

1982**Civil Defence: The Cruellest Confidence Trick****Citation:**

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Summary:

Pamphlet from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament which explores the British government's civil defense plans in case of a nuclear attack, concluding that the only true defense against nuclear weapons is to make sure they no longer exist.

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CIVIL DEFENCE:

THE CRUELLEST CONFIDENCE TRICK



By Philip Bolsover

40p

INTRODUCTION

THE GOVERNMENT has produced a pamphlet *Protect and Survive* which purports to provide us all with a do-it-yourself guide to survival in nuclear war. The sale of this pamphlet is on one hand a careful political move at a time when efforts are being made to work up a renewal of the cold war; and on the other hand a mass confidence trick, a public fraud of the most heartless kind because it deals in human lives.

For years now many people have, despite CND warnings, accustomed themselves to "living with the Bomb". Most of us have not admitted to ourselves that we might actually die with the Bomb. Nuclear weapons – always more of them, always getting bigger – have been a cloud on the far horizon, real, but not so real that people were forced to look at them steadily, to see what they could do to each one of us. Even if we had to accept the Bomb we could forget about it – a state of affairs that corresponds closely to the wishes of successive governments, Labour and Tory.

Now, suddenly, all that is changed. The Government is admitting that millions of us must die if there is a nuclear war. The Home Office writes off those millions; they cannot be saved. But, says the official pamphlet, some people may live if, having survived blast and fire, they protect themselves in home-made shelters against radioactive fallout. The pamphlet's advice is mostly concerned with fallout, which appears to be the Government's main problem. But how many of us can be saved by the pitiful arrangements that it recommends. How many will be contaminated inside the shelters; how many will be affected if they emerge for even a few minutes? How many will appear unaffected after an attack, but will, in fact, be in the first stages of a lingering death?

Before we go further let it be clear that we of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament have our own very different views of protection and survival – views that are winning rapidly growing support. They can be put briefly:

We are convinced that you to whom this pamphlet is addressed can survive only if Britain ceases to be the world's most tempting and vulnerable target (packed into this island we have more nuclear bases than any other country in the world, except, perhaps the two super-powers). This means two things:

- 1. We must throw away our costly, terribly dangerous nuclear weapons.**
- 2. We must tell the Americans we are not stupid enough to remain their advanced nuclear base; that we will not allow them to make our country a target by basing H-bombers, Cruise missiles and nuclear-armed submarines here. Who are they to sentence us to death? What are we to allow it?**

The Government would maintain that these proposals are not realistic. Mrs Thatcher might say in her best captain-of-the-school voice that they are wet. The Defence Minister and his generals would call them mad.

But these people want us to sit under our tables to protect ourselves against H-bombs that have the power of millions of tons of dynamite. That idea is not so much wet as waterlogged. They want us to hide under wooden doors propped against walls that may collapse. They tell us to cower behind barricades of books, bits of furniture, clothing or rags, while all about us chaos reigns and the whole social system falls in ruins. Listen for a moment. Do we hear peals of maniac laughter echoing down the corridors of Whitehall? The Home Office has not yet told the heads of families to take a fiddle under the table – to play, perhaps, at being Nero. Not yet. But we are actually advised to take toys, magazines and a pack of cards, and to tell each other stories. Let us, then, be in tune with official policy – who not a fiddle.

To this ultimate lunacy we have come now, and, of course, must come once we have taken the first step toward the madhouse – the creation of nuclear bases in our small, overcrowded island. That is the point: we must inevitably and logically end crouching under that table if we begin with Polaris bases and nuclear bombers. It is a straight road, coming soon to terror, agony and mountains of corpses.

Looked at from the official point of view it has a certain wild logic: you have nuclear bombs (that's the beginning) so you have to run from other peoples bombs. So you must have shelters. But you can't shelter the whole population. So people must build their own shelters. But people are not expert enough to build shelters, nor do they have the right materials. So why not a room, its doors barred with furniture, its windows blocked with more furniture, bags of sand (to put our heads in?), old clothing, any old thing. And inside this room a table "strengthened" with more books, clothing and sand. Or a door leaning against the wall (Why not, in the end, an even tighter space – a coffin, perhaps?).

The Government and its officials say they are trying to save us; they want some people to survive. This is rather like the captain and officers of a ship, who, having whistled up a terrible storm, push the crew into the waves and then fling matchboxes to them with the assurance that though most will drown a few will be saved if they build a little raft. Of course the situation would have been different if in the first place the crew had stopped them whistling – perhaps by extracting teeth.

