that background that the Government and I condemn them for their policies are prepared to countenance the folly of détente and place at risk the remainder of the ever-declining free world.⁵²⁶

By the end of the 1970s, the contrast between the £8,000 million spent annually on military defence and the £20 million spent per year on civil defence⁵²⁷ was striking. It was also clear to the Government that the lack of a civil defence programme significantly weakened the credibility of the strategic nuclear deterrent by casting doubt on whether the UK would ultimately be willing to use nuclear weapons if the population was unprotected.⁵²⁸

In the 1940s and 1950s, rising international tensions has led to a significant revival of civil defence as a policy concern. This was to recur as the 'second cold war'

⁵²⁶ Winterton, N. HC Deb, 01 April 1976, vol. 908, cc.1591-722

⁵²⁷ TNA: HO 322/939 *A Strategy for Civil Defence* (10 May 1980)

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*

from 1979 to 1985 saw an ideological and geopolitical renewal of conflict between East and West. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, which was harshly criticised by the West, led to the failure to ratify and the eventual abandonment of the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty of the same year which signalled the beginning of the end of détente. In the same year the Conservative party under Margaret Thatcher was returned to power and just a year later in 1980 the US election saw Republican Ronald Reagan elected on a platform opposed to the concessions of détente. In her own words, Thatcher and Reagan ‘...believed in so many of the same things’⁵²⁹, most relevantly, that the way to peace lay through strength, both ideologically and militarily. Reagan took a hard-line ideological stance towards the USSR, stating in 1983 that ‘The Soviet Union is an Evil Empire, and Soviet communism is the focus of evil in the modern world.’⁵³⁰ The result of this was close transatlantic cooperation between the US and the UK, especially on issues related to defence and the Soviet Union.

In light of this stance and the increase in international tensions signalling the end of détente which Conservative peer Baroness Emmet believed to be caused by ‘...the threatening attitude of certain countries towards nuclear warfare’⁵³¹ when the party was returned to power in 1979 a review of civil defence was announced, the economic and ideological influences of which have been discussed in greater depth in previous chapters. At the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee meeting in May 1980, ministers instructed officials to prepare a series of papers proposing

⁵²⁹ Thatcher, M. *Reagan's Leadership, America's Recovery* National Review (30 December 1988)

⁵³⁰ Ronald Reagan, in an address to a meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida (8 March 1983)

⁵³¹ Emmet, E. HL Deb, 06 December 1979, vol. 403, cc.861-4

civil defence planning objectives and options in light of current threat assessments. The Soviet Union was judged to have the capability to carry out ð...significant attacks on the United Kingdom with conventional, chemical and nuclear weapons. Their intentions are less easy to judge thus making it difficult to match home defence preparations to the threat.ö.⁵³²

In June 1982, the Home Office stated ðIn Britain, the Government's attitude towards civil defence is a measure of the perceived risk of enemy air attack on the civilian population.ö⁵³³ However, while the threat from the Soviet Union was evidently a clear consideration in the development of civil defence policy, the formation of a response was tempered by several other considerations. In May 1980, a briefing document establishing the strategic rationale for a civil defence policy acknowledged that although the Soviet Union had the capacity to ð...conduct almost any form of campaign they regard as necessary,ö⁵³⁴ the Government's response would also depend on other factors:

The means which might be taken to provide some measure of protection...will depend on what are judged to be the main policy objectives. The survival of the maximum number of the population might be seen as an obvious objective. But to protect anything approaching the total population is not an attainable end.⁵³⁵

The strategic review recommended a public warning service, a self-help policy on

⁵³² TNA: HO 322/1012 *Review of Home Defence Preparedness* p.1 (May 1980)

⁵³³ TNA: HO 322/1019 *Civil Defence: The Statutory Obligations of Local Authorities* (June 1982)

⁵³⁴ TNA: HO 322/939 *A Strategy for Civil Defence* (10 May 1980)

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

shelters, a decentralised system of government and stockpiles of food to help ensure the survival of at least half⁵³⁶ the population. While some in the Ministry of Defence felt that there was no doubt that the Soviet threat was 'massive and increasing',⁵³⁷ it was ultimately considered that the risk to the population at large was insufficient enough '...to justify what would necessarily be very expensive protective measures'.⁵³⁸

Shortly before the results of this home defence review were announced, an assessment by the Home Office as to the nature of the Soviet threat stated that:

...the 'measures' under review could in no sense affect the fundamental Soviet considerations of the United Kingdom's importance as a target. Nor could they affect Soviet perceptions of the vulnerability of the United Kingdom, or any key installation or facility within it, to either conventional or nuclear attack.⁵³⁹

This statement as to the ineffectiveness of civil defence in making the United Kingdom less of a target for Soviet aggression is an interesting one in light of civil defence's priority role as an adjunct to military deterrence. Civil defence in this situation does not seem to be considered valuable as an early deterrent to target in the first place, but more as a sandbag to add to the last line of defence once all else has failed. This is reflected in Government thinking, which acknowledged that civil

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁷ TNA: CAB 322/939 *Letter to C. Johnson from F. Pym* (6 May 1980)

⁵³⁸ TNA: HO 322/939 *Home Defence* (11 June 1980)

⁵³⁹ TNA: HO 322/984 *Impact of Improvements in United Kingdom Civil Home Defence Preparedness on the Soviet Union and Other Countries* (25 July 1980)

defence '...would not reduce the Soviet military threat to this country but would help to demonstrate the United Kingdom's determination to survive as well as fight.'⁵⁴⁰

Subsequently, the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, performed a complicated juggling act, keen to stress that plans to substantially increase spending on civil defence were not linked to any perceived risk or external threat while still ensuring that the intended statement '...will be seen as a sufficient response to the international situation and to the concern being expressed by the public and in parliament.'⁵⁴¹ A ministerial committee review of the statement was eager to stress that any announcement '...should aim to diminish public concern despite the seriousness of the subject.'⁵⁴² A draft version of the statement had also been flagged up by the Prime Minister as possibly alarmist when she queried whether it '...may give the impression that there has been a sudden increase in the threat,'⁵⁴³ requesting that Whitelaw amend that statement to counter a feeling that the Government was not doing enough in the civil defence arena in comparison with other nations. This was a view echoed by John Biffen, Chief Secretary to the Treasury who urged Whitelaw to '...begin it with a reassuring statement that war is not likely in the foreseeable future provided that we continue our policy of peace through strength.'⁵⁴⁴ As such, the statement when it arrived was quick to mollify any possibility for concern:

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴¹ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Home Defence Review and Ministerial Statement* (17 April 1980)

⁵⁴² TNA: HO 322/1024 *Ministerial Consideration of Home Defence Review* (25 March 1980)

⁵⁴³ TNA: HO 322/984 *Letter from M. Pattinson to J. Halliday* (4 August 1980)

⁵⁴⁴ TNA: HO 322/984 *Letter from J. Biffen to W. Whitelaw* (4 August 1980)

I begin by emphasising that, despite the difficulties of the present international situation, the Government do not regard armed conflict with the Warsaw Pact countries as probable, let alone inevitable or imminent, provided that we maintain, as we intend, a firm commitment to peace, while ensuring that our defence forces remain balanced and effective. We believe that to be seen to be prepared at home, as well as capable of military deterrence and defence, will make war less likely. Nevertheless, I remind the House of what my Right Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said in paragraph 110 of his statement on the defence Estimates 1980. He said that Soviet strategists hold that any war in Europe is likely to escalate into a nuclear exchange, though it might start with conventional warfare, and that the warning time we might receive could be very little. This period of warning might, we believe, be measured in days rather than weeks.

Against this background, the Government consider that an expanded civil defence programme is both prudent and necessary to achieve an appropriate balance in our defence capability.⁵⁴⁵

A Memorandum by the Chairman of the official Committee on Home Defence stated that the current assumption about the nature of the Soviet threat "clearly affects" the drive towards a civil defence policy while simultaneously acknowledging that the exact nature of the threat remained unclear. This concern was also echoed by the Treasury, who expressed their doubts about the suitability of placing a report by the Home Defence Planning Sub-committee on the state of civil preparedness before Treasury ministers:

They felt that the wrong approach to the subject had been taken by the Sub-Committee and that the conventional threat set out in the report had not been adequately defined and did not justify the recommendations that had been made. They felt that there was

⁵⁴⁵ Whitelaw, W. HC Deb, 07 August 1980, vol. 990, cc.790-804

⁵⁴⁶ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Memorandum by the Chairman of the Official Committee on Home Defence* (17 March 1980)

insufficient evidence to adopt a changed strategy for civil defence planning.⁵⁴⁷

It could be argued that while this factor was still uncertain, the greater influence and subsequent policy determinant was the recurring concern, stated once more in the same Memorandum that civil defence should not appear to be a detracting factor in the efficacy of the deterrent: "the lack of plans for the protection of the public could be seen by the Russians as inhibiting any Western decision to initiate the use of nuclear weapons, and could thus affect the credibility of Britain's nuclear deterrent."⁵⁴⁸ As previously discussed, this was also a highly influencing opinion of Conservative backbenchers who were intensifying the "political pressure"⁵⁴⁹ around the subject. The proposed trebling of civil defence spending in three years by 1984 also indicates that policy was being driven by considerations of a nuclear exchange, if not probably then at least possibly. Expenditure was therefore justified in as much as "the government consider that an expanded civil defence programme is both prudent and necessary to achieve an appropriate balance in our defence capability."⁵⁵⁰

The *Home Office Circular No. ES 1/1981* that was issued in March 1981 as a result of the review also disabused the claim that the review of civil defence policy and its subsequent reactivation were not linked to any perceived external threat. The

⁵⁴⁷ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Review of Home Defence Planning* (14 March 1980)

⁵⁴⁸ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Memorandum by the Chairman of the Official Committee on Home Defence* (17 March 1980)

⁵⁴⁹ TNA: HO 322/1024 *Home Defence Review* (13 March 1980)

⁵⁵⁰ Whitelaw, W. HC Deb, 07 August 1980, vol. 990, cc.790-804

circular provided further information on the measures to be taken by local authorities to improve the state of civil preparedness for home defence and gave prominence to the Government's assessment of the existence or imminence of any potential threat:

Changes in strategic thinking mean that we must be prepared for conventional as well as nuclear attack on this country, and for the possibility of hostilities occurring at short notice. In future, emergency plans will have to be maintained at a high state of readiness and be capable of dealing with a variety of forms of attack, ranging from the effects of conventional aerial attack with high accuracy weapons against a limited number of targets to the devastating consequences of a strategic nuclear attack.⁵⁵¹

Speaking in a debate in the House of Commons in 1981, Patrick Mayhew confirmed the Government's thinking with regard to the necessity of expenditure being directly linked to the calculated risk of war:

The central Government must provide funds and central organisation. They will naturally judge or calculate the scale of provision by reference to their assessment of the likelihood of war. As my hon. Friend will recall, in 1937, 1938 and 1939, all with eyes to see and ears to hear reckoned that war was inevitable. Inadequate though it then was, by reason of the imminent onset of war, the scale of provision for civil defence was higher than we now believe to be necessary. A higher likelihood of war would justify and induce higher expenditure than we consider it right to allot at present.⁵⁵²

The collapse of détente at the end of the 1970s transformed the context in which

⁵⁵¹ *Home Office Circular No. ES 1/1981*

⁵⁵² Mayhew, P. HC Deb, 27, November 1981, vol. 13, cc.1152-61

civil defence policy making was developed. Political objections to any perceived preparations for public protection were often fuelled by the perception that the superpowers, supported by Britain, were preparing to wage war on European territory.⁵⁵³ While the home defence review was supported by many on both sides of the House,⁵⁵⁴ the more unilateralist view of some in the parliamentary Labour party, as represented by Tony Benn MP in a Debate on the Address in November 1980, accused the government of using the perceived threat represented by the Soviet Union to further their own policies:

The truth is that the civil defence policy of this country is not a credible policy. What people want now is an exploration of a non-nuclear defence strategy... they are not prepared to see the Government use the Cold War as an instrument of their own domestic policy.⁵⁵⁵

This is an example of not only how external actors and agencies influenced policy decisions, but how critics of government policy believed those actors were given as reasons in order to legitimise or justify policy developed for alternative reasons. There was some justification for this suspicion; in November 1982 a policy briefing document on attack assumptions was produced by the Emergency Planning Department at the Home Office which offers some significant insight into policy determinism:

⁵⁵³ Scott, L. (2006) p.691

⁵⁵⁴ Banks, R. and Ross, S. HC Deb, 07 August 1980, vol. 990, cc.790-804

⁵⁵⁵ Benn, T. HC Deb, 20 November 1980, vol. 994, cc.7-102

We began raising the profile of civil defence in 1980 not because we thought the risk of war in Europe has increased but largely in response to pressure from Government supporters who, for a wide range of motives, thought that there should be at least a partial return to the pre-1968 days.⁵⁵⁶

However, the paper reiterates the prevailing belief in adequate civil defence as an essential ingredient in the capacity of a nation to withstand attack: 'In short, we can never totally exclude the risk of nuclear war but we can legitimately discount it as a reason for disruptive and expensive civil defence measures against improbably contingencies at the far end of the threat spectrum.'⁵⁵⁷ The Emergency Planning Department was also keen to emphasise in public that increased planning was happening not because they government believed in the inevitability of war or to condition the public to greater acceptance of war, but, as *The Times* reported, '... a response to greater awareness of the Russian capability and increased public interest in civil defence.'⁵⁵⁸

Immediately following the review, the subject of civil defence became a popular topic in the media and was widely reported in both the broadsheet newspapers and on the television.⁵⁵⁹ *The Times* was typical of the broadsheet newspapers at the time in how it reported on civil defence, giving the reasons behind the renewal of interest in civil defence as resulting from:

⁵⁵⁶ TNA: HO 322/1003 *Future of Civil Defence Policy – Attack Assumptions* (17 November 1982)

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁸ *The Times* (29 September 1980)

⁵⁵⁹ There are approximately 200 references to civil defence in the archives of *Guardian*, *Observer* and *The Times* newspapers in the year following the review.

...Russia's big build-up of more conventional fire power. Latest intelligence assessments include the likelihood of a period of conventional warfare, and the warning period before any attack is assumed to be less than 10 days rather than three or four weeks.⁵⁶⁰

The Government was also keen to draw attention to the provision its civil defence policy made against attack by conventional weapons, as a foil to its critics who argued that civil defence policy as it stood could have no hope of protecting the population against nuclear warfare. Conservative peer Lord David Renton, president of the pro-civil defence organisation the National Council for Civil Defence, confirmed the Government's justification of its policy and the influence of the perceived Soviet threat by stating:

Some people wrongly assume that this third possibility is the only one which is conceivable, arguing that there would be no survivors and that all civil defence preparations are a waste of time even to protect people on the periphery and in remote areas from fall-out. Their argument is then falsely extended to the denial of civil defence in all circumstances. In the past 30 years all the great powers have been involved in conventional wars and no nuclear weapons have been used. The greatest danger is therefore that of a conventional attack, especially after the recent massive increase in Soviet conventional arms.⁵⁶¹

When questioned by opposition backbenchers in a House of Commons debate, in October 1983 to justify the case for their civil defence policy as it stood, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Ancram, took care to move the debate away from the threat of nuclear action between the superpowers,

⁵⁶⁰ The Times (16 December 1980)

⁵⁶¹ Renton, D. HC Deb, 24 March 1983, vol. 39, cc.1083-99

acknowledging the 'never say never' insurance policy provided by civil defence but stressing the need for protection against unspecified incidents of harmful but indirect origin:

The case, essentially and simply and I believe that it should be restated is that no Government can guarantee that this country will never again be involved or caught up in war, directly or indirectly.... If we cannot be sure that we shall never again be involved or caught up in any kind of warfare, nuclear or conventional, we have a duty to do what we can to protect our people from its effects, were it to happen.

The Government are committed to peace a peace which we believe our defence policy will maintain and preserve. But we recognise, as we must, that no Government have control over our own destiny. In an imperfect world there must always be dangers and risks, and it is these dangers and risks which in all responsibility we must be prepared to reduce.⁵⁶²

The focus of civil defence policy was shifting further and further away from protection against the actions of a foreign aggressor towards the establishment of a civil defence capacity to deal with civil disasters as opposed to wartime emergencies. The Conservative party made commitments to extend the *Civil Defence Act* of 1948 to allow civil defence resources to be used for peacetime emergencies, in what was claimed to be an example of the '...further indication of the humanitarian nature of civil defence.'⁵⁶³ This was a shift in policy concern first seen in the 1950s (see Chapter 2). However a change in the relationship between East and West unthinkable at the time was soon to accelerate this shift permanently away from traditional models of civil defence policy towards one of pure

⁵⁶² Ancram, M. HC Deb, 26 October 1983, vol. 47, cc.375-93

⁵⁶³ Mellor, D. HC Deb, 06 June 1985, vol. 80, cc.206-7W

emergency planning.

It was in this international and domestic context that civil defence policy continued fundamentally unchanged until 1985, when East-West tensions eased after the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev who brought a new style of leadership to the Soviet Union. Despite initial scepticism in the West, Gorbachev's reformist policies – including the commitment to reverse the Soviet Union's deteriorating economic condition instead of continuing stockpiling arms – led to increased cooperation between the superpowers that marked the start of the end of the Cold War. As a result, international tensions started to subside – Margaret Thatcher famously labelling Gorbachev as a man with whom it was possible to ‘do business together’⁵⁶⁴ – and civil defence policy began to undergo a change.

In its 1983 election manifesto, the Conservative Party had announced ‘We propose to amend the Civil Defence Act 1948 to enable civil defence funds to be used in safeguarding against peacetime emergencies as well as against hostile attacks.’⁵⁶⁵ It was this ‘all-hazards’ approach increasingly seen in civil defence policy that eventually led to the introduction of the *Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986*, an Act ‘to enable local authorities to use their civil defence resources in connection with emergencies and disasters unconnected with any form of hostile attack by a

⁵⁶⁴ Margaret Thatcher, quoted in a BBC television interview (17 December 1984)

⁵⁶⁵ *Conservative Party Election Manifesto 1983* <http://www.conservative-party.net/manifestos/1983/1983-conservative-manifesto.shtml> (accessed 4 September 2008)

foreign power.⁵⁶⁶ As Nicholas Bosner, MP for Upminster who introduced the measure as a Private Members Bill, stated upon its second reading in the House of Commons:

It is a short and simple Bill which enables those local authorities who are required by law to carry out functions under the Civil Defence Act 1941 - and, I should add, the regulations made under that Act - to use for peacetime purposes the resources that are available to them for civil defence. The Bill is designed to encourage but not to enforce the use of civil defence personnel and other resources when making plans and preparations to deal with peacetime disasters, and, of course, to deal with them when they occur.⁵⁶⁷

The Bill was broadly supported by all the major parties, including the Government who welcomed it for allowing the party to fulfil its manifesto commitment⁵⁶⁸, and the parliamentary Labour Party who stated that "We must welcome anything that tries to concentrate resources on the peacetime use of civil defence rather than on preparation for hypothetical war use."⁵⁶⁹ The Act was an evident sign of the Government's belief in the receding threat posed by the Soviet Union. However while the Act gave local authorities more freedom in the scope and manner of their public protection it stopped shy of authorising any reduction in preparations for defence against foreign hostilities.

⁵⁶⁶ *Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986*

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1986/pdf/ukpga_19860022_en.pdf (accessed 30 September 2008)

⁵⁶⁷ Bosner, N. HC Deb, 21 February 1986, vol. 92, cc.587-627

⁵⁶⁸ Renton, D. HL Deb, 04 June 1986, vol. 475, cc.1057-65

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Local Authority Dissent

Since the creation of civil defence in Britain, planning and provision for public protection had been a function of local authorities on the basis that they had existing structures, staff and equipment on which to base and build a civil defence organisation and they knew and are known by the people within their jurisdiction. Local authorities were first given responsibility for civil defence by the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Act of 1937 which obliged local authorities to construct ARP schemes in order to defend the population and their property from air attack.⁵⁷⁰ Further amendments were made to the Act in 1938 and 1939 to enable local authorities to carry out their designated function without hindrance, enabling them to '... earmark in advance buildings, or parts of buildings, either for use as public shelters or for other necessary Civil Defence purposes'⁵⁷¹ It was the 1948 *Civil Defence Act* that broadened the remit of civil defence to include '... any measure not amounting to actual combat for affording defence against any form of hostile attack by a foreign power or for depriving any form of attack by a foreign power of the whole or part of its effect, whether the measures are taken before, at or after the time of the attack.'⁵⁷² It also obliged local authorities to 'perform such (defence) functions as may be prescribed' by the designated Minister.⁵⁷³

Until the revival of civil defence in 1972, it was not a particularly noteworthy area of local government activity and such duties as were imposed upon local

⁵⁷⁰ TNA: HO 45/17610 *Air Raid Precautions Act 1937*

⁵⁷¹ Anderson, J. HC Deb, 04 April 1939 vol. 345 cc.2633-752

⁵⁷² *Civil Defence Act (1948)* HMSO

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*

authorities were not particularly onerous. This began to change with the introduction of the *Local Government Act 1972* which clarified local authorities' power to spend money in the event of a disaster situation "Where an emergency or disaster involving destruction of or danger to life or property occurs or is imminent or there is reasonable ground for apprehending such an emergency or disaster, and a principal council are of opinion that it is likely to affect the whole or part of their area or all or some of its inhabitants."⁵⁷⁴ This provision marked the beginning of what was to be central government's increasing reliance on the local state to provide the backbone of its civil defence policy.

It was long acknowledged by the government that local authorities had not only an important role to play in the protection of the public but also in ensuring that plans for the regional seats of government in the post-attack period were properly in place.⁵⁷⁵ Since the Strath Report in 1957 and the following Home Defence Review of 1960, civil defence policy had started to move away from traditional ideas of public protection towards concentrating instead on plans for the survival of government and community order. Local authorities had a vital role to play in the continuation of government and the importance of planning to ensure the proper discharging of this function was stressed by the Government in 1973:

The keystone of our preparations in civil defence for national survival after an attack lies in the measures which are designed to provide a regional system of internal government.... Therefore, the

⁵⁷⁴ *Local Government Act 1972*

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/RevisedStatutes/Acts/ukpga/1972/cukpga_19720070_en_22#pt8-pb7-11g156
(accessed 11 October 2008)

⁵⁷⁵ Bacon, A. HC Deb, 20 July 1967 vol. 750 cc.2615-55

basis of the wartime machinery of internal government is decentralisation and concentration of all domestic functions within a number of home defence regions.... But, and more immediately relevant as an integral element of our domestic regional government, we cannot overestimate the part which local authorities would have to play in a post-attack situation. It is therefore essential that the plans made by the local authorities in peacetime for discharging their post-attack responsibilities should be realistic and workable and constantly kept up to date in the light of the latest assumptions and best scientific advice we can give them.⁵⁷⁶

In order to ensure that local authorities were complying with the civil defence duties, the Government introduced the *Civil Defence (Planning) Regulations (1974)*, an example of a direct change in policy resulting from the actions of external agencies. The early 1970s had seen a significant change in the structure of local government resulting in the emergence of larger and more competent authorities at county level and it was thought that these would be more able to cope with the planning and operational needs of civil defence than their predecessors.⁵⁷⁷ Consequently, in 1974 these regulations were issued under the 1948 *Civil Defence Act* requiring local authorities to make plans for the purposes of civil defence.⁵⁷⁸

As noted in more than one debate in the House of Commons following the 1974 regulations, the Government had no actual power to ensure that local authorities carried out their duties under the *Civil Defence Act*, relying instead on ò.. the good sense of local authorities properly to discharge their civil defence functions.ò⁵⁷⁹

Concerns began to be raised towards the end of the 1970s that local authorities

⁵⁷⁶ Lane, D. HC Deb, 21 December 1973, vol. 866, cc.1769-87

⁵⁷⁷ Fox, S. (2003) p. 67

⁵⁷⁸ *The Civil Defence (Planning) Regulations 1974*

⁵⁷⁹ Summerskill, S. HC Deb, 31 March 1977, vol. 929, cc.195-6W

were failing to comply with the requirements set out in the 1948 Act and subsequent Regulations and in April of 1977 the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Office, Dr Shirley Summerskill, replied to these concerns by stating:

I accept that in all those matters in respect of which Parliament imposes a function on local authorities, some councils are better than others. But, as I have said recently ... the Home Secretary has no powers of inspection and report. Government officials can proceed only by persuasion - because we are dealing with civilians - and by quoting the example of the better authorities.⁵⁸⁰

This inability to directly control the plans made by local authorities would come to be a thorn in the side of central government policy. In announcing the results of the 1979 Home Defence Review to the House of Commons in August 1980, William Whitelaw stated that:

Effective civil defence arrangements depend upon co-operation between central Government and local government. I know that concern has been expressed about variations in civil defence arrangements in different parts of the country. I am satisfied that the Government have adequate powers to ensure that proper standards of protection are provided throughout the country, and it will naturally be our aim, with the local authorities, to see that that is done.⁵⁸¹

However, as increasingly tense East-West relations at the beginning of the 1980s signalled the end of détente, believing that government-approved civil defence plans were wholly inadequate and the local authority sanction of such would

⁵⁸⁰ Summerskill, S. HC Deb, 07 April 1977, vol. 929, cc.1468-80

⁵⁸¹ Whitelaw, W. HC Deb, 07 August 1980, vol. 990, cc.790-804

encourage military spending and reinforce the belief that limited nuclear war was acceptable, some local authorities across Britain began to refuse to comply with central government policy on nuclear weapons and civil defence.

The refusal by local authorities to participate in civil defence preparations was not a new phenomenon. As discussed in Chapter 2, in 1954 Coventry City Council, and later in 1956 the London borough of St Pancras both refused to carry out their civil defence responsibilities. St Pancras called civil defence a waste of time and money, with a view that there could be no real protection against nuclear attack.⁵⁸² On these occasions civil defence commissioners were sent to the councils to undertake their civil defence responsibilities and the authorities charged for their work and the threat of similar action kept other dissenting local authorities from terminating their war planning altogether.⁵⁸³

Labour-controlled Manchester City Council was the first to pass a resolution against nuclear weapons in 1980 and circulated this resolution, which became a model for other nuclear-free zones, to other authorities with a request for similar action. A national nuclear free local authorities (NFLA) organisation, under the City's leadership, was set up. The Manchester City Council resolution 'õ calls upon Her Majesty's Government to refrain from the manufacture or positioning of any nuclear weapons of any kind within the boundaries of our city.'⁵⁸⁴ While it did not specifically target civil defence commitments, an unwillingness to comply with

⁵⁸² TNA: HO 322/135 *Correspondence from Town Clerk, Metropolitan Borough of St Pancras to the Under Secretary of State* 1957

⁵⁸³ Crossley, G. (1983) p.331

⁵⁸⁴ Quoted in Rathenow, H-F. and Smoker, P. in *Security Dialogue* (April 1984) p.184

Government plans is inherent in the statement:

We believe it is not in the interests of the people to be either the initiators or the magnet of a nuclear holocaust and firmly believe that such unequivocal statements would clearly indicate the overwhelming desires of the people we represent and could lay the groundwork for the creation and development of a nuclear-free Europe.⁵⁸⁵

The nuclear free movement and its role in the civil defence debate grew rapidly, and in a significant number of cases was directly influenced by an ideological distaste for central government policies. Many nuclear free local authorities saw the adoption of the declaration as largely a symbolic gesture, often born of (mainly) Labour councillors' desire to use their position to align themselves with a larger peace campaign. Some of the larger local authorities such as Leeds, Oxford and Bristol went beyond the declaration and set up peace education courses and local exhibitions and published literature setting out the effects of nuclear war and their position as nuclear free authorities.⁵⁸⁶ The single issue which united all nuclear-free zones was their opposition to civil defence; that being the only area in which local authorities had a statutory defence role. As a booklet published by Bristol City Council in 1981 states:

To foster the illusion that to prepare civil defence plans is to help us survive a nuclear attack is as dangerous as it is unrealistic. We must never be led to accept the inevitability of nuclear war nor give up our

⁵⁸⁵ *Agenda Paper 2, nuclear-free zones conference* 16th April 1982, Manchester Town Hall

⁵⁸⁶ See, for example, *Bristol and the Bomb* (1981), *Leeds and the Bomb* (1983) and *Oxford and the Bomb* (1984)

opposition to any Government policies that take us closer to the brink of warí ..that is why Bristol with Labour is one of Britain's Nuclear Free Local Authorities all working for peace ó the only real defence.⁵⁸⁷

After Manchester City Council's declaration of non-compliance, the issue of the nuclear-free local authorities became a topic for political debate that would continue until the end of the Cold War. The first question to be raised concerning the threat to central government policy posed by the nuclear-free local authorities was raised in the House of Lords in February 1981 after seven separate local authorities adopted Manchester's declaration. In a motif to be seen repeatedly over the following years the Government dismissed the actions of the local authorities, stating that Moscow would not make a distinction between those local authorities that were nuclear-free and those that were not. The Government would not be drawn into a debate on what it proposed to do concerning the rogue authorities, only stating that 'the Government are responsible for national security and they will continue to take any steps necessary to maintain it'.⁵⁸⁸ By March of the same year, a total of 13 local councils had subscribed to the declaration⁵⁸⁹ and following the local elections in May 1981, which returned administrations of several leading local authorities who were supportive of the declaration, this total reached 60, including the Greater London Council.⁵⁹⁰

However it would be simplistic and misleading to ascribe the battle between central

⁵⁸⁷ *Bristol and The Bomb* (1981)

⁵⁸⁸ Eden, N. HL Deb, 10 February 1981, vol. 417, cc.127-9

⁵⁸⁹ Pattie, G. HC Deb, 06 March 1981, vol. 1000, cc.201W

⁵⁹⁰ Hart, J. HC Deb, 20 May 1981, vol. 5, cc.292-380

government and the nuclear-free local authorities as merely one of ideology between right-wing pro and left-wing anti-nuclear defence lobbies. While the majority of dissenting local authorities were Labour or Liberal controlled, some moderate Labour councils, such as Salford, were concerned that the Government ð...was not doing enough in the way of publishing facts to counter the CND's propaganda.ö⁵⁹¹ Conservative majority councils such as Huntingdon - who passed a motion in 1980 declaring the civil defence plans of the time to be 'absurd'⁵⁹² and calling on the Government to provide money for public shelters ó also participated in non-cooperation. After the cancellation of the exercise Hard Rock in 1982, it was noted by the Government that ð...it is also necessary to recognise privately that some Conservative County councils had done no more than the statutory minimum required of them in the civil defence field.ö⁵⁹³

Additionally, for organisations such as the Association of County Councils, the issue was not necessarily one of ideological objection but practical, and occasionally humanitarian, concern when they declared that ð...the government's response lacks credibility as a total package, having no effective policy for shelter and evacuation.ö⁵⁹⁴ The lack of a credible humanitarian function and subsequent public support was recognised as a sticking point for local authorities. A Scottish Office response to Home Office proposals on dealing with the recalcitrant local authorities noted:

⁵⁹¹ TNA: HO 322/1016 *Letter from D. Heaton to J. Howard* (2 December 1982)

⁵⁹² Campbell, D. (1983) p.169

⁵⁹³ TNA: CAB 322/1021 *Exercise Hard Rock and Civil Defence Policy* (9 July 1982)

⁵⁹⁴ TNA: HO 322/944 *Home Defence Review* (3 February 1981)

I have reservations about proceeding to default action against any council in the foreseeable future, partly because such action is not likely to be effective but mainly because we are unlikely to get the support of the general public to default action until we have, from their point of view, a credible civil defence policy.

I doubt whether our civil defence posture will ever be accepted as credible by the general public until we can demonstrate that we are planning, at least to some extent, for the public's protection. The general public is much more likely to press the local authorities to carry out their functions if shelter and evacuation is a prominent part of them. This policy would also answer points 1 and 3 of the Labour Party NEC Advice Note no.6 of June 1981.⁵⁹⁵

The Labour Party National Executive Committee's advice note in June 1981 issued to local authorities not only established Labour's position on civil defence but issued advice to local authorities as to how they should respond to direction on civil defence from central government:

We recommend local authorities to reject attempts to use so called civil defence to condition people to accept that a nuclear war is somehow 'survivable'.

We recommend local authorities to adopt a policy of opposition to nuclear weapons being manufactured, deployed or positioned within the boundaries of the local authority. So far over 60 Labour-controlled authorities have declared their areas 'nuclear-free zones'. We recommend that other local authorities do the same.

We recommend that local authorities refuse to co-operate with all but the bare legal minimum necessary under the 1974 Civil Defence (Planning) exercises and arrangements which are concerned with nuclear weapons and nuclear war preparations.⁵⁹⁶

The Home Office also recognised the ideologically-motivated damage this advice

⁵⁹⁵ TNA: HO 322/1019 *Civil Defence: Local Authority Responsibilities* (20 July 1982)

⁵⁹⁶ TNA: HO 322/1019 *Advice Note: Civil Defence, Home Defence and Emergency Planning* (June 1981)

by Labour had on their policy. A memorandum by William Whitelaw would later cite that 'Sheeplike response to the opposition party's irresponsible issue of the advice recommending Labour-controlled councils, inter alia, to boycott national civil defence exercises...has brought to a head a long-standing difficulty with the existing civil defence planning regulations.'⁵⁹⁷

The Labour-controlled Greater London Council, which declared itself a nuclear-free zone in May 1981, was particularly vocal in highlighting what it saw as the fraudulence of a civil defence policy influenced by the idea of nuclear deterrence. In a booklet published later the same year entitled *London and Civil Defence; Why the GLC disagrees with the government* it set out its objections to government policy as part of an overall defence strategy:

Civil defence is seen by the Government as a necessary part of nuclear 'deterrence' policy. In peace time, its role is to win support for the nuclear deterrent by creating the false impression that civil defence measures would significantly assuage the destruction of a nuclear counter attack.⁵⁹⁸

Labour believed such local action would highlight both the inadequacies and essential 'fraud' of civil defence policy and provide an impetus for public awareness on the deterrent issue that would eventually lead to renewed calls for disarmament and gave its backing to local authorities doing only the very minimum in order to

⁵⁹⁷ TNA: HO 322.1019 *Civil Defence Policy* (June 1982)

⁵⁹⁸ Greater London Council (1981) p. 3

comply with the *Civil Defence (Planning) Regulations (1974)*.⁵⁹⁹ Supporters of government policy dismissed local authority claims that the civil defence grant was inadequate for the duties imposed upon them, Robert Banks MP encapsulating the Conservative government's frustration with the dissident authorities when he stated:

...in view of the fact that, with the substantial Government grants now available, the actual burden of costs that falls upon a local authority in maintaining civil defence requirements is minimal compared with that authority's total budget, it can only be on ideological grounds that those authorities oppose the progress of civil defence or are in wanton ignorance of its importance.⁶⁰⁰

Central government acknowledged the Labour-controlled Association of Metropolitan Authorities long standing opposition to spending on civil defence while other local authorities were being cut, but also believed that there were "objections in principle to expenditure on civil defence".⁶⁰¹ The Chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, in conversation with the head of the Home Office's Emergency Planning Division, stated his uncertainty as to whether objections to government policy from within this organisation derived from fundamental opposition to civil defence in principle or was based on tactical and financial considerations.⁶⁰² He explained that:

...cross-currents of attitude which existed in the Association between the old-school 'moderates' led by the leader, Sir Jack Smart, and the

⁵⁹⁹ Guardian (30 June 1981) p.5

⁶⁰⁰ Banks, R. HC Deb, 29 July 1982 vol. 28 cc.1422-33

⁶⁰¹ TNA: HO 322/944 *Civil Defence* (26 February 1981)

⁶⁰² TNA: HO 322/1003 *New Civil Defence Regulations – Consultations with AMA* (6 January 1982)

strongly left-wing element in the constituencies which was continuously monitoring the performance of the leadership for what might be described as doctrinal purity.⁶⁰³

In the July 1981 issue of *Protect and Survive Monthly*, a national magazine by the right-wing lobby organisation National Council for Civil Defence, a letter by the Deputy Leader of the Greater London Council was published which stated:

Such preparations can only serve to make nuclear war more thinkable and more likely. They are irrelevant, provocative and a waste of time and money. GLC Officers have already been instructed to report on the implications of the council scrapping its nuclear preparations. I have no doubt this is the decision which will be taken in the near future. In the meantime, no more work will be done on implementing the outcome of the government's so-called Civil Defence review. All maintenance and improvement work on wartime headquarters will be suspended. Civil Defence training schemes and exercises are being halted.⁶⁰⁴

The conclusions raised from the report into the potential results the letter describes of the GLC dispensing with civil defence preparations were indicative, and held significant implications for the successful implementation of central government policy:

The London boroughs could be deprived of the essential framework on which their war plans are based. Without stimulus from the GLC it is likely that, in many cases, civil defence preparedness in the boroughs would cease or be carried out at a reduced level.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁴ *Protect and Survive Monthly* (1981)

⁶⁰⁵ TNA: HO 322 *Emergency Planning – Implications of Proposal to Terminate Civil Defence Preparations against Nuclear Attack* (20 May 1981) p.6

In a letter to the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, in August of the same year, the chairman of the GLC's Public Services and Fire Brigade Committee clarified the GLC's position ó and that of many other dissenting, Labour-controlled local authorities - one of direct contrast to that of the Government in terms of local authority autonomy in defence matters, framing the argument in terms of political rather than ideological conflict:

In particular the Labour Majority at County Hall has made no secret of the fact that we are reappraising the GLC's position in the light of the objective set out in our Election Manifesto, which states 'Labour will terminate the present wasteful expenditure on so-called 'home defence'. This reflects the conviction shared by many that the concept of civil defence in the face of nuclear war is both futile and unjustifiable ó that it fosters an illusion of security thus misleading the public, gives a misplaced respectability to the idea of nuclear conflict and makes heavy demands on scarce national resources. In an area in which there is clearly such divergence of opinion and room for doubt as to the value of the basic policy pursued and the effectiveness of its implementation, it seems entirely inappropriate that Government should impose duties with statutory force on local authorities.⁶⁰⁶

The letter also sought to argue that civil defence was a matter on which the law should be amended in order to permit local authorities' discretion in determining to what extent and in what way they chose to implement civil defence measures in their localities.⁶⁰⁷ The petition was not successful in changing Government policy however, and the Government would later move to amend the regulations to force local authorities' compliance. In a letter from the Secretary of State to the Prime

⁶⁰⁶ TNA: HO 322 *Letter from Simon Turney to William Whitelaw* (13 August 1981) p.1

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p.2

Minister, William Whitelaw expressed his intention to force the GLC and other recalcitrant local authorities to fulfil their civil defence duties:

The opponents of civil defence continue their efforts to discredit it, and the GLC has attracted much publicity for its declared intention of doing only paper planning. In these circumstances the Government has a clear obligation to assert its commitment to civil defence and to ensure that local authorities discharge those essential responsibilities which until recently they have accepted without question.⁶⁰⁸

In June 1982 the GLC officially declared London a nuclear-free zone with thirteen boroughs demanding that existing statutory obligations on local authorities to provide civil defence should be removed.⁶⁰⁹ With its professional and well-funded information department the GLC was able, under the banner of its Nuclear Policy Unit, to provide a wide range of alternative civil defence materials, seeking to raise the profile of the nuclear debate and pressurise central government into addressing awkward questions on the nature of public provision⁶¹⁰. The actions of the GLC were met with condemnation from the Government who argued that it was beyond the power of the GLC or any other local authority to influence defence matters in their area and that such declarations would not spare them in the event of foreign hostilities.⁶¹¹ With the GLC's notification of non-compliance, the largest and most politically influential of all local authorities to make such a declaration, the debate began to grow more widespread and more heated. Roy Hattersley, Shadow Home

⁶⁰⁸ TNA: HO 322/979 *Letter from W. Whitelaw to the Prime Minister* (July 1982)

⁶⁰⁹ *Why the GLC Declared London a Nuclear-Free Zone* (1983)

⁶¹⁰ See *London and Civil Defence; A GLC Fact Pack* (1982)

⁶¹¹ Boyle, P. HL Deb, 23 June 1982 vol. 431, cc.1072-106

Secretary, expressed this attitude succinctly in a debate on the Civil Defence (Grant) (Amendment) Regulations in the House of Commons when he said:

[the regulations] required massive preparations to be made for evacuating major cities. They also required an arbitrary insertion into every local authority employee's contract of a legal obligation to carry out civil defence duties. Who would be surprised if the Greater London council...considered a proposal which required it to evacuate the population of London into the home counties and said, "Surely the Government cannot be stupid enough to believe that this is practical; they must be doing this for reasons of propaganda"?⁶¹²

Secretary for Defence, Francis Pym, labelled Labour's stance as one designed to detract from an unworkable policy of disarmament:

The truth is that the Labour Party has finally given up any attempt to find a realistic and responsible policy for defence and disarmament. A perpetual protest march is no substitute; nor is hysterical anti-Americanism. Encouraging local authorities to declare nuclear-free zones is a diversion from the real business.⁶¹³

Similar condemnations of Labour-backed nuclear-free activities could be found in the specialist media of the time. The short-lived, pro-civil defence journal *Protect and Survive Monthly* was particularly critical of anti-nuclear peace groups and the nuclear-free zones in particular, labelling them as "... linked with various political or pacifist inspired organisations... sometimes having a pro-Soviet viewpoint, which has lent respectability to the most extremist ambitions now being promoted

⁶¹² Hattersley, R. HC Deb, 26 October 1983 vol. 47, cc.336-74

⁶¹³ Pym, F. HC Deb, 11 November 1981, vol. 12, cc.545-633

by newly-won Labour councils.⁶¹⁴

When questioned whether it would respect the decision of the nearly 70 local authorities that had, by July 1981, declared themselves to be nuclear-free, the Government once again answered that it was responsible for national security and would take any steps necessary to ensure this, including 'all those activities related to the deployment of nuclear-capable forces as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's deterrent strategy'⁶¹⁵ stating once more that it was 'impractical' that local authorities should be involved in decisions relating to the deployment of military forces or weapons. In the same year the Transport Secretary, Kenneth Clarke, dismissed the local authorities' actions as irrelevant, stating: 'The phrase "nuclear-free zone" appears to have no legal meaning or practical effect and the declarations by local authorities are political statements rather than effective decisions under their powers.'⁶¹⁶

However in February 1982, after Clwyd County Council declared itself 'nuclear free', the Nuclear Free Wales Declaration was made. This policy was made possible by the 1972 *Local Government Act*, which allowed local authorities control over expenditure for whatever members considered was in the interest of their area.⁶¹⁷

By 1982 all of the Welsh county councils had joined with Clwyd County Council and it was announced that Wales was the first nuclear free country in Europe, an

⁶¹⁴ *Protect and Survive Monthly* (July 1981)

⁶¹⁵ Eden, N. HL Deb, 17 July 1981, vol. 422, cc.1489-91

⁶¹⁶ Clarke, K. HC Deb, 26 November 1981, vol. 13, c466W

⁶¹⁷ *Local Government Act 1972*

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/RevisedStatutes/Acts/ukpga/1972/cukpga_19720070_en_22#pt8-pb7-11g156
(accessed 11 October 2008)

embarrassment for the Government who were attempting to play down local authority dissent as insignificant.⁶¹⁸ Geraint Morgan, Conservative MP for Denbigh whose constituency included much of the county of Clwyd, echoed central government's position on the local authorities' actions when he dismissed the actions of the County Council as reckless and irresponsible:

There have already been threats, publicly uttered, to force my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to abandon the civil defence programme for Wales under the threat of a local revolt. There have been threats to block planning applications from the Ministry of Defence, to publish local war plans, to open war bunkers—whatever they may be—for public inspection and even to provide evening classes in what are euphemistically described as "peace studies".⁶¹⁹

At this stage the Government still did not appear to consider the declarations made by the dissenting local authorities to be of any great threat to central government policy and it was not openly acknowledged that they had the power to influence Government civil defence planning. If there could be said to be an official reaction to the local authorities' actions it was one of mocking dismissal, as exemplified in a House of Lords debate of June 1982:

Some authorities have gone so far as to declare themselves nuclear-free zones. I find that to be a singularly meaningless term. It is rather like a bald man writing "rain-free zone" on the top of his head and expecting to remain dry throughout the summer—which of course he could not, unless he had a special arrangement with the Almighty. I suppose that the local authorities concerned may feel that they have some special and reliable arrangement with the Warsaw Pact

⁶¹⁸ Shaw, G. HC Deb, 28 March 1985 vol.76, cc.645-6

⁶¹⁹ Morgan, G. HC Deb, 25 February 1982, vol. 18, cc.1015-72

countries, but if so it will be an arrangement that they will not only not drop a bomb on them but that they will not drop one anywhere upwind of them, in whatever direction the wind may be. That seems to me to be an admirable defence but one upon which we cannot rely.⁶²⁰

Despite repeated assertions from the Government that defence planning was a matter for central, not local, government,⁶²¹ the Nuclear Free Wales Declaration and the actions of the GLC had stimulated debate on the issue, a debate that was to grow in intensity following the failure of the planned 1982 civil defence exercise *Hard Rock*.

Hard Rock

Hard Rock was a major national home defence exercise jointly planned by the Home Office (in Scotland, the Scottish Home and Health Department) and the Joint Exercise Planning Staff with the Home Office taking the lead. The exercise was planned to take place from 9th September to 3rd October 1982. Unlike previous home defence exercises, Hard Rock was planned from the beginning as one providing local authorities with the opportunity to test their civil defence planning and emergency services within a national framework. Although Hard Rock was originally conceived as a post-nuclear strike exercise it was decided, in response to strongly expressed views of local authority County Emergency Planning Officers, to extend it to include a conventional war phase which was considered likely to

⁶²⁰ Elton, R. HL Deb, 23 June 1982, vol. 431, cc.1072-106

⁶²¹ Trenchard, T. HL Deb, 02 March 1982, vol. 427, cc.1279-80W

precede a nuclear strike. The former was regarded by the local authority emergency planning staff as an area of activity which could most usefully be exercised.⁶²²

Hard Rock was the biggest civil defence simulation since the 1960s involving all county councils and the first civil defence exercise not wholly military in origin and planning, designed to be the first real test of the supposedly more effective civil defence arrangements of the Conservative administration. However, the planned exercise was dogged from the beginning by the reluctance of local authorities to participate. This reticence was not born of one concern but of several; the financial burdens of civil defence planning, ideological objections to civil defence and the refusal to accept increased direction of local government affairs by central government.⁶²³

The Government struggled with how they should deal with local authorities who were, to varying degrees, refusing to carry out their civil defence obligations:

The choice for the Home Office lay between threatening the recalcitrant local authorities and persuading them. To do nothing was not acceptable. In his [Patrick Mayhew's] view a threatening approach would be unlikely to produce the desired results, and he favoured a persuasive approach, to be carried out by first approaching Conservative leaders in the relevant councils.⁶²⁴

This approach, both to the Government policy of devolved responsibility and the

⁶²² TNA: HO 322/984 *Hard Rock 82 Background Notes*

⁶²³ TNA: HO 322/944 *Local Authority Civil Defence Expenditure* (12 March 1981), TNA: HO 322/1019 *New Civil Defence Regulations* (12 August 1982)

⁶²⁴ TNA: HO 322/978 *Note of a Meeting Held on 18 November 1981*

actions of the local authorities, was questioned by organisations such as the Association of Civil Defence and Emergency Planning Officers, who perceived there to be an ulterior motive in the local authorities' non-compliance: '...they are using Home Defence issues in pursuance of their major objective of 'freedom from central government control'...the truth is that Home Defence is too vital and complex a part of our overall defence preparations to be left to the discretion of local authorities'⁶²⁵. The Government, however, was firm; the civil defence obligations placed upon local authorities to implement the decisions laid out by William Whitelaw's statement to parliament on 7th August 1980 would be 'vigorously pursued'.⁶²⁶

Nearly a third of county councils scheduled to take part in Hard Rock, including the GLC, voted for non-compliance with the planned civil defence exercise and in the end, 20 out of 54 county level authorities declined to take part in Hard Rock and a further 7 would only play on a limited basis.⁶²⁷ This non-participation effectively killed the exercise. In a letter to John Nott at the Ministry of Defence, William Whitelaw stated:

...planning for the exercise at county and regional level is, in wide areas of the country, behind and seriously deficient in quality and commitment. In consequence it now seems likely that the exercise if held as planned will fail to meet its objectives and is more important to fail to the extent of discrediting home defence and the government's handling of it.

In my judgement, and that of Patrick Mayhew....the stage has been

⁶²⁵ TNA: HO 322/944 *Letter to W. Whitelaw from J. Harding* (27 February 1981)

⁶²⁶ TNA: HO 322/944 *Letter to J. Harding from A. Jackson* (13 March 1981)

⁶²⁷ Banks, R. HC Deb, 29 July 1982 vol. 28, cc.1422-33

reached when the risk of political damage if the exercise is held this year outweighs the potential value of the exercise coupled with the political damage if postponed.⁶²⁸

It could certainly be argued that in forcing the Government to acquiesce and cancel the exercise, the dissident local authorities had already managed to discredit a civil defence policy that relied so heavily on the devolution of powers from central government to local hubs of control, a conceit on which the whole of government planning was based, from local command bunkers to regional headquarters. The blame for this failure was laid squarely at the feet of the dissenting local authorities but, more significantly, with the ideologically-motivated Labour party:

This situation has been brought about in large part as a result of the decision taken by the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party to frustrate civil defence work, and it would be right to allocate the major part of the blame accordingly in defending the Government's decision to cancel the exercise.⁶²⁹

Despite the Government's fear that to cancel Hard Rock carried considerable political dangers, and could ð...be seen by some as a climb-down to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Labour Party National Executive Committee,ö⁶³⁰ in July 1982 William Whitelaw announced that Hard Rock would be postponed, concluding that:

⁶²⁸ TNA: HO 322/ 1021 *Letter from W. Whitelaw to J. Nott* (June 1982)

⁶²⁹ TNA: HO 322/1021 *Exercise Hard Rock and Civil Defence Policy* (9 July 1982)

⁶³⁰ TNA: HO 322/1021 *Exercise Hard Rock* (13 July 1982)

I am not satisfied with the state of local planning for Exercise Hard Rock and I have decided that it should be postponed. I am considering urgently with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland the need to amend the planning regulations made under the Civil Defence Act 1948.⁶³¹

When questioned on the failure of Hard Rock the day after its cancellation was announced, the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, could not be pressed to comment upon this as a reflection on the Government's civil defence policy but reiterated her disappointment towards the local authorities whose actions had made the exercise untenable:

Many of us wish that nuclear weapons had not been invented, but they have, and it is our duty to make preparations for civil defence to defend the population. It was very disappointing that out of the 54 local authorities that were scheduled to take part in exercise Hard Rock, only 34 were ready to do so. The 20 that were not prepared to do so were all Labour councils.⁶³²

In practice, while the dissenting councils were Labour-controlled and the Labour opposition was quick to claim that the cancellation of the exercise was a comment on the fact that there could be no possible protection against nuclear war,⁶³³ central government was as ill prepared to take part in the exercise as most local authorities. It is possible that if information about protected seats of control for government officials had been made available to the local authorities such information would

⁶³¹ Whitelaw, W. HC Deb, 14 July 1982, vol. 27, cc.395W

⁶³² Thatcher, M. HC Deb, 15 July 1982 vol. 27, cc.1164-8

⁶³³ Jenkins, H. HL Deb, 21 July 1982, vol. 433, cc.849-50

have been used by peace groups and the opposition to the detriment of the Government and political capital made from what appeared to be provision for the protection of the political elite ó in the form of regional seats of government - and not the population at large. The disclosure of planning information into the public domain was to remain a difficult dilemma for the Conservative administration throughout the 1980s and by forcing the Government to publish the plans for the aborted Hard Rock exercise the nuclear-free local authorities won a significant political victory.

It is clear that politicians on both sides of the House viewed the failure of *Hard Rock* as a significant chapter in civil defence policy history. The Government decried the actions of the local authorities as 'disgraceful'⁶³⁴ but could not deny the effect they had had on central government planning. While the threat of action against the authorities by the Government stopped the councils from abandoning their war plans altogether, the rebellious local authorities provided a unique gauge with which to test both the limits of government policy and disarmament as a way to prevent nuclear war. CND literature at the time was typical of the nuclear-free movement when it claimed the cancellation of *Hard Rock* as a political victory:

The support of local elected representatives gives legitimacy to alternative policies put forward by the peace movement and focuses attention on where the responsibility lies for the arms race ó central government.⁶³⁵

⁶³⁴ Pawsey, J. HC Deb, 29 July 1982, vol. 28, cc.1422-33

⁶³⁵ Bolsover, P. (1982) p.12

The Government's policy of devolving civil defence responsibilities to local authorities suffered considerable public relations damage from the cancellation of *Hard Rock*. CND stated that 'We believe *Hard Rock* has been cancelled largely because of our nuclear free zone campaign'⁶³⁶ and while the Government disputed this in public, claiming that *Hard Rock* would be a success when it was run at a later date with the co-operation of all local authorities,⁶³⁷ this was never to happen. Privately, the Government acknowledged the influence of the campaigns from those opposed to civil defence in forcing the cancellation of *Hard Rock*, admitting their own failure to counteract these messages:

The adverse publicity attaching to the Government's nuclear programme as a whole seriously inhibited the ability of local authority civil defence planners to get on with their job. It would be great advantage in Ministers themselves grabbing the propaganda nettle.⁶³⁸

Some Labour politicians backed the view that '... certain defence ministers were quite pleased that *Hard Rock* was abandoned because it would have proclaimed the inadequacies of present civil defence.'⁶³⁹ Despite this, the Government insisted that its broad defence plans would remain in force, with provision for civil defence organised 'on the basis that the local authorities shall be the agents of central Government.'⁶⁴⁰ However it could not be ignored that the failure of *Hard Rock* was the direct result of local authority inaction and William Whitelaw, speaking at the

⁶³⁶ Guardian (19 July 1982)

⁶³⁷ Guardian (15 July 1982)

⁶³⁸ TNA: HO 322/978 *Civil Defence Stocktaking* (17 June 1981)

⁶³⁹ Ross, W. HL Deb, 01 November 1983, vol. 444, cc.523-49

⁶⁴⁰ Mayhew, P. HC Deb, 29 July 1982, vol. 28, cc.1422-33

annual conference of Civil Defence and Emergency Planning Officers on July 14th 1982 laid the blame for the shelving of the exercise at the feet of the 'wayward' nuclear-free authorities.⁶⁴¹

A report compiled by the Emergency Planning Division in July 1981, on the direction of Home Office Permanent Secretary Brian Cubbon, detailed the legal position that central government found itself in in dealing with the nuclear-free local authorities and the powers available to ensure the authorities complied with their statutory duties.⁶⁴² The primary regulation that empowered the Government to intervene when a local authority failed to perform its statutory duties was Regulation 4 of the *Civil Defence (Regulations) 1949* which states:

If the designated Minister is satisfied that any local authority has failed or refused properly to discharge any of the civil defence functions conferred on them as aforesaid he may by order either empower himself to discharge those functions in the name and at the expense of that authority or authorise or require some other authority or person to exercise those functions in the name and at the expense of the authority so failing or refusing.⁶⁴³

However the report recognised the difficulties in the appointment of commissioners as seen in the cases of non-compliance by Coventry in 1954 and St Pancras in 1956, questioning the effectiveness of such a measure now that civil defence was so inextricably bound with other local services. The 1948 *Civil Defence Act* did

⁶⁴¹ The Times (15 July 1982)

⁶⁴² TNA: HO 322 *Civil Defence Planning Relations Between Central Government and Local Authorities Planning Paper* (28 July 1981)

⁶⁴³ *Civil Defence (General) Regulation 1949* p.7

give ministers the right to 'direct' a local authority as to how to make plans but as author Duncan Campbell asserts, to exercise this right would have been constitutionally unusual,⁶⁴⁴ and indeed the first Emergency Services Circular issued in 1974 indicates the limitations of ministers' powers in this instance:

The Ministerial power to issue directions is regarded as a reserve power to be used only when the national interest is at stake and when long-established procedures of advice and guidance fail to ensure the necessary local action.⁶⁴⁵

The Government's tactics had been to '... rely on encouragement, advice, persuasion and money in getting local authorities to fulfil their obligations'⁶⁴⁶ but, when this ultimately failed, the Government sought to alter policy to meet the desired outcomes. The report recommended some changes to policy to encourage local authorities to discharge their civil defence duties. The first of these was to increase the rate of specific civil defence grant above 75% to encourage more spending on civil defence. The second was an initiative to raise public awareness of civil defence, with emphasis on the survivability of conventional warfare and therefore the value of civil defence preparations, in the hope that '... a more informed public may through the normal democratic process begin to apply pressure on recalcitrant authorities'⁶⁴⁷ which included a proposal for a widespread propaganda campaign to counteract the information placed in the public domain by

⁶⁴⁴ Campbell, D. (1983) p.371

⁶⁴⁵ ES1/1974 *Civil Defence Act 1948 – Subordinate Legislation*

⁶⁴⁶ TNA: HO 322 *Civil Defence Planning Relations Between Central Government and Local Authorities Planning Paper* (28 July 1981)

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

groups such as CND. The last suggestions included letters from central government to local authorities and public exhortations concerning the value of civil defence, with the aim of '... stiffening the resolve of the fainthearted.'⁶⁴⁸ However, rejecting the ideas laid out in the report and perhaps recognising the futility of trying to get local authorities to comply with legislation set out nearly 40 years previously, William Whitelaw indicated in July 1982 that new legislation would be brought in to address the problem.⁶⁴⁹

The result of this was the *Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983* which legally compelled local authorities to make and review civil defence plans, establish and maintain premises which could be used as emergency control centres, train civil defence staff and participate in civil defence exercises, placing each local authority '... under a duty to comply with any directions given to it by the designated Minister in such circumstances as might prevail.'⁶⁵⁰ The primary difference between these regulations and the *Civil Defence (Planning) Regulations 1974* which they replaced was that earlier regulations required local authorities only to make contingency plans, whereas the new regulations required them to keep their plans up to date; a policy change in order to prevent disruption by 'minimal compliance' local authorities and an example of policy consolidation.⁶⁵¹

In discussing the Regulations in October 1983 the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd,

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁹ Guardian (7 October 1982)

⁶⁵⁰ Mayhew, P. HC Deb, 17 January 1983, vol. 35, cc.6-7W

⁶⁵¹ Flannery, M.J. (1993) p.213

was keen to establish the policy climate into which the new regulations were being introduced. Aware that the majority of non-compliant local authorities were Labour-controlled, Hurd emphasised the non-political nature of the new regulations, painting civil defence policy as an essentially humanitarian function, a 'common sense' policy with no other aim than to reduce suffering and loss of life.⁶⁵²

Powers exist in case a local authority fails or refuses to discharge any functions conferred on it. But I wish to make it absolutely clear that we have no appetite for using these powers. We are not spoiling for a fight. We want to use reason and persuasion to achieve effective civil defence for this country. Because this is essentially a humanitarian policy, it can be separated from polemics on other matters. It should not be a matter of political colour. We hope that all responsible local authorities, whatever their political views, can co-operate in civil defence.⁶⁵³

The most notable humanitarian function included in the 1983 Regulations was the inclusion, for the first time, of the necessity that local authorities make plans for evacuation, or the transfer of ð...members of the civil population from one area to another in the event of hostile attack or threat of hostile attack and the accommodation and, so far as may be necessary, the maintenance of the persons so transferred.ö⁶⁵⁴

This position of civil defence in terms of the all-disasters approach was one that had been carefully managed by the Government; in February 1983, briefing notes

⁶⁵² Hurd, D. HC Deb, 26, October 1983, vol. 47, cc.336-74

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁴ TNA: HO 322.1016 *Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983*

for the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, emphasised that the Prime Minister ò...believed the Government's case should be presented in terms of deterrence; it would be much more difficult to win a debate on what might happen in a nuclear war; the new regulations should therefore seek to require local authorities to prepare for disasters of any kind..ö⁶⁵⁵ A note by Whitelaw three days later observes wryly that the regulations would ò...demoralise our supporters and enormously encourage CND.ö⁶⁵⁶

Critics of the new regulations argued that the Government was using the regulations as a thinly veiled attack on local authority autonomy, stating that government civil defence policy appeared to either be based on humanitarian function or was a part of Britain's overall defence strategy as it suited their purpose.⁶⁵⁷ This dichotomy could also be observed at the heart of Government itself; in January 1983, Patrick Mayhew wrote to William Whitelaw questioning the purpose of civil defence in light of this positioning:

I still concur with the proposition that a realistic measure of civil defence provision gives some additional credibility to the deterrent. But I think its primary purpose is humanitarian, and must be so proclaimed.

The primary need for civil defence is the need to provide protection for people in the event of an attack which we cannot guarantee to prevent. In terms of numbers of people who could be helped, as distinct from proportions of the population of an attacked area, its value even at the low level we are proposing is not inconsiderable.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁵ TNA: HO 322/1003 *The Nuclear Debate and Civil Defence* (7 February 1983)

⁶⁵⁶ TNA: HO 322/1003 *Civil Defence in The Next 6 Months* (10 February 1983)

⁶⁵⁷ Hattersley, R. HC Deb, 26, October 1983, vol. 47, cc.336-74

⁶⁵⁸ TNA: HO 322/1003 *The Civil Defence Scene* (11 January 1983)

Mayhew was strongly in favour of introducing the regulations as quickly as possible, citing the need to maintain impetus in civil defence planning and also in order to thwart the actions of CND.⁶⁵⁹ It was acknowledged by both sides of the House however that the regulations had been devised as a direct result of the influence of local authority inaction, whether this was considered to be caused by either the irresponsible, misleading influence of peace group propaganda or justified, local action against the potentially disastrous, ideologically-influenced defence policy of central government.⁶⁶⁰ By the time the Regulations had been passed, 155 local authorities had declared themselves to be nuclear free.⁶⁶¹

No new powers to compel local authorities to discharge their civil defence duties were included with the new regulations, the Government stating that they hoped that '...in discharging their functions under the new regulations, the local authorities will respond to guidance and advice from central Government, without the need for formal directions.'⁶⁶² In May 1984 a questionnaire was issued to local authorities in order to find out what level of civil defence planning had been achieved and the results showed wide differences in what had been done by the authorities both in planning and in providing resources.⁶⁶³

In 1984-85 the Government's budget for civil defence expenditure was set at £69.7

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁰ Mayhew, P. HL Deb, 01 November 1983 vol. 444 cc.523-49, Hattersley, R. HC Deb, 26 October 1983 vol. 47 cc.336-74

⁶⁶¹ Rumble, G (1985) p.171

⁶⁶² Gray, H. HL Deb, 01 November 1983, vol. 444, cc.523-49

⁶⁶³ Mayhew, P. HL Deb, 06 February 1985, vol. 459, cc.1086-95

million, £11.1 million of which was allocated to local government.⁶⁶⁴ The relatively scarce funds allocated further fuelled the belief amongst nuclear-free local authorities and peace groups that the Government's concern was for the illusion of protection for the populace rather than the actual provision of such; despite the Government's emphasis on the humanitarian function of civil defence when introducing the 1983 Regulations, there remained no provision for public shelters or evacuation.

In response to the failings highlighted by this report the Government decided to take a direct role in monitoring the local authorities' activities. This resulted in the Planned Programme of Implementation (PPI), a policy reaction to local authorities' continual reluctance, issued to local authorities on 30 October 1986 as *Home Office Circular ES 1/1986*. This was coupled with a threat to withhold the civil defence grant, which by this time was also available to be used indirectly to support peacetime emergency planning after the introduction of the *Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986*. The Home Office explained the introduction of these new powers less in terms of preparing for nuclear-led foreign aggression but as part of the 'all-hazards' approach increasingly seen in civil defence policy making:

A number of local authorities are making encouraging progress in meeting their civil defence responsibilities. But the rate of progress varies considerably and there is a great deal still to be done before there is a satisfactory and balanced state of preparedness across the country. We therefore propose to require local authorities to pursue a

⁶⁶⁴ Shaw, G. HC Deb, 13 November 1984 vol. 67 c202W

rolling three-year programme setting priorities and a timetable for implementation of the 1983 regulations. The programme emphasises the central importance of detailed operational civil defence plans. It sets six-monthly target dates for their staged completion in all counties within two to three years. New guidance on the preparation of plans and on the all-hazards approach will also be issued to accompany the programme.⁶⁶⁵

This change in focus to the more acceptable 'emergency planning' model of civil defence was a turning point in civil defence policy and a recognition that local authorities were far less likely to have ideological issues with planning for all kinds of civil emergencies.

The Scientific Advisory Branch

The Scientific Advisory Branch⁶⁶⁶ was responsible for advising all government departments on scientific and technical aspects of policy. In relation to civil defence, it researched the possible threat to the civil population posed by a future war using thermonuclear weapons for training exercise and protective measures, and the consideration of those measures that might be employed to mitigate the effects of enemy attack. It sponsored scientific research on issues related to civil defence for the Home Office and other departments involved in civil defence and liaised with the volunteer Civil Defence Regional Scientific Advisers and Training Officers.

⁶⁶⁵ Arthur, S. HL Deb, 22 July 1986, vol. 479, cc.203-4WA

⁶⁶⁶ In 1982 its title changed to the Scientific Research and Development Branch

As Smith notes,⁶⁶⁷ in the post-war age of the atom bomb, these advisers were mainly concerned with researching the same kinds of civilian defence methods employed during World War Two; developing shelter designs and how to mitigate the number of casualties from blast and fire. With the advent of the hydrogen bomb and the anticipated level of destruction realised in the Strath Report of 1955, the advisers' options were considerably limited when faced with the reality of the hydrogen bomb and the severely restricted civil defence budget. Official government advice, in the form of 1957 publication *The Hydrogen Bomb*, still did not fully engage with the public over the level of the threat posed by the bomb, advising that 'Radioactive dust on the body could be washed off with soap and water.'⁶⁶⁸

This combination of overwhelming technological advance and economic constraints saw the advice provided by the Scientific Advisory Branch similarly constrained. Their focus shifted from developing means of government financed shelter to one of maximising chances of survival through personal protective measures. In the immediate post-Strath years, the branch carried out several experiments to measure the penetration levels of radiation and the effectiveness of simple protective measures that could be carried out by members of the public.⁶⁶⁹ The results of this can be first seen in the government publication *Advising the Householder on Protection Against Nuclear Attack* (1963) which provides householders with practical information on building a makeshift shelter to protect

⁶⁶⁷ Smith, M. (2009) p.63

⁶⁶⁸ *The Hydrogen Bomb* (1957)

⁶⁶⁹ TNA: HO 338/18 *Report on 'Rose Cottage' experiments* (January 1956), TNA: HO 338/18 *Letter to Falfield Civil Defence School* (1956)

themselves against fallout in their own home. The recommendations were empirically based but heavily criticised; Duncan Campbell's critique of the information as containing 'various inanities and inadequacies'⁶⁷⁰ was typical of the general derision.

The role of the scientific advisors in providing research continued into the post 1972 period but the public advice it informed changed very little. This advice, which the Government would state 'at any given time is taken in the light of informed opinion,'⁶⁷¹ remained defiantly similar nearly 20 years later in *Protect and Survive* (1980) and drew similar mockery and dismissal from the media and the public. In terms of what it could offer public protection that informed opinion was, as the Government fully knew, better than nothing but wholly less than adequate. Director of the Scientific Advisory Branch J. K. S. Clayton, in his introduction 'The Challenge - Why Home Defence?' in the Home Office 1977 *Training Manual for Scientific Advisers*, stated that: 'government Home Defence policy must be aimed to increase the prospects of the survivors in their stricken environment.'⁶⁷² This attitude is very much in evidence in the recommendations given in *Protect and Survive*, which only included:

those areas of civil defence which would be of direct relevance to the public including the action the public could take for protection against the effects of hostile attack and information on these effects and the complementary action that would be taken by local and

⁶⁷⁰ Campbell, D. (1983) p.81

⁶⁷¹ Shaw, G HC Deb, 31 January 1985, vol. 72, cc.407-8

⁶⁷² Clayton, J.K.S. (1980) p.3

central Government.⁶⁷³

It can be argued that the secrecy surrounding civil defence was a contributing factor towards the derision that met these government publications from the general public. As Grant observes, 'the obsession with secrecy ensured that almost all the public information on nuclear attack was provided by the government's opponents'⁶⁷⁴ as the public were unaware of the scientific basis for the advice they were offered, even if that advice was largely inadequate. The scientific recommendations put forward by the advisers was certainly influential; as Melissa Smith notes, the work of the scientific advisors was felt in both the civil defence advice issued by the Government and in shaping policymakers' understanding of the civil defence issue, 'helping to construct the 'official' version of nuclear war ' a version, aimed largely at reassuring the public, which contrasted sharply with the devastating assessments of nuclear war contained in secret government reports.'⁶⁷⁵ However, in terms of policy creation in the post-1972 era itself their influence was less surely seen. As Robin Woolven asserts:

I would have placed the role of the Scientific Advisers way down the list of influences on civil defence policy making. Obviously the high level scientific input to the Home Office and MoD was influential but surely the local or regional volunteer scientific advisers were an economic (i.e. cheap) way of inserting professional advice on such matters as fall out dispersion etc.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷³ Shaw, G. HC Deb, 20 December 1984, vol. 70, cc.281-2W

⁶⁷⁴ Grant, M. (2010) p.197

⁶⁷⁵ Smith, M. (2010) p.179

⁶⁷⁶ Interview with Dr Robin Woolven, Intelligence Officer with the Security Service 1980697, 23 August 2013

The role of the Scientific Advisory Branch as an external influence in policy making was ultimately hobbled by economic and ideological forces. The move towards a defence policy that relied upon a strategy of deterrence combined with the need to maintain public support for expenditure on nuclear weapons led to the publication of official public information which, while empirical in nature, owed their creation more to shifting political priorities than evidence based research.

Peace Groups and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

As Cortright notes, attempting to evaluate the impact of the peace movement on policy is difficult and presents certain methodological challenges.⁶⁷⁷ The methods by which the campaigns of peace groups are measured for success are often imprecise and subject to bias, relying on subjective analysis by the groups themselves or the impressions given by government officials who are often extremely reluctant to admit any influence. Additionally, it can be difficult to ascertain whether the peace groups themselves were ever a catalyst for change or whether more influence can be ascribed to a shift in public attitudes which granted the movement its strength.