"There is a persistently determined minority of 'experts' in the United States (and probably also in the Soviet Union) whose answer to these threats is an extensive programme of 'protection' of population and industry – fallout and blast shelters, underground installations, massive evacuation plans etc. . . . Since I consider this approach to be implausible, unattainable and a dangerous delusion, I shall devote no further attention to the effects of so-called civilian defence on the consequences of nuclear war."

Prof. Bernard T. Feld, Editor-in-Chief of the Atomic Scientists Bulletin and Professor of Physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in a 1976 article "The Consequences of Nuclear War".

The Government must indeed hope that its Home Defence plans will enable some people to survive. That is praiseworthy enough. But it also hopes to do something else – and this is not praiseworthy; it is wicked. It hopes to accustom us to the idea of nuclear war; to persuade us that individually we will live even though others die. Nuclear death can happen to others, but not to you. The manufacture of this atmosphere is as much a preparation for war, as is manufacture of a hydrogen bomb.

While this pamphlet is being written a full scale publicity campaign is in progress to prepare us for the final catastrophe: to convince us that after all it will not be so catastrophic. This is a deliberate softening process. To achieve this unhappy end television programmes are appearing, radio interviews are broadcast, and suddenly newspaper articles are published all over the country. Parliament is being used for the same purpose, with debates in the Lords and the Commons and frequent questions to the Government.

In the House of Commons debate (21 February, 1980) Mr Leon Brittan, Minister of State, Home Office, mentioned one reason for the campaign, and it had more to do with preparing for war than saving life. It was essential, he said, that “civil preparedness should be adequate if the credibility of the military deterrent strategy was to be maintained. Military and civil preparedness was closely related” (*Times*, 22 February, 1980).

In fact much of the Government’s thinking is, as it has 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 – 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 – 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 – his sign of victory.

the nuclear super powers. Twenty and 25 megaton bombs are available, bombs of up to 65 megatons have been tested, according to the Home Office booklet Nuclear Weapons.

After the Explosion

At this point it is worth while to quote from a CND publication *Civil Defence and Nuclear War*. This gives an account of the effects of fire and blast based on the Civil Defence Manual Pamphlet No.1 and on the US Department of Defence book *Effects of Nuclear Weapons*. It was written some years ago, but it applies with equal truth today:

“Fire and blast can best be described by supposing that a 10 megaton bomb has exploded on the ground at King’s Cross station, and we are ~~travelling~~ towards London from the outside. We might see the first damage to houses as far away as Peterborough and Southampton, 80 miles away, where the windows would be smashed. At Luton, Chelmsford, Guildford and Maidstone, 30 miles away, doors and windows would be blown in and interior partitions cracked. At St Albans, Slough, Sevenoaks and Brentwood, 20 miles away, we would begin to see debris in the roads. At Epping, Watford, Uxbridge, Epsom and Dartford, 15 miles away a few houses would be burning, and people who had been out in the open at the time of the explosion would be seriously or fatally burned by the heat-flash of the explosion.

“At Romford, Waltham Abbey, Stanmore, Harrow, Surbiton and Chislehurst, 12 miles away, the main fire zone would begin. Inside this zone, 24 miles across, almost every building exposed to the heat-flash would have been set on fire at the moment of the explosion. There would be so much blast damage that it would be difficult to make our way along the streets even if there were no fires. People who had been in the open in this area when the bomb exploded would have been charred by the flash.

“Mass fires would stop us going any further into this area. Inside, there would be increasing blast damage, and in the ring bounded by Tottenham, Highgate, Fulham and Greenwich, five miles away from the explosion, all houses would have collapsed and the streets would be impassable until cleared by bulldozer. The area from Hampstead to Stepney and from Stoke Newington to Battersea, seven miles across, would be completely flattened, a mass of dust and rubble.

“King’s Cross itself would be in the middle of a crater nearly a mile wide and deep enough to hold Nelson’s Column and to penetrate the deepest part of the London Underground.

“As far as Nottingham, Birmingham, Bristol and Bournemouth (100-150 miles away) anyone who had been looking in the direction of the explosion when it happened would have had their eyesight permanently damaged because the lens of the eye focuses the heat-flash on the sensitive lining of the eye, burning a hole in it.

“The enormous number of separate fires that would be started simultaneously over hundreds of square miles would not stay isolated.

In the big fire raids of World War II when thousands of incendiaries were dropped on Hamburg, Tokyo, Dresden and other cities, the fires all joined together to make a single holocaust or 'fire storm'. These huge pillars of fire caused winds of up to 150 mph, strong enough to uproot trees, to rush in towards the burning area. Only the contents of basements escaped burning. People caught in the street in the fire storm were soon burned to death. The fate of people in fireproof shelters was not much better. The air that they breathed had to come in from the street, and the temperature of that air was 1,400 degrees Fahrenheit, or nearly as hot as molten glass. This forced some people to rush out of the shelters into the flames outside. Others were killed by carbon monoxide, a poisonous gas produced by the enormous fire. The fires burned for days and some areas were so hot that they could not be entered for weeks. Even then, the insides of some shelters burst into flames when they were forced open, and some were even red-hot."

The Fire Storm

The Hamburg fire storm was investigated immediately after the war by American scientists, who took evidence from inhabitants of the city. Here is an extract from the *US Strategic Bombing Survey* of October 1945:

"... Incendiary bombs started fires which spread . . . The heat increased rapidly and produced a wind which soon was of the power and strength of a typhoon. This typhoon first moved in the direction of the fires, later spreading in all directions. In the public squares and parks it broke trees, and burning branches shot through the air. Trees of all sizes were uprooted. The fire storm broke down doors of houses and later the flames crept into the doorways and corridors. The fire storm looked like a blizzard of red snowflakes . . .

"The first serious danger in houses which had not been hit and had withstood explosions nearby became apparent when the lights went out, water stopped running and cracks formed in the walls . . . In the course of hours, the air in the shelters became increasingly worse.

"Matches or candles did not burn. People lay on the floor because the air was better there and they could breathe easier. Some vomited and became incoherent. Some became tired and quiet and went to sleep . . . Wherever the ventilators were working they brought in hot smoky air instead of cool fresh air, so that they had to be turned off. Filters, when available, proved insufficient to keep out smoke . . .

"Whoever was still able to make his own decision had one of two alternatives: to stay or to escape. Many looked into the streets, saw that everything was on fire, decided that they could not get through and withdrew into the corners of the shelters. Some tried to get out of the burning areas, and for them it was a race with death . . .

"Many were caught in the fire. Many stated that the air 'just didn't come any more' and breathing became very difficult. Otherwise, they did not feel anything, and the rest went over those who had fallen . . . The dead normally lay with their faces toward the ground. Many were lying in rows. Only a very few who had fallen got up by their own effort or with the help of others . . .

Every possibility of escaping the fire storm behind rubble or remaining walls or corners was kept in mind. This was evident by the number of corpses found behind these ledges and corners . . .”

The firestorm at Hamburg killed 60,000 people and affected only six square miles. The Tokyo fire, which burned to death 84,000 people in a few hours, covered 16 square miles. In the Dresden fire storm 135,000 people perished in an area of 11 square miles. What would happen, then, in an area of London 24 miles across, covering more than 400 square miles that a 10-megaton bomb would affect?

Some Government experts have maintained that because houses would shield each other from heat rays a nuclear explosion over a British city would not cause a fire storm. This is not true. The heat from a nuclear explosion is reflected by clouds and diffused by the dust and mist that are always in the atmosphere, so that it appears to come from every direction at once. It is quite possible to be fatally burned by the flash of a nuclear explosion even if you are sheltering behind a brick wall, and it is possible for houses to be set on fire even if they are not in the direct line of the explosion. Other experts have said that in the flattened area there would be nothing left to burn. Very comforting. If you are blown to pieces with your house you can't be burned to death! Hiroshima was flattened, but a fire storm raged there for six hours, burning everything combustible within two kilometres. More than 70 per cent of the appliances of the Hiroshima Fire Brigade were destroyed by the blast; 80 per cent of the personnel were unavailable for duty. Collapsing buildings fractured water pipes and reduced water pressure almost to nil.

Even if the flattened area of London or any other city escaped a fire storm, what of the thickly populated ring round the edge of the devastated area, where thousands of fires would be started as they were started in Hamburg, Tokyo and Dresden? What of the fire storms there, where all those families, pathetically faithful to the Government's instructions, would be huddled under their tables, surrounded by their inflammable piles of books, magazines, piles of clothing and bits of furniture?

Is it worse to die by radiation or fire, or to be blown to bits by blast? Who knows? Who cares? But we have a choice sometimes, if we follow the instructions of our wise Government. If we are dutiful citizens we will die in the Home Office way, and make sure that our children do the same.