Against the backdrop of increasing public anxiety surrounding the British ownership and potential use of nuclear weapons following three British nuclear tests in 1957, a group emerged to coordinate the anti-nuclear movement in Britain. The National Committee for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons Tests (NCANWT)

⁶⁷⁷ Cortright, D. (1991) in *Peace and Change* vol., 16, p.51

initially focussed on putting pressure on the Government to ban weapons testing and by the end of its formation year, boasted 100 local chapters.⁶⁷⁸ Anti-nuclear sentiment had been rising for some time within the Labour Party and the various peace groups and activists united under the umbrella organisation of NCANWT had hoped that the party would repudiate the use of nuclear weapons at its 1957 conference. But when Aneurin Bevan, who had previously led the anti-nuclear movement within the Labour party, declared his pro-nuclear stance, the well-known playwright J.B. Priestly penned a stinging article in *The New Statesman*, calling on people to refute the 'nuclear madness':

As the game gets faster, the competition keener, the unthinkable will turn into the inevitable, the weapons will take command, and the deterrents will not deter. Our bargaining power is slight; the force of our example might be great.⁶⁷⁹

J. B. Priestley's article attracted great favourable response and, combined with the move towards greater nuclear deterrence announced in the 1957 *White Paper on Defence* this served as motivation for the establishment of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in January 1958.⁶⁸⁰ As Smith notes, by offering the public an alternative politics which sought to challenge the official version of Cold War defence, CND presented itself as a threat to the process of policy making itself, one that would persist to this day.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁸ Wittner, L. (2009) p.59

⁶⁷⁹ Priestley, J.B. (1957) *Britain and the Nuclear Bombs* in *The New Statesman* (2 November 1957)

⁶⁸⁰ Taylor (1988) p.15

⁶⁸¹ Smith, M. (2011) p.288

CND sought to undermine the official narrative of nuclear weapons and civil defence policy, but the level to which it and other peace movements active during the last two decades of the Cold War - contributed to the development and termination of such policy is a matter for debate. Certainly civil defence was on CND's agenda from the early years of its formation, as it attempted to expose what it considered a wilfully fraudulent narrative of public protection and draw attention to the inherent dishonesty in the policy itself. In 1961 CND's newsletter *Sanity* carried the group's anti-deterrence position on civil defence which would remain unchanged until the end of the Cold War: "Civil defence is expressly intended to deceive the public into believing that Britain could survive a nuclear war - a belief which provides a reason for maintaining a nuclear deterrent."⁶⁸²

In 1980, CND's membership doubled to 9,000 national members and a further 250,000 in local branches,⁶⁸³ including a specialist subsection Labour CND, open to parliamentarians and members of the Labour Party. While CND itself was not an organisation formally affiliated with the Labour Party, CND supporters were generally to the left of British politics and in the immediate years after its inception, roughly three-quarters of its supporters were Labour voters⁶⁸⁴ and many of the early executive committee were Labour Party members.⁶⁸⁵ During the 1980s, several Labour peers and MPs were sympathetic to CND's views on unilateral disarmament and the fraudulence of civil defence, some expressing their support

⁶⁸² CND (1961) *Beware CND! Says Home Office* in *Sanity* p.1

⁶⁸³ Hinton, J. (1997) *Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament* in Powers, S. *Protest, Power and Change* p.63

⁶⁸⁴ Parkin, F. (1968) p.39

⁶⁸⁵ Driver, C. (1964) p.76

for the organisation in open debate.⁶⁸⁶ Labour peer Hugh Jenkins, speaking in the House of Lords in 1982, argued that the popularity of anti-nuclear organisations such as CND lay with the policies of government itself:

One reason for the great growth of CND has been the failure of the Government to sustain the pretence of survival in a sufficiently convincing way. I think that the nuclear warriors have been rather dull in failing to see that this pretence is a necessary part of the policy. The trouble is that the Government really do not believe it themselves, and if they want successfully to deceive the people, they must first deceive themselves.⁶⁸⁷

As Bruce Kent, General Secretary of CND from 1979-1987, later commented: "Civil defence was the best thing the government did for CND. It made people realise that the suggestions it contained were absurd."⁶⁸⁸

CND's primary tool was using the arguments for civil defence as weapons against it, and they were skilled in turning Government advice and publicity surrounding civil defence to condemn it. The organisation produced a considerable volume of literature which directly challenged the information produced by government, often directly contrasting the official narrative of government with one that appealed to the 'common sense' of the public, invoking the horror of nuclear war in an attempt to expose the 'myth' of protection. A 1982 publication by CND supporter Philip Bolsover epitomised the emotional approach taken by CND:

⁶⁸⁶ Allaun, F. HC Deb, 01 July 1980 vol. 987, cc.1317-25

⁶⁸⁷ Jenkins, H. HL Deb, 23 June 1982 vol. 431 cc.1072-106

⁶⁸⁸ Interview with Bruce Kent, General Secretary of CND 1979-1987(23 September 2013)

Much of the Government's thinking is, as it frequently indicated, based on the idea that the 'winner' of a nuclear war will be the country that has the most people alive at the end ó even if that country is a radioactive rubbish heap! So, if one day you crawl alive from under your table you may stand on the piles of dead and peer through the smoking ruins with joy in your heart ó for we may have won. And perhaps, somewhere somebody on the 'enemy' side will be doing as you are doing; hoping that maybe his pile of poisoned, burnt and shattered bodies is smaller than yours ó his sign of victory.⁶⁸⁹

The publication of *Protect and Survive* gave particular ammunition to CND in 1980 and it provided a focus for the public's anxieties towards nuclear war. The organisation quickly produced emotive materials critiquing *Protect and Survive*⁶⁹⁰ and by extension, the Government's position on both civil defence and nuclear weapons. John Preston argued that ' *Protect and Survive* has always been used as a reference point both by government and critics for bad civil defence policy'⁶⁹¹ and this was confirmed by Bruce Kent who acknowledged that ' we certainly used Protect & Survive to our advantage.'⁶⁹²

Thompson and Bolsover argued that civil defence was a step towards making the idea of 'limited' nuclear war acceptable, an attempt to convince the public of the possibility of survival. As Thompson argued ' the country must now not only be made to bear the expectation, as a definite and imminent possibility, of actual

⁶⁸⁹ Bolsover, P. (1980) p.9

⁶⁹⁰ See Thompson, E, and Smith, D. (ed.) (1980) *Protest and Survive* (London: Penguin) and Bolsover, P. (1982) *Civil Defence: the cruellest confidence trick*

⁶⁹¹ Interview with Professor John Preston, Professor of Education at the University of East London, 13 August 2013

⁶⁹² Interview with Bruce Kent, General Secretary of CND 1979-1987, 23 September 2013

nuclear devastation.⁶⁹³ As Stafford points out, by offering the public a state-approved script on how to respond to nuclear war, the Government opened up the possibility for critique and reinterpretations of a post-nuclear Britain.⁶⁹⁴ CND took full advantage of this opportunity, using the tools of ridicule and protest to advance the nuclear debate with the public. As Bruce Kent stated, “More than anything civil defence changed the way people thought about nuclear war. CND played no official part in [policy development] but we always ridiculed civil defence and this undermined policy by making it so ridiculous.”⁶⁹⁵

Nevertheless, it was the Government's policy to engage with disarmament groups where possible, and there does not appear to be evidence to suggest that the government was deliberately withholding information on civil defence plans and exercises from peace organisations and, subsequently, from the public. A meeting of the Police War Duties Committee in May 1982 noted that there had been enquiries from peace groups whether there were any special plans for the police in the event of war, whether these plans could be extended to the public and what extent of police participation could be expected in the forthcoming exercise Hard Rock. It was noted in the minutes that while no comment was offered for the last two points, “...in the Home Office view it is advisable to respond to such queries as openly and directly as possible.”⁶⁹⁶

The Government's civil defence planning exercises were certainly an opportunity

⁶⁹³ Thompson, E. and Smith, D. (1980) p.47

⁶⁹⁴ Stafford, J. (2012) p. 401

⁶⁹⁵ Interview with Bruce Kent, General Secretary of CND 1979-1987, 23 September 2013

⁶⁹⁶ TNA: HO 322/1012 *Minutes of the Police War Committee* (Wednesday 5 and Thursday 6 May 1982)

for CND to use its tools to parody and in 1982, it sought to explore the potential for subverting the 'Hard Rock' exercise with its campaign 'Hard Luck'. In collaboration with the sympathetic organisation Scientist Against Nuclear Arms, CND produced a pack which urged local groups to campaign and 'bridge the gap between the abstract/technical reality and the concrete reality of a nuclear war situation.'⁶⁹⁷

The Government had devoted relatively little time to studying the effects of a co-ordinated anti-nuclear campaign on the public perception of government policy and did not seem to regard CND or other anti-nuclear groups as a threat to policy until 1980 when the government acknowledged that their review of civil defence '...coincided with the CND's revival and, although we have sought to distance civil defence from the nuclear issues, much damage has been done at local level.'⁶⁹⁸

In July 1981 it was noted by the emergency planning division of the Home Office that '...we are still awaiting Ministerial decisions about the proposed campaign to present the Government's home defence policy to a public increasingly deluged by CND propaganda.'⁶⁹⁹ The effects of the co-ordinated anti-nuclear campaign by CND and related groups was a cause of anxiety for civil defence planning and policy making and frequently discussed in civil defence progress reports and departmental meetings, as was a concerted campaign of defence against the message of CND:

⁶⁹⁷ 'Hard Luck' campaign pack (September 1982)

⁶⁹⁸ TNA: HO 322/1019 *Civil Defence Policy* (July 1982)

⁶⁹⁹ TNA: CAB 322/978 *Home Defence Progress Report* (14 July 1981)

Our increasing anxiety over the CND and END [European Nuclear Disarmament] attacks on civil defence, which we have some evidence to believe are affecting the morale of professional and volunteer civil defence workers, is now shared by both the Ministry of Defence and the FCO which are, of course, more concerned with the wider CND campaign against national defence policy and the nuclear deterrence in particular. We are today meeting MOD and FCO to consider a strategy for presenting a coherent defence of government policy covering both military and home defence.⁷⁰⁰

Despite this assertion, no concerted campaign of information to counter the anti-nuclear message ever appeared. The extent of the Government's counter-propaganda amounted to little more than the publication of the previously-discussed and poorly-distributed pamphlet *Civil Defence: why we need it* published in December 1981, in which, it was agreed, the link between civil defence and the nuclear deterrent would not be included.⁷⁰¹ The link between civil defence and deterrence was a dangerous one for the Government in terms of support for civil defence: as CND knew:

í it made people realise that despite what the government was saying, deterrence was not a foolproof arrangement. It was very important to the government: the foreign office put out a statement saying that accidents canø happen but of course they can happen, human error can happen. The government said it was better to have civil defence, but if you are saying that you need to have civil defence you are saying that deterrence is not foolproof.⁷⁰²

⁷⁰⁰ TNA: HO 322/984 *Home Defence Progress Report* (12 December 1980)

⁷⁰¹ TNA: HO 322/984 *Home Defence Progress Report* (5 March 1981)

⁷⁰² Interview with Bruce Kent, General Secretary of CND 1979-1987, 23 September 2013

The Government "fully recognised"⁷⁰³ the problems that CND were causing at a local level and in January 1982, a letter to the Home Office from the Home Defence College at Easingwold stated that more effort should be devoted to the potential threat from peace groups; "...our recent and continuing experience with the anti-nuclear campaign teaches the need to apply all the foresight we can muster to dealing with the much more virulent campaign that we might expect should we come close to war."⁷⁰⁴

In the face of growing unease amongst the public to the idea of nuclear war, fanned by the success of information-distributing campaigns by anti-nuclear groups, the Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Heseltine, in 1983 set up a Ministry of Defence subgroup, Secretariat 19, with the express purpose of explaining "... to the public the facts about the Government's policy on deterrence and multilateral disarmament."⁷⁰⁵ Speaking about this period, Bruce Kent acknowledges the difficulty of determining the effectiveness of CND's campaigning, but was clear on the distinction between the influence of CND on policy determinism and the effect of the group on the Government itself: "Very difficult to assess the impact of CND [on civil defence policy] but I think the Government overestimated the importance [of the organisation]. Heseltine would not debate us, he thought that CND could swing the outcome of the 1983 election but I don't ever think CND was a major threat to the Government."⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰³ TNA: HO 322/1019 *Relations Between Central Government and Local Authorities in Civil Defence* (26 July 1982)

⁷⁰⁴ TNA: CAB 322/1008 *Letter from J.A. Pemberton to J.A. Howard* (19 January 1982)

⁷⁰⁵ Heseltine, M. HC Deb, 21 July 1986 vol. 102 c71W

⁷⁰⁶ Interview with Bruce Kent, General Secretary of CND 1979-1987, 23 September 2013

CND closely aligned itself with civil defence non-compliance such as in the case of exercise Hard Rock in 1982 which it saw as an opportunity to disrupt central government policy, stating '... Hard Rock offers CND groups throughout Britain the chance to mount a nationwide campaign of protest and resistance to the civil defence con trick'⁷⁰⁷ and gave their full support to any local authorities choosing not to comply with the exercise. The Government recognised that it was vital for the integrity of civil defence policy that CND be prevented where at all possible from claiming the cancellation of Hard Rock as a victory⁷⁰⁸ but as Grant argues, in using the 'language of annihilation',⁷⁰⁹ CND forced the Government into having to rethink the way it communicated with the public in order to defend its civil defence policy. This, it can be argued, is the greatest success of CND and similar groups.

Conclusion

There is strong evidence to argue that civil defence policy post-1972, as it was pre-1972, was influenced by external factors. By 1968, East-West relations were undergoing a period of détente and the perceived reduction in the risk of a nuclear or conventional exchange involving Britain was compelling enough that it was cited as one of the determining factors behind the decision to place civil defence on a 'care and maintenance' basis. Despite the revival of civil defence as a policy concern in 1972 and the acknowledgement that danger from accident or miscalculation could never be completely removed, the focus of home defence

⁷⁰⁷ *Sanity* (February/March 1982)

⁷⁰⁸ TNA: HO 322/1016 *Civil Defence Policy* (23 December 1982)

⁷⁰⁹ Grant, M. (2009) p.132

during much of the 1970s was on more generalised emergency planning, reflecting this period of decreased international tension.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 followed quickly by the election of Margaret Thatcher, and then Ronald Reagan, two world leaders of significant influence opposed to the concessions of détente, signalled the end of this period of relaxed relations between the superpowers and the re-emergence of civil defence. The result of this was the largest review of civil defence that had been seen since its reactivation in 1972 and that would be seen until the end of the Cold War. Upon announcing the outcome of the review it was stated that the resulting plans to substantially increase spending on civil defence were not linked to any perceived risk from an external threat and that civil defence was just an important adjunct to a balanced defence policy, in keeping with Conservative doctrine on developing and maintaining a strong defence capability.

As the actions of the authorities and sympathetic peace groups such as CND cannot be analysed without reference to their motivating ideologies, the Conservative government's battle against the nuclear-free local authorities cannot be seen in isolation. It combined an ideological distaste for the peace movement with hostility towards local government on the whole.⁷¹⁰ It can be argued that by increasing control over local authority defence responsibilities, central government sought to curtail local authority independence during the period in question and as even until the late 1980s, central government was still seeking to curtail local government

⁷¹⁰ Crossley, G. (1985) p.110

influence in the creation of civil defence policy by claiming it as exclusively a
“...concern of national government.”⁷¹¹ The nature of central government policy in
itself was also a contributing factor in the refusal of many local authorities to co-
operate with civil defence plans.

Many of the causes of local authority non-compliance were non-political and
contained within the policy itself. The Government would not provide local
authorities with accurate data for use in civil defence planning for both reasons of
security and over fears that this information would be obtained and used to the
detriment of the Government by opponents of civil defence - thereby limiting the
practical value of any resulting planning. In the face of the Government's dilemma,
the nuclear-free zones and CND won the propaganda war as public confidence in
civil defence waned and the Government was forced to re-evaluate the way it
communicated its policy to the public. Despite this, it was the political support of
the Labour Party that gave the local authorities their momentum and ultimately the
succession of policy changes introduced to maintain Government policy in the face
of the threat of policy termination.

It can be argued that the nuclear-free authorities' campaign against civil defence
was a mixture of success and failure in terms of policy influence. The refusal of
local authorities to comply with central government planning certainly served to
keep the nuclear debate in the public mind and individual council initiatives helped
to bring the issue to the attention of many. The alternative information on civil

⁷¹¹ Blatch, E. HL Deb, 22 July 1987, vol. 488, cc.1456-70

defence provided by the nuclear-free zones also highlighted the credibility gaps in the Government's policy and exposed the faults in the factors that led to these policies. The major success of the campaign was the cancellation of the Hard Rock exercise and the reduction of local authority involvement in civil defence to an absolute minimum.

The polarisation of county councils and central government in the early 1980s on the issue of civil defence policy represents one of the largest mass acts of political rebellion in Cold War British history. Nevertheless in this success lay the seeds of its own failure, in the shape of the *Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983* and the subsequent Planned Programme for Implementation which substantially increased minimum duties and forced local authorities to conform to central government requirements. As such it can be said that while the dissenting local authorities forced the Government to continually review its policy in order to keep implementation possible, these changes were to the detriment of the aims of the authorities. The local authorities also had little effect on civil defence policy itself; while it was certainly an aim of policy makers in shifting policy from the traditional hostile attack model of civil defence to the peacetime, civil contingencies model to ensure local authorities complied with civil defence planning, the nature of those plans were more significantly influenced by thawing East-West tensions than any actions of peace groups or nuclear free councils.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

It can be argued that all possible interpretations regarding the nature of civil defence policy in the last two decades of the Cold War are functions of a much broader political perspective. Monocausal interpretations that focus exclusively on any one sphere of influence as a mutually exclusive or discreet entity are necessarily inadequate; as Buckley states:

...it is possible to observe that in a democracy such as Britain's the means of representation and the process of representation are locked in a symbiotic relationship whereby each necessarily and inevitably influences the other.⁷¹²

This thesis has demonstrated that British civil defence was the product of a long and complex process of interaction and reaction between the contrasting, complementary and conflicting political forces and agencies at work during this time. At no point was civil defence ever a single, cohesive policy but rather a heterogeneous collection of policies with a muddy genesis, sprawling evolution, impenetrably intertwined influences and often contradictory character. At various times during the creation and implementation of the assortment of policies that comprised public protection against the threat of nuclear attack it is possible to identify significant influences upon those policies. But the relationship between economics, ideology and external factors is a close and synergistic one, from which it is impossible to extrapolate a lone thread of causality or single defining influence.

⁷¹² Buckley, J. (1982) p.13

The rational model of public policy analysis is arguably the most widely held view of the way policy is made. It defines policy making as a problem solving process that operates with rational, balanced, objective and analytical properties and decisions are made within a sequential set of phases. The rational model assumes that the policy maker is firstly able to accurately identify the nature of the problem to be addressed, that the aims and objectives of policy creation are defined, that all alternative ways of addressing the issue are considered and compared with objective criteria and that the goal of the policy maker is to achieve the best possible solution to a problem. If policies do not achieve their objectives, the fault is considered to lie with problems in the political or administrative implementation, not with the policy itself.

The rational model of policy making often assumes a significant quantity of specialised, accurate knowledge, the clarity of goals and criteria, that rational measurable criteria are available and agreed upon and the time and resources exist to define and analyse all possible alternatives. However, real-world policy making often operates in the absence of one or more of these factors and this was certainly so in the case of civil defence which did not operate in a rational and reasonable sphere demanded by the rational model, dominated as it was by political, practical and socio-cultural forces. Such a linear model also ignores the role of people and organisations in the process and the gap between decision and implementation, both significant factors in the decision made about civil defence. As such, for the purpose of understanding policy making in this sphere, this thesis has demonstrated

that using only the rational model, characterised by objective analysis of options and the separation of policy from implementation, is inadequate for the purpose. As Anderson notes, 'we need to recognise that policy making involves both incremental and fundamental decisions.'⁷¹³ Civil defence can be better understood by the use of a combination of models applied to various aspects of policy to illuminate aspects of the complex interaction of influence.

As Hill states, 'the rationalism/incrementalism debate is beside the point when it is party political commitment or ideology rather than either rational planning or partisan mutual adjustment that drives the policy debate'⁷¹⁴ and it is important to see the policy making process in its institutional context which made both rational and incremental decision making difficult at times. March and Olsen argue that 'insofar as political actors act by making choices, they act within definitions of alternatives, consequences, preferences (interests) and strategic options that are strongly affected by the constitutional context in which the actors find themselves'⁷¹⁵ and it was in strongly partisan and ideologically-driven administrations that many of the policy decisions surrounding civil defence were made.