An American investigator, Dr Robert Jay Lifton, interviewed a number of Hiroshima survivors. One of them was an electrician working at a railway station about three miles from the centre of the explosion; he crawled from under a locomotive and tried to take a badly injured man on his bicycle to hospital: “. . . but I couldn't move my bicycle because of all the people coming from Hiroshima and blocking the way . . . I saw that they were all naked and I wondered what was the matter with them.” In fact, the clothes had been burned off them, and the skin was hanging in strips from their bodies; it came away like a glove if they were touched. Most of them died later from radiation, burns and shock. The electrician went back to his post at the railway station: “There were dead bodies everywhere. There was practically no room for me to put my feet on the floor . . . At that time I couldn't figure out the reason why all these people were suffering or what illness it was that

had struck them down . . . I was the only person taking care of the place as all the rest of the people had gone.”

The psychological shock was almost as great as the physical one. People felt as though they had been separated from life. A Protestant minister said: “The feeling I had was that everyone was dead. The whole city was destroyed . . . I thought all of my family must be dead – it doesn’t matter if I die . . . I thought this was the end of Hiroshima – of Japan – of humankind . . . This was God’s judgement on man . . .”

And a woman, Yoko Ota: “I thought it might have been something which had nothing to do with the war, the collapse of the earth which it was said would take place at the end of the world and which I had read about as a child.”

Dr Hachiya describes in *Hiroshima Diary* the scene on the outskirts of Hiroshima: “Those who were able walked silently toward the suburbs in the distant hills, their spirits broken, their initiative gone. When asked whence they had come, they pointed to the city and said, ‘That way’: and when asked where they were going, pointed away from the city and said, ‘This way’. They were so broken and confused that they moved and behaved like automatons.”

Then there was “the constant smell of dead bodies” not only from the corpses lying around, but also from the general odour of mass cremation.

Dr Lifton found “there was a widespread sense that life and death were out of phase with one another, no longer properly distinguishable – which lent an aura of weirdness and unreality to the entire city.” “Death in Life” Dr Lifton called his book, and the phrase does describe those poor people, surrounded by death and the smell of death, themselves only half alive in their own world of mind-numbing shock and terror. Soon most of them were indeed to die.

All this from a “small” bomb, a mini-bomb with the power of a mere 12,000 tons of TNT. Let us not forget that the equivalent of 13,000 such bombs may drop on this country according to the official estimate, which is likely to be an underestimate. To what distraction and madness will people be driven by the megaton bomb with the power of a million tons of TNT? Or the five or 10 or 25 megaton bomb?

THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS

WHAT ARE the Government's plans for civil defence in this situation?

There are to be no official shelters – except the deep one into which the Government itself will scuttle, and those for the regional and sub-regional seats of local government.

“Senior officials have never known such close ministerial interest in their ‘doomsday’ activities. Mrs Margaret Thatcher has already been through the steps she would have to take to launch a Polaris missile strike in response to a Russian nuclear attack on the United Kingdom.”

Times, 26 February, 1980.

Lord Belstead, who has charge of civil defence affairs in the Home Office, said a national system of official shelters would “cost billions and billions and billions of pounds”. A civil defence college memorandum was a little more prosaic: “Although a specially designed comprehensive shelter scheme would undoubtedly afford additional protection against radioactive fallout for those whose homes did not have adequate protection, it is not at present considered a practicable proposition to provide communal shelters for this country, chiefly on grounds of expense”. And, of course, there is no plan for the evacuation of people from large populated areas – for the very good reason that there is no safe place to which people can be evacuated.

Air Marshall Sir Leslie Mayor, principal of the Home Defence College, described the Government's assumptions in a talk to a NATO civil defence training seminar in May, 1977. The chances were, he said, that those parts of the country holding no nuclear targets would come through “more or less” undamaged by blast or fire. Their difficulties would be caused by fallout radiation, a large influx of refugees, survival without external supplies of food, energy, raw materials, finished products, and other resources, and physical, social and economic isolation . . . The main target areas would be so badly knocked about as to be beyond effective self-help . . . Between those extremes would be areas which, although hard-hit, would not have suffered a technical knockout and would stand on a knife-edge between recovery and collapse.

As an official, Sir Leslie was naturally putting the best possible face on the situation, but even so, what a picture he paints of a country in its last desperate agony. One could agree with him and the Government that mass evacuation would be useless, that a national system of air raid shelters would be ruinously expensive, and that people might as well stay at home. But that all adds up to an admission

that there is no defence, and with that admission there is only one logical alternative: get rid of the nuclear weapons that make us a target.