In the last two decades of the Cold War, the civil defence programme came under attack from both the left and the right for its perceived inadequacies, but this criticism stemmed from widely differing ideological perspectives. Critics within

⁷¹³ Anderson, J. (2010) p.95

⁷¹⁴ Hill, M. (2009) p.155

⁷¹⁵ March, J. and Olsen, J. (1996) p.251

the Conservative party, broadly in favour of civil defence as a necessary adjunct to a strong military and a defence policy based on the theory of nuclear deterrence, viewed the practical inadequacies of a no shelter, no evacuation policy as something which undermined the effectiveness of the deterrent posture, a nod towards the idea that a nuclear war was unwinnable. The Conservative governments under Thatcher were unwilling to spend large amounts of money on civil defence since this might suggest that the British independent deterrent - the maintenance and upgrade of which did have large budgets attached to it - might fail. A strong military was a fundamental part of Conservative ideology and it was eager to avoid public debate around the question of the effectiveness and worth of the deterrent, especially as this might in turn have brought fresh calls for nuclear disarmament.

It could be argued that the revival of civil defence in the early 1970s and the increase in civil defence spending under the Conservative governments from 1981 might imply a shift in policy concerns away from the idea of mutually assured destruction towards concepts of survivable or even winnable wars.⁷¹⁶ It could also be argued that the increase in spending seen in the Conservative administrations was simply a result of humanitarian concerns or conversely, as a means of introducing covert methods of control and surveillance under the guise of provisions for public protection. Objectors to civil defence from Labour and other left-wing organisations and peace groups, while often noting the potential protection of a deterrent capability, were grounded in the belief in the inherently

⁷¹⁶ Buckley, J. (1982) p.10

dishonest practice of leading the public to believe that a nuclear war was survivable. Simultaneously, the possible erosion of civil liberties and the introduction of means of social and political control introduced under the auspices of civil defence legislation were of concern to those of the left. Nuclear war was often seen as a pretext for the suppression of subversive elements of society in attempt to preserve political and economic power.

The Garbage Can theory describes a model of policy analysis that stresses the anarchical nature of organisations as 'loose collections of ideas' as opposed to rational 'coherent structures'. Organisations discover preferences through action, rather than act out of preferences. Understanding is poor, trial and error learning operates, and membership is fluid.⁷¹⁷ This 'organised anarchy' system of decision making is characterised by three general properties: problematic, inconsistent or ill-defined preferences; unclear technology, procedures or processes; and the varying involvement of decision makers. The nature of the choice, the time it takes, and the problems it solves all depend on a complicated inter-meshing of a combination of four streams: the problems, choices available, possible solutions and outside influences on policy makers, or, as Cohen et al. state: 'a collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be the answer, and decision makers looking for work'.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁷ Parsons, W. (1996) p.192

⁷¹⁸ Cohen, M. March, J. and Olsen, J. *A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice* in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol.17, no. 1 (March 1972), pp. 1-25.

In the Garbage Can model, issues or problems are disassociated from choices. This gives an image of a garbage can in which participants in the decision making process are rummaging around for either a solution to a new (or recurring) problem or for a previously rejected problem to which an existing or favoured solution can be applied.⁷¹⁹ Problems are addressed on a solution basis but the process does not necessarily follow a rational method as the capacity of policy makers to make decisions can be limited by two potential problems. Firstly, they may have ambiguous or unclear preferences, with different ideas about what the goal of the decision should or shouldn't be and secondly, they may have too little information about their options to make objectively rational decisions.

The Garbage Can model posits that the manner in which governments make choices under this kind of goal ambiguity leads to policy being created in the absence of consensus, and March and Olsen argue that problems are linked to solutions primarily by their time of arrival in the garbage can, and therefore policy choices are made for the most part either before any problems are connected to them (oversight) or after the problems have abandoned one choice to associate themselves to another.⁷²⁰ This sloppy and haphazard process can be most clearly be observed in successive governments' attempts to disseminate civil defence policy information to the general public.

As in the garbage can model, civil defence policy making was seen to have

⁷¹⁹ Dorey, P. (2005) p.129

⁷²⁰ March, J. and Olsen, J. (1994) p.736

satisfactory, rather than optimal, goals, and where the policy decisions met the necessary outcomes on an acceptable level there was no attempt to comprehensively evaluate alternatives. No government could afford to admit that there was no proper defence for the civilian population⁷²¹ while at the same time privately acknowledging that there could be no widespread protection against nuclear attack. Thus, where civil defence information was made available to the public, it was instead an attempt to persuade the people that the results of a nuclear exchange would not, with a little citizen-led action and self-reliance, be catastrophic. An acceptable solution in the form of *Protect and Survive* was fished from the garbage can that reflected the only choices available.

There is a tendency for the defence debate in Britain to revolve more around the question of economic costs than strategic objectives⁷²² however, and this thesis has shown that the economic influences on civil defence policy were not necessarily of a party political persuasion. Since the revival of civil defence in 1972, civil defence expenditure did not consistently fall under Labour governments and rise under Conservatives ones. The Labour administration of the 1970s demonstrated a high level of policy continuation as shown by its agreement with previous Conservative government's reluctance to plan for shelter provision on the grounds of cost. While both parties displayed support for the policy of nuclear deterrence, their attitudes towards civil defence provision varied in their commitment, independent of their levels of expenditure. The economic playing field has not always been a level one

⁷²¹ Interview with Dr Robin Woolven, Intelligence Officer with the Security Service 1980697, 23 August 2013

⁷²² Freedman, L. (1999) p.63

with the Labour administration of 1974-1979 facing severer external budgetary constraints than the Conservative government of the 1980s. In real terms however, the expenditure levels after the 1980-81 review still amounted to less than was spent during the previous Labour government. While this illustrates that it is impossible to take economic factors alone as a variable, independent of all others, it can be seen that economic influences played an important part in the development and later implementation of civil defence policy.

The 1981 review of home preparedness was a significant moment in post 1968 civil defence policy making and the results of the review were often ambiguous and inconsistent. The Government assessment of the threat of war seemed to place it somewhere between not likely enough to justify a programme of mass shelter building and likely enough that civil defence measures ought to be of whatever quality an additional £45 million a year by 1983-84 might provide. For a government committed to a reduction in expenditure this appears uncharacteristic, and it could be argued that with policy decisions such as choosing not to resurrect the Civil Defence Corps as not 'cost-effective'⁷²³ but simultaneously calling for more volunteers to assist in local preparedness exercises, the Government was acknowledging the need for greater civil defence provision but was unable or unwilling to back this up with a firm policy commitment, with the resulting financial obligations this would create. Thus the Government was caught in a complicated dilemma from which the policy results are a strange, ambivalent hybrid of bombastic rhetoric and attempted public mollification, where it was

⁷²³ Elton, R. HL Deb, 26 February 1985, vol. 460, c929WA

acknowledged in publicly available literature that there was cause for the public to be concerned, but not to a level of alarm that might generate demand for a public shelter building scheme.

The general public was given many varied justifications both moral and political for the reluctance of the Government to provide a higher level of 'insurance' for what they considered a relatively small risk, but it was the economic reasons that were most often cited, specifically for the lack of a wide scale shelter building and evacuation scheme. The public was reminded of the balance between risk and economic justification in official public information on civil defence such as *Civil Defence: why we need it*. However such information often appeared deliberately simplistic and overly reassuring and offered no explanation for the public as to how it was to understand apparent contradictions such as the 1980 review of home defence's increase in expenditure in light of the only 'slight risk' of war. Neither did official information comment upon the ambiguity of a civil defence policy that drew so heavily on the concept of deterrence, leaving many critics of Government policy suspicious of the Government's claims of the effects of economic restrictions on civil defence policy and arguing for a more comprehensive policy financed by a reduction in the imbalance between the billions spent on defence and the millions allocated to civil defence.

Ultimately it was not measures for public protection that was most significantly shaped by economic considerations but the very nature of what was meant by 'civil defence'. Each government since 1972 made it clear that policies for public

protection would proceed not by what was needed but by what could be afforded, but in practice this translated not to additional measures for public protection but to redefinitions of the scope of civil defence to justify additional expenditure. In turn, the motivation behind the increases and decreases in expenditure bore more relation to ideological postures than it did to any administration's economic policies or the economic situation of the time. Although the economic climate was frequently cited by both ministers and subsequently by commentators as a consideration when developing civil defence policy, this thesis has shown that a direct link between expenditure and the state of the economy in real terms cannot be observed.

Peace groups and disarmament campaigns such as CND also highlighted the impotence of civil defence measures against nuclear weapons, recognising the contradictions inherent in civil defence policy. They questioned the motivations of the champions of civil defence on the right, arguing that even if the Government wished to increase spending on civil defence it could not do so without calling into question the credibility of its deterrent and subsequently its entire defence policy. Civil defence was therefore seen by its critics on the left as a dishonest policy which attempted to legitimise by stealth those foreign, military and economic policies which were only likely to exacerbate the prospect of nuclear war. The perspectives of those on the political left and right also divided commentators at the time, as can be seen stated in Rogers (et al.) and Lee, respectively:

If civil defence is part of our system of deterrence by virtue of

showing that we will use nuclear weapons if we have to, it is also part of our deterrence in the sense that it is integral to the process which may lead to the use of those weapons.⁷²⁴

It may not be assumed that one country's ability to or one power bloc's ability to protect its population is any indication of its willingness to join in a war, or even start it. Conversely, one side's inability to protect its people should never be assumed to be a sign that it would be reluctant to go to war or start it.⁷²⁵

Group theory attempts to describe all political activity in terms of the group struggle, and policy makers are viewed as constantly responding to petitions, bargaining and negotiating amongst influential groups. Political parties can be made from coalitions of special interest groups, but it was CND that managed to best exploit the opportunities presented by the impositional policy approach of the Conservative government. CND represented a bridge between the public and government, one that, as group theory illustrated, had to be managed by the government to achieve policy equilibrium. However, the large grass roots support enjoyed by CND in the 1980s did not translate to direct and measurable change in policy selection. As Stafford notes 'the evidence suggests that low levels of confidence in civil defence did not seriously undermine Thatcher, or lead to an increase in public support for Labour's defence policies.'⁷²⁶

This suggests that in group theory terms, neither CND nor any related peace groups as a consolidation of single-interest organisations exhibited sufficient power to

⁷²⁴ Rogers et al. (1981) p.10

⁷²⁵ Lee, C. (1981) p.174

⁷²⁶ Stafford, J. (2012) p.404

significantly disturb the policy equilibrium. Additionally, as Peter Dorey notes, the objectives of special interest groups such as CND in the 1980s were considered too extreme for the Government to countenance and were therefore afforded 'outsider' status, without access to elite-level policy makers.⁷²⁷ Denied access to the core executive, outside interest groups instead seek to influence policy through parliament or through extra-parliamentary activities such as raising public awareness, seeking to influence the systemic agenda instead.⁷²⁸ As such the major influence of CND lay not in the realm of policy development but instead within the public sphere and the way they compelled the Government to alter the way they presented information about civil defence to the public and the mobilisation of the public in an activism that was in direct contrast to the Government sanctioned passivity of their official public advice. As Bruce Kent asserts:

CND certainly made people stop and think on the issue of nuclear weapons and civil defence was a major factor in changing many people's minds. Reagan said 'we get our policies off your banners' and of course he was being sarcastic, but while you can never say how things would have been, there was certainly a sense that we had an effect on the Government.⁷²⁹

The interests of organised groups have long been recognised as central to policy making in Britain and proponents of the group theory of political analysis stress the importance of these interests in policy making. To group theorists, policy making is, at any one time, the result of the balance reached in the struggle between interest

⁷²⁷ Dorey, P. (2005) p.129

⁷²⁸ Dorey, P. (2005) p.131

⁷²⁹ Interview with Bruce Kent, General Secretary of CND 1979-1987, 23 September 2013

groups and policy will change direction towards those groups exhibiting more power and influence and away from those groups whose influence is waning. As Earl Latham describes:

What may be called public policy is actually the equilibrium reached in the group struggle at any given moment, and it represents a balance which the contending factions or groups constantly strive to tip in their favour...The legislature referees the group struggle, ratifies the victories of the successful coalition, and records the terms of the surrenders, compromises, and conquests in the form of statutes.⁷³⁰

The theory of incrementalism states that policy making is essentially evolutionary rather than revolutionary, and this incremental approach can be seen throughout Cold War civil defence policy making and notably in the revival of civil defence in 1972. Developed by Charles Lindblom in his 1959 article *The Science of Muddling Through*⁷³¹ and subsequent work, incrementalism is a conservative policy making approach in which policy changes are made in the margin of existing policies. Instead of developing new policies, existing policies are improved or amended and subsequently are often only incrementally different, using, as Lindblom describes it: "the method of successive limited comparisons."⁷³² Lindblom argued that a rational decision making process was "not workable for complex policy questions"⁷³³ and that policy makers often instead "muddle through" by making incremental adjustments to policies rather than engaging in a comprehensive and

⁷³⁰ Latham, E. (1956)

⁷³¹ Lindblom, C. (1959) *The Science of Muddling Through* in *Public Administration Review* vol.9 no.2 pp.79-88

⁷³² Lindblom, C. (1959) p. 80

⁷³³ *Ibid.* p.81

logical process as seen in the rational model. With an incrementalist approach, successive comparisons are made to already existing policies and policy makers seek to reach agreement through negotiation where they can. This approach sees policies developed through continually building on current situations, in contrast with the approach of rationalism which starts from fundamentals anew each time, building on the past only as experience embodied in a theory, and always prepared to start from the ground up.⁷³⁴

Typically, an incrementalist policy is one which provides only a limited, short-term amelioration of the issue posed on the political agenda, created in an environment where only a limited number of alternatives and consequences have been considered and where the goal is not to maximise a solution but to produce one that is administratively satisfactory. Political agreement is emphasized as a strategy and the measure of a good outcome, rather than by clearly defining policy goals, policy instruments and criteria to measure success and subsequently, incrementalism is a result of several intertwining political issues.⁷³⁵ Therefore, an incremental approach to policy making is often considered easier than a rationalist one; resulting policy changes are often more politically expedient as they do not necessitate any redistribution of policy values and subsequently, incrementalism tries to improve the acceptability of public policy.

As Hill notes, "From an empirical perspective, policy processes are in many respects continuous processes of evolution in which a realistic starting point may

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁵ Lindblom, C. and Woodhouse, E. (1993)

be far back in history.⁷³⁶ Lindblom argued that the incremental approach represents the typical decision making process in pluralist societies such as the United Kingdom⁷³⁷, and this is certainly a process seen very clearly in the creation of civil defence policy in the last two decades of the Cold War which produced no original or innovative policy decisions but a series of choices based on existing policy, often originally created as far back as World War Two. This can be seen to have been influenced by economic considerations as incrementalism consumes far fewer resources than a more systemic, rational approach. Successive governments repeatedly rejected innovative, expensive policy choices, resorting instead to improving and adapting existing civil defence programmes. Remedial in nature, civil defence policy focussed on what policy makers considered to be politically and economically feasible, rather than what the best solution to the problem was and it is in this approach that the most obvious failings of public protection are to be found.

Lindblom identified a flaw in the rational model by noting how policies change as they move through levels of bureaucracy to the point at which they are implemented: 'Implementation always makes or changes policy to some degree.'⁷³⁸ The failure of the Thatcher Government to secure a means of co-operative implementation for its civil defence policies led to politically significant policy termination, highlighting the dangerous dichotomy between policy making and implementation in the incrementalist process.

⁷³⁶ Hill, M. (2009) p. 143

⁷³⁷ Anderson, J. (2010) p.13

⁷³⁸ Lindblom, C. (1993)

A process of incrementalism was politically expedient in the civil defence policy arena as it often ó though not always - enabled agreements to be reached between stakeholders on matters of policy dispute with only slight modifications to existing policy, rather than adopting the much more politically risky all or nothing approach. A more rational approach would have required a complete knowledge and anticipation of the consequences of policy decisions,⁷³⁹ but as the nature of civil defence necessitated working under conditions of untested uncertainty, this reduced the nature of the risk in adopting potentially unpopular policies. As a result, incrementalism yielded practical, affordable, but limited and compromised policies. From 1972, as Dye notes, policy makers generally accepted the legitimacy of existing policies and tacitly agreed to continue with existing decisions.⁷⁴⁰ The incrementalism model of decision making that, more than any other model, characterised civil defence policy throughout the later Cold War

While certain actions of non-domestic actors occurred largely independently of British politics, it was often the ideological reaction of British policy makers that ascribed significance to these events and as such inflated the influence that these events had on policy creation. The anxiety that many Conservative politicians had after the Soviet actions of 1979 concerning the perceived ineffectualness of civil defence preparations for example, could often be ascribed more to a reaction based on a hard line foreign policy doctrine than the event itself.