One of the Government's assumptions is that 30 million of Britain's 55 million people would survive if civil defence precautions were adopted. In the first place this figure is a pure guess, intended to "reassure" the population; in the second, it covers only the period of the actual attack and immediately afterwards; but how many more millions would die later from radiation sickness, disease and starvation?

The second main assumption is based on a gamble — that there will be a warning period of three or four weeks before any attack. This, again, is a guess. The period in the Cuba crisis was a matter of days, not weeks. It could be hours or even minutes. And what happens if there is an error, human or technical, in a nuclear defence installation? In November, 1979, a computer error in an American military headquarters set off a war game tape that simulated a massive Soviet nuclear attack and started alarm bells ringing in US nuclear forces all over the world, including Britain. The error was discovered just in time to stop US and British missiles from being fired — and if they had been despatched the Soviet reply would have hit Britain within minutes. An error on either the Soviet or the American side would inevitably draw in Britain because a significant proportion of the missiles would be fired from here.

"The world-wide computer network on which the Pentagon relies to keep track of its own and Soviet forces has a failure rate of between 40 and 85 per cent."

Guardian, reporting an official US Government study on military computers.

Commenting on the November incident, Bruce Blair, a Brookings Institute defence analyst and former US missile launch officer, prophesied more nuclear false alarms. *The Observer* reported (2 March, 1980): "He estimates that cases in which computer errors spark nuclear alerts occur 'every couple of years'. While on active duty in late 1973 Blair lived through such an incident. A Soviet test missile was launched from Tyuratam, near Iran, and the US defence computer predicted it would land in California. It actually landed in Kamchatka, Siberia, but not before a nuclear alert went out to all ICBM and SAC bases."

Give the Government the benefit of the doubt. Let us assume that there is a long warning period. During the preliminary period of three or four weeks during which war leaders bargain and bicker before the final act, the Government's policy, it says, would be to allay public concern and strictly control all news while at the same time activating the civil defence apparatus. The country would be divided into regions and sub-regions, each with an underground headquarters (the Government itself would, of course, have a super-safe headquarters).

During the three days immediately before an attack, television and radio services would be replaced by an official broadcasting service. There would be a massive publicity campaign. Films and radio tapes, previously prepared, would instruct

people how to make shelters in their homes. People would be told not to leave their houses (but some officials think that thousands would take to the hills).

During the last 24 to 48 hours the Government would hand over authority to local commissioners. The commissioner would usually be the chief executive of the local authority, and he would have dictatorial powers, including the power to execute people. The sub-regional headquarters would co-ordinate rescue services as far as possible. They would announce the location of bombs falling in their areas, and, with the help of monitoring posts, would plot the direction of radioactive fallout. They would also be in touch with the police and military for control of the population – by forcible means, if necessary, including firearms.

So the regional seats of government and the sub-regions would be ready, with the administrators and the allotted quota of experts all comfortably settled in their deep bunkers (they would have been persuaded to leave their families to face fire, blast and radiation above ground).

Doomsday Refuge

The Government's official pamphlet *Protect and Survive* would have been circulated in record time. Let us look a little more closely at what those underground leaders and administrators would have you do as doomsday approaches.

You must stay at home (even if your house is the kind that would shake in a high wind). If you run away the local authority of the area into which you run will not help you with accommodation, food or any other essential – and your house may be requisitioned.

You must make a fallout room to protect you against radioactivity; and you must build an inner refuge within that room.

You choose the place furthest from the roof and the outer walls (you must not, of course, be living at the top of a house in a bedsitter with a window). The pamphlet continues:

“The further you can get within your home, from the radioactive dust that is on or around it, the safer you will be . . . Even the safest room in your house is not safe enough, however. You will need to block up the windows in your room, and any other openings, and to make the outside walls thicker, and also to thicken the floor above you to provide the strongest possible protection against the penetration of radiation. Thick, dense materials are best, and bricks, concrete or building blocks, timber, boxes of earth, sand, books and furniture might all be used.”

In passing, the pamphlet remarks that if you live in the top two floors of any block of flats more than five storeys high you'd better move out. No hope for you there. But how many thousands of people live in flats above the third storey? You are one of thousands living in a bungalow? “It will not give much protection”, says the pamphlet candidly. You'd better get out before radiation gets in.

After you have made your fallout room you are a long way from safety: “Still greater protection is necessary . . . you should build an inner refuge”. So you lean two or three doors against the wall, and on top of these you pile “bags or boxes of earth or sand or books or even clothing