⁷³⁹ Jordan, A. (1987) p.12

⁷⁴⁰ Dye, T. (2012) p.18

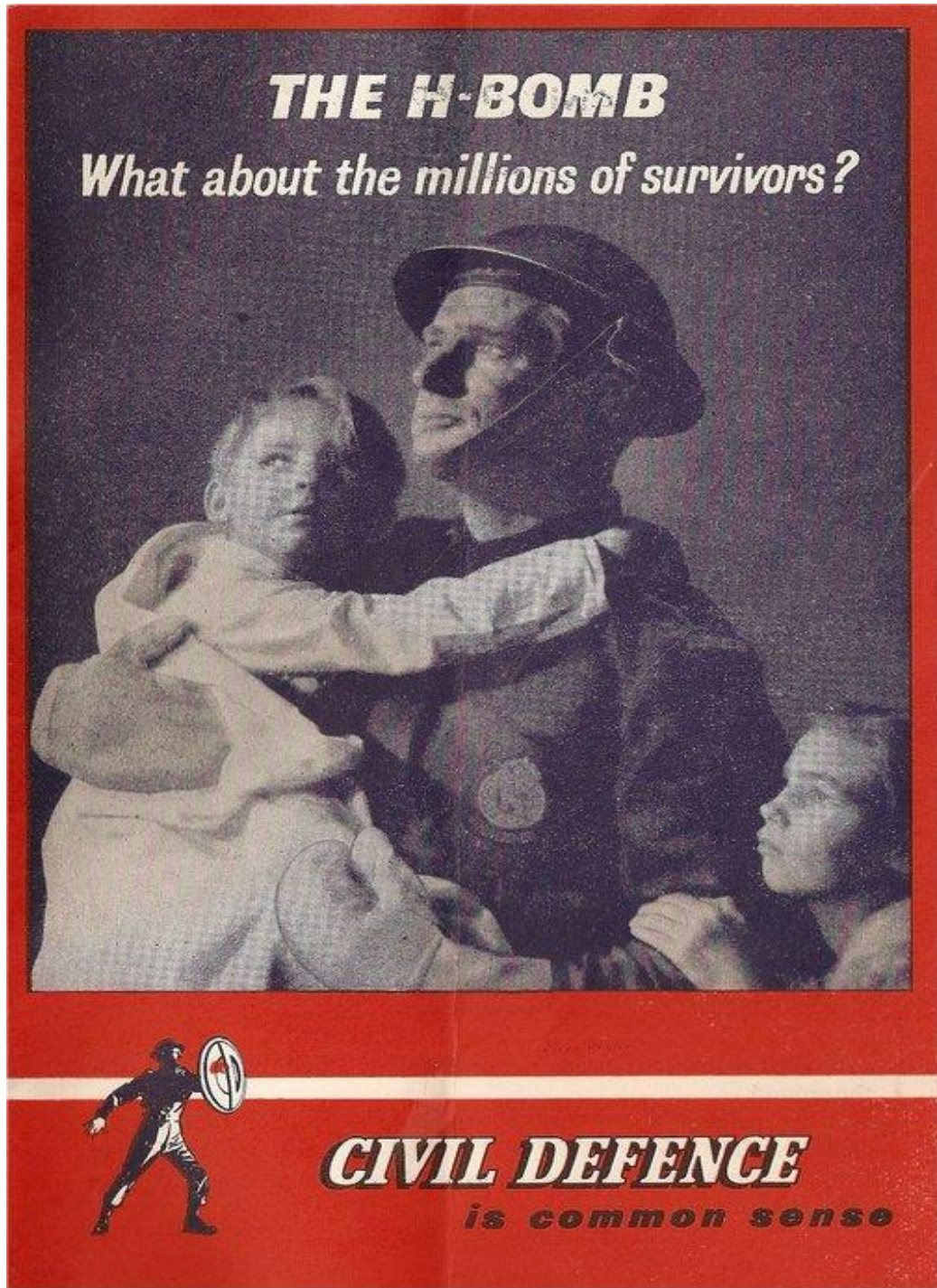
Whatever the actual influence of ideologically-filtered thinking about the potential risk from frosty East-West relations on policy making, it cannot be said that the events resulting from the collapse of détente were not important in both the timing and outcomes of policy decisions. It was an external influence in the form of a temporary thawing of East-West relations at the end of the 1960s that was the primary determinant in the decision to place civil defence on a 'care and maintenance' basis in 1968. The general disinterest in civil defence by all but the most dedicated advocates until 1972 can be seen as a mixture of response to low-risk threat assumptions and increasingly severe competition for ever more limited funds. During the final years of the Cold War, the Soviet Union's redirection of the country's resources from expensive military commitments to more productive areas in the civilian sector contributed towards accelerating détente between Moscow and the West and, amid renewed talks on economic issues and the scaling-back of the arms race, the threat of nuclear war receded.

The winding down of civil defence as a response to this lessening danger and its eventual transformation into an 'all-hazards' model of emergency preparedness that began with the 1986 *Civil Protection in Peacetime Act* was the ultimate example of external influence on policy making. The traditional model of civil defence was abandoned at the end of the Cold War, the policy recognised as one created in response to an external situation that no longer existed and heralded the transformation of civil defence into the model of emergency preparedness seen today.

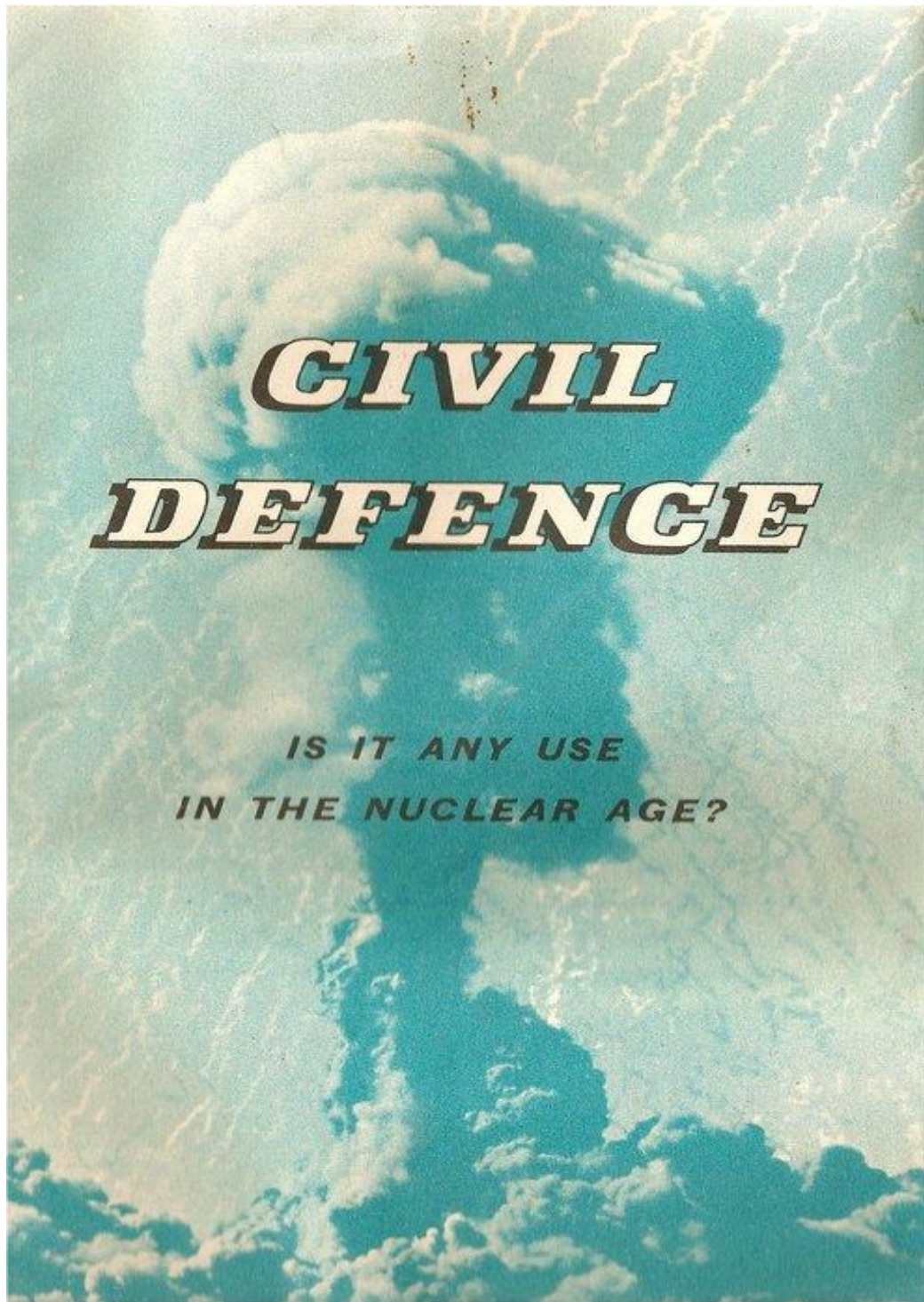
Appendices

Appendix A

The H Bomb
(1957) HMSO

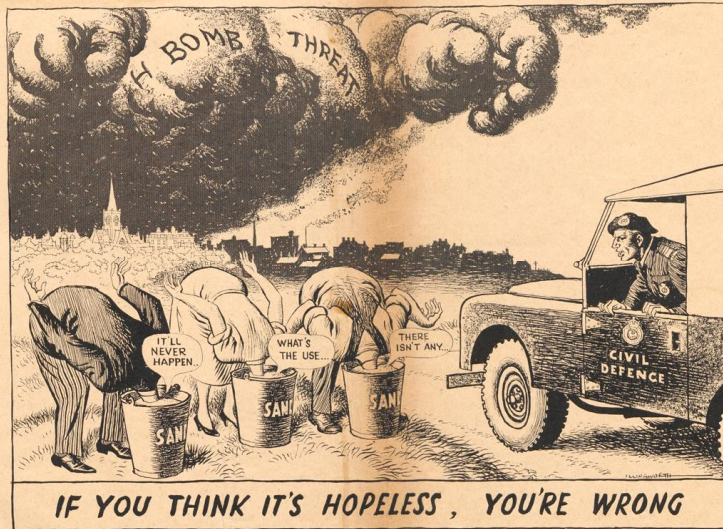


Civil Defence: Is It Any Use In The Nuclear Age?
(1957) HMSO



Illingworth cartoon National 1957.

36



Specialty drawn for H.M. Government by Illingworth

FOUR STRAIGHTFORWARD SIMPLE FACTS ABOUT Civil Defence Today

The basic minimum of information for every responsible man and woman

1 The H-Bombs we hear so much of the horrors, not enough about our chances of survival. Some people will tell you that if this country were attacked with H-Bombs, every man, woman and child would be wiped out. That just isn't true. It isn't anything LIKE the truth. There would be terrible devastation, but for millions and millions of people, chances of survival would be very good. It depends very much on our Civil Defence. The more people we have in it, the better.

2 Civil Defence is well on with the job already. Some people think of Civil Defence equipment as a long-handled shovel, a rubber odd 'n' hat, and so on. Well, it's not like that at all. Civil Defence today is a modern, country-wide Service, which offers you training with first-class equipment—radio and radio-testing instruments, fire-fighting apparatus and rescue gear, and the latest four-wheel-drive vehicles. There are thousands of qualified instructors, three full-time Instructors' Schools, and a Staff College for advanced courses and studies.

The more you get to know about Civil Defence, the more impressed you become. There is a Civil Defence organisation in every town in the Kingdom, and there are units in thousands of industrial firms. There are half a million people in the Civil Defence Services today. But half a million is not enough, not nearly.

3 Civil Defence is useful to you now, in peace. In Civil Defence today, you learn. That is the whole aim and object of joining. You learn, first and foremost, how to live with your eyes open in the same world as the H-Bomb. You begin to learn what this new, nuclear-age world is really like. You acquire a fuller, deeper

understanding of many important events that we are all involved in, whether we like it or not.

Besides this, there is a practical, everyday value in the things you learn. Take just one part of it—First Aid. In Great Britain in 1956 there were over a quarter of a million casualties from motor accidents, and probably at least another million casualties from accidents in the home. What you know—don't know—about First Aid could make all the difference to somebody.

Do you know how to put out a fire? Do you know how to operate a radio transmitter? These are two more of the useful, interesting things that Civil Defence could teach you, now. Do you remember the East Coast floods, the Lyntonmouth disaster, the Harrow rail smash? These are three of the emergencies where trained volunteers from Civil Defence were ready and able to help. They were needed.

4 Civil Defence wants more volunteers, NOW. It's no good saying "I'll be there on the day." That's too late. There wouldn't be time to train you and organise you.

It's no good leaving Civil Defence to other people. For everybody else, *The Other Fellow is YOU.* You live in this world, you are part of the nuclear-age—there is no opting-out for anybody. Civil Defence matters—and matters to you.

Go along to your Council Offices today, and ask about Civil Defence. There's no commitment, no "bull", no length-of-service engagement. Your training takes only about one hour a week. The classes are free, and are near your own home. The knowledge you gain could be useful to you at any time, and would be vital to you if we were at War.

Civil Defence is sound common sense. It's high time you were in it.

The FOURTH Arm

Traditionally, we have three Services in this country: the Royal Navy, the Army, and the Royal Air Force. Now, we have a fourth service of the Crown—namely, volunteer, part-time—but not less vital than the others: Civil Defence. We have peacetime Civil Defence for just the same reason that we have a peacetime Navy, Army and Air Force: it is an essential part of our ordinary peacetime national preparedness. *That is all there is to it.*

WHAT YOU CAN DO IN CIVIL DEFENCE

Five Sections: which will you join?

WARDEN. This is a job for a man or woman with a quiet, confident and the power of leadership—and something of a flair for getting on with people. The Warden takes control of the area in an emergency and directs the other services where they are required.

HEADQUARTERS. This is the nerve centre, where the reports come in and the orders go out. If you are an office or scientific worker, a radio operator, a motorist or a driver—there is an interesting, important work that you could train for now.

RESCUE. Members of Rescue Squads are highly skilled. Each man carries a pack containing saw, working tools, ladders, wire-cutters and First Aid kit—and he is trained in the use of all of them. Besides up the Rescue Squad is a special Rescue Vehicle, with searchlights, cables, winches, stretchers and heavy rescue gear. A rescue team needs intelligence as well as strength.

THE AMBULANCE AND CASUALTY COLLECTING SECTION. This unit consists of professionally qualified volunteers, to give First Aid and use the latest get back safely to the ambulance—and drivers to take the ambulances back to hospital. This is work for both men and women—and if you drive a car already, so much the better.

THE WELFARE SECTION would be called on first to look in bringing care and comfort to those millions of evacuees that is only the beginning of their job. After an attack, there would be more millions of people to be housed, clothed, fed and kept healthy. Our very survival could depend on what the Welfare Section did then. The Welfare Section needs dependable, intelligent, capable men and women, and it needs them now.

AND THE AUXILIARY FIRE SERVICE, which also has really, worth-while, practical training to offer. This work is important; a nuclear explosion sends out an intense heat-wave, and fire would be numerous and quick to spread. The A.F.S. has special nuclear-war fire-fighting apparatus you would do your training with it.

IN EVERY SECTION YOU GET FIRST AID TRAINING



Warden Section



Headquarters Section



Ambulance and Casualty Collecting Section



Welfare Section



Rescue Section



Auxiliary Fire Service



Civil Defence Recruiting Drives are going on now, all over the country. Their object is to tell you all about Civil Defence—what it can do, what it IS doing and what there is in it for you.

CIVIL DEFENCE is common sense

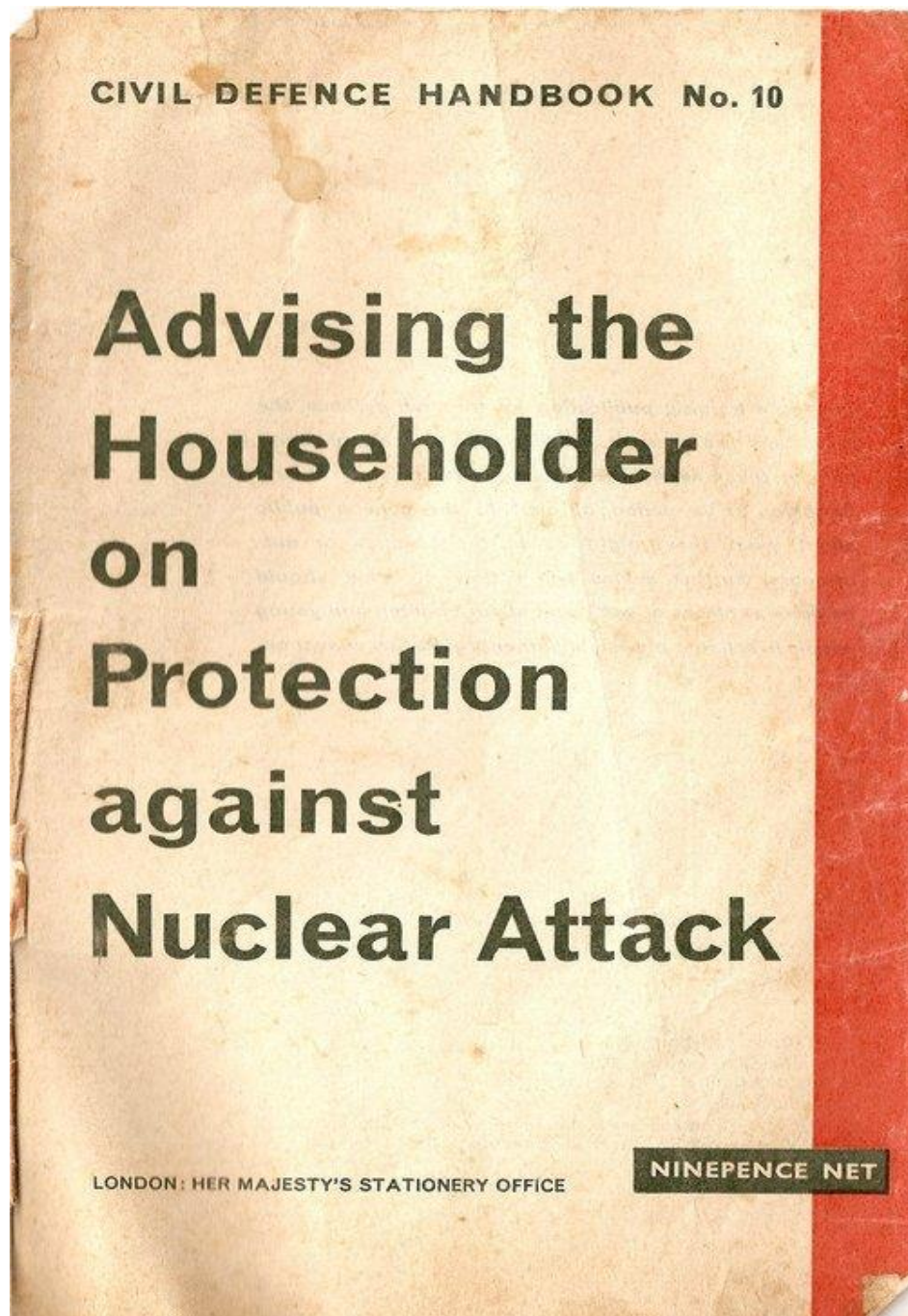
Go to your Council Offices and ask, today. They will be glad to see you.

ISSUED FOR H.M. GOVERNMENT BY THE CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Civil Defence, 1957
 C.O.I. 2/122 (1957)
 H.M.S.O. London

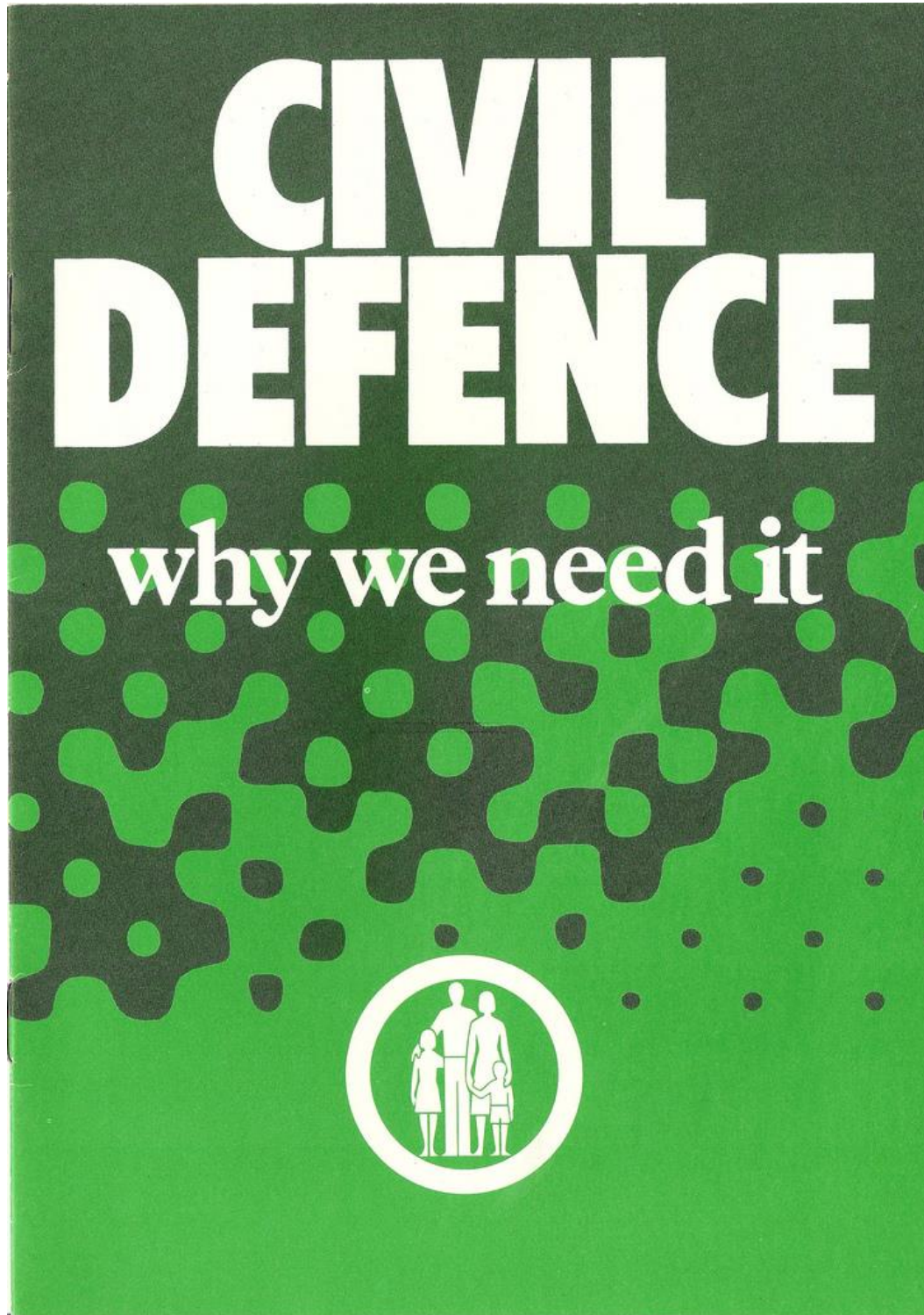
Appendix B

Civil Defence Handbook No.10: *Advising the Householder on Protection Against Nuclear Attack*
(1963) HMSO/COI



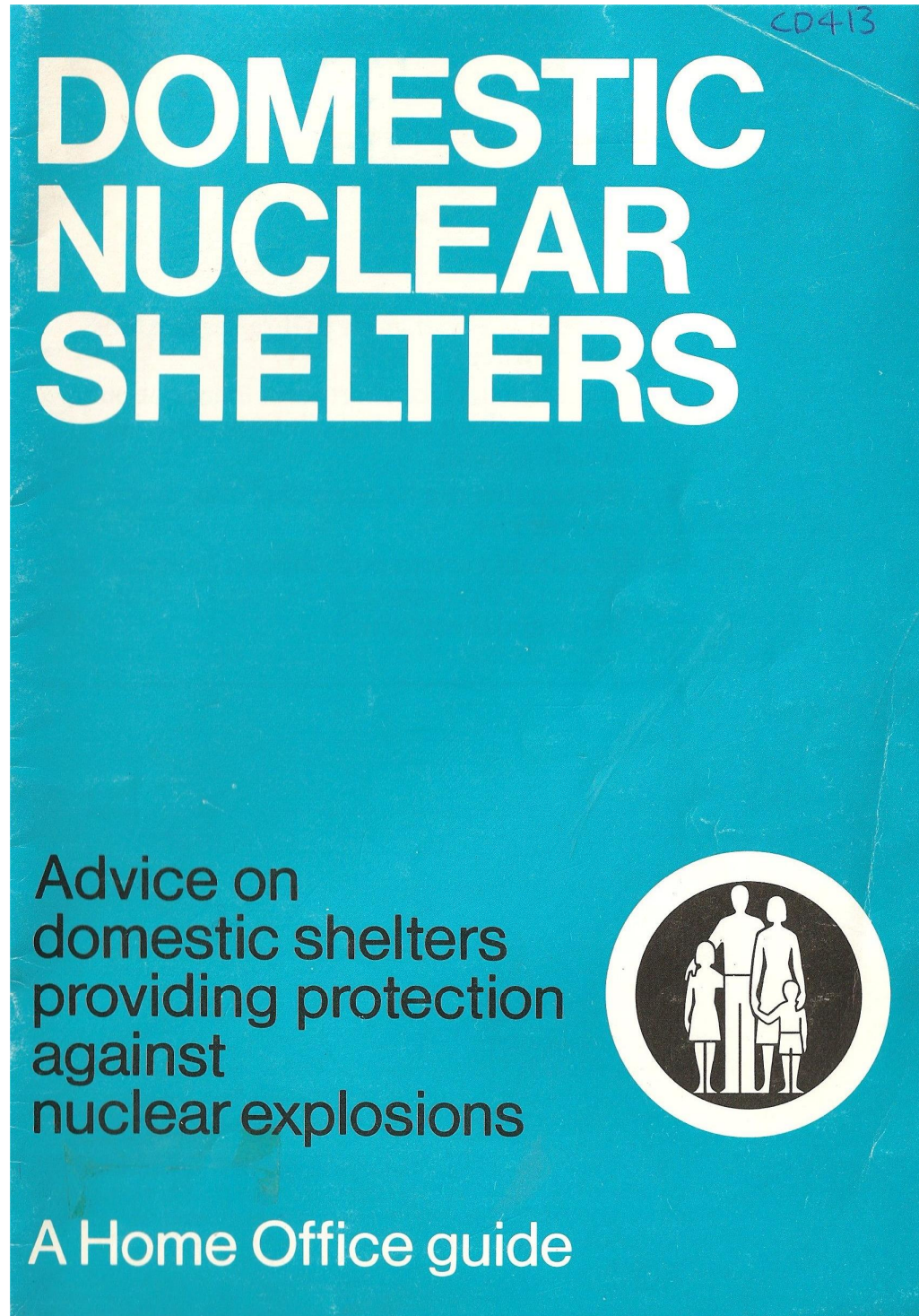
Appendix C

Civil Defence: why we need it
(1981) HMSO/COI



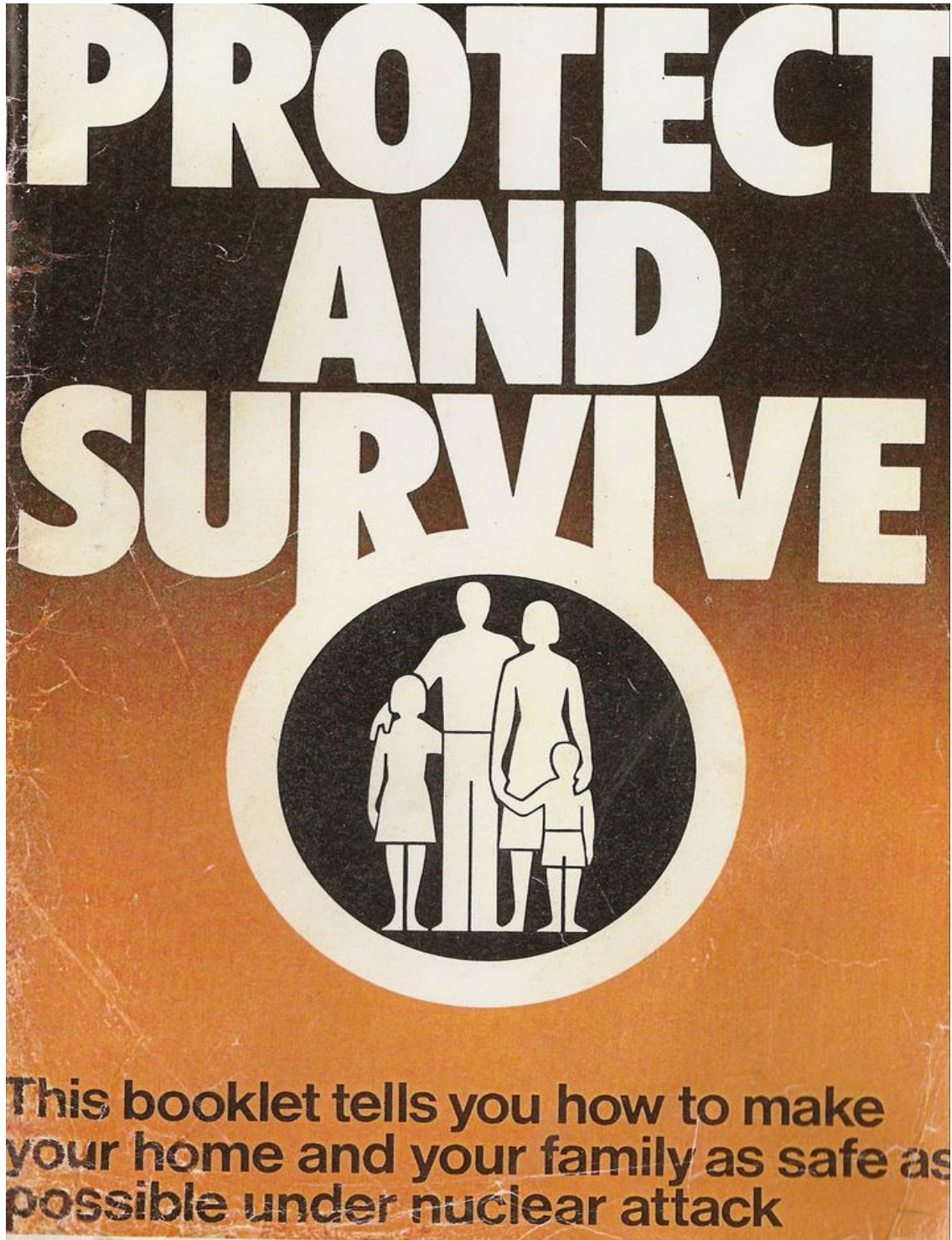
Appendix D

Domestic Nuclear Shelters
(1980) HMSO/COI



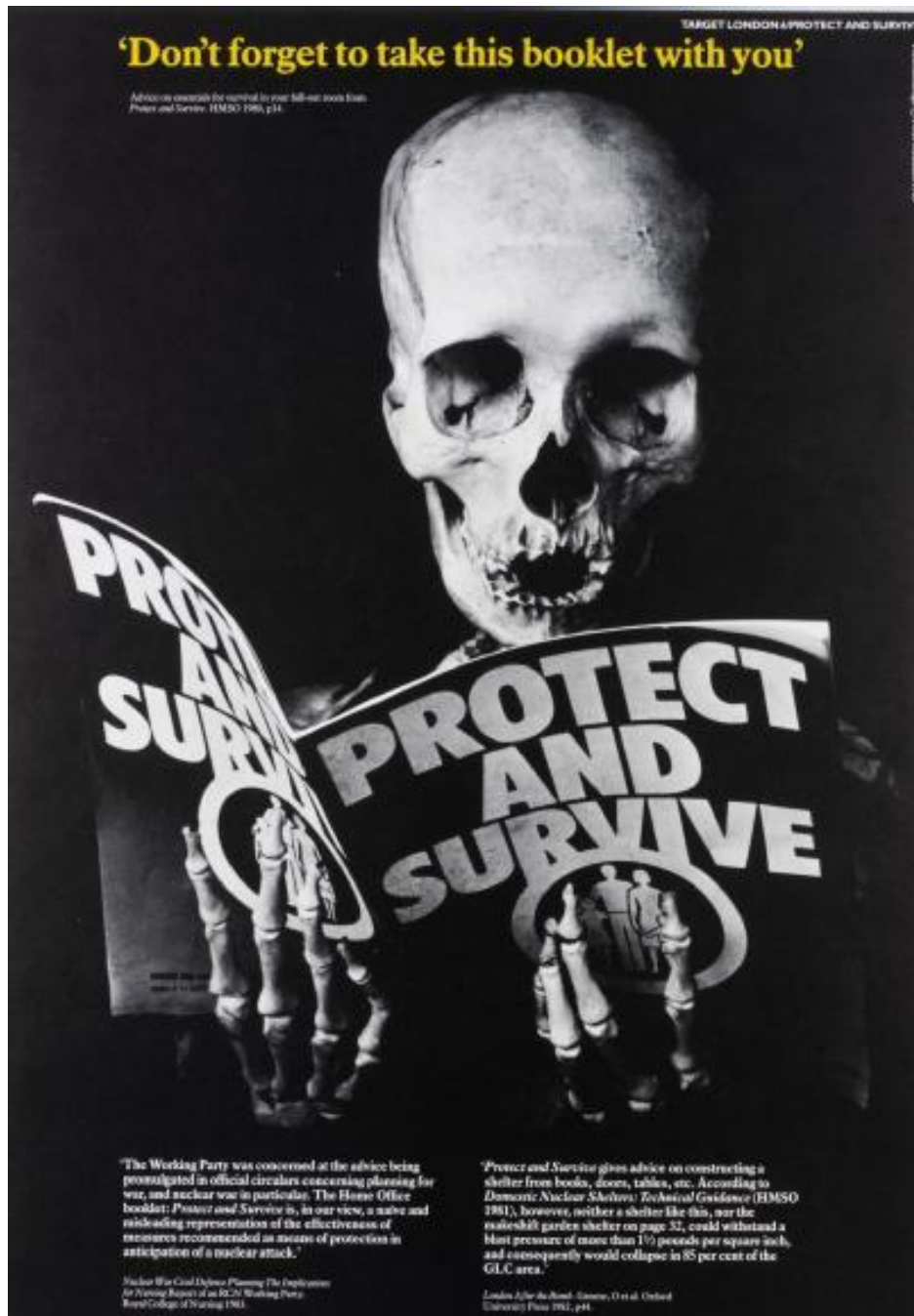
Appendix E

Protect and Survive
(1980) HMSO/COI

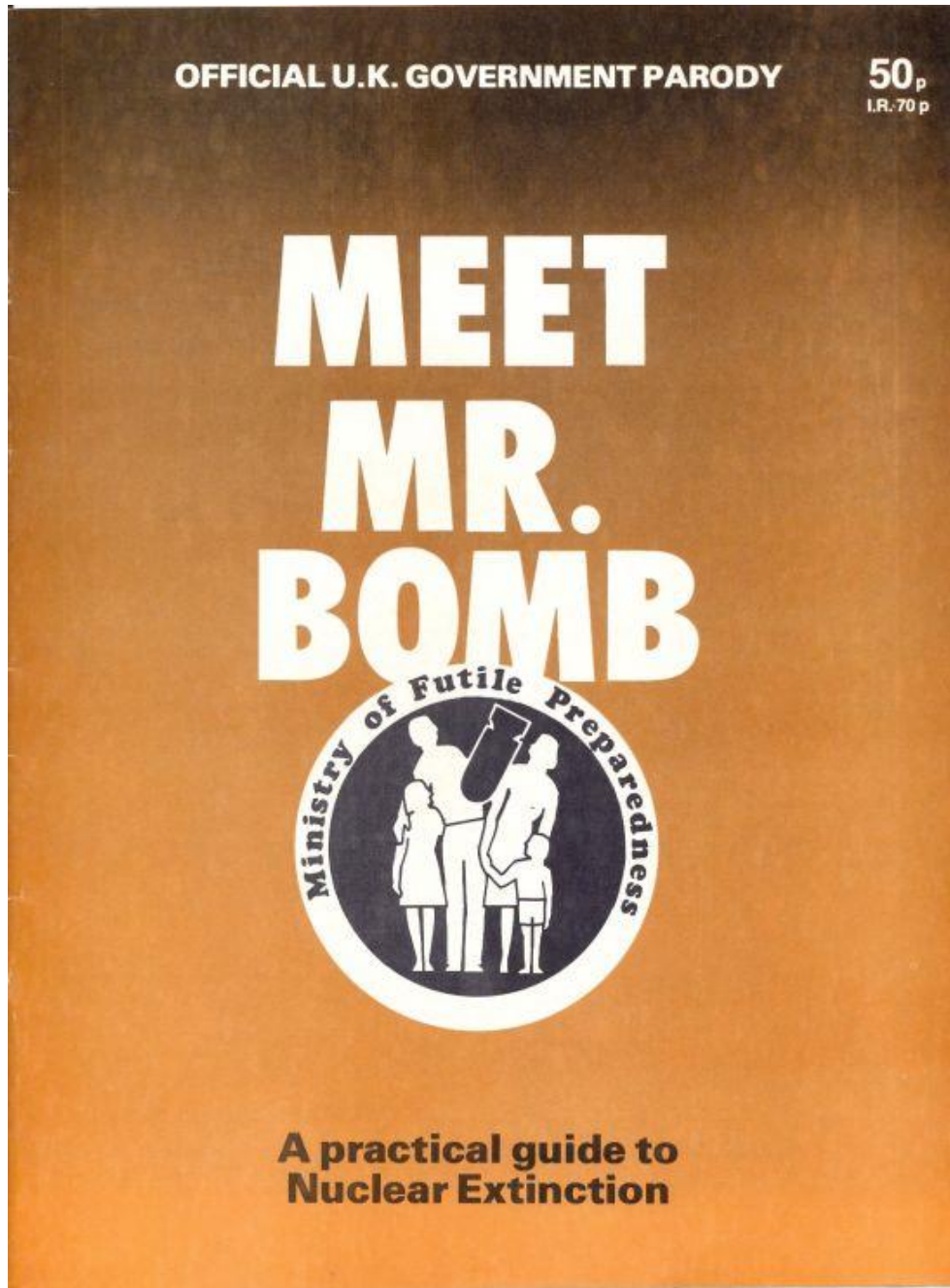


Appendix F

Protect and Survive by Peter Kennard
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Meet Mr Bomb
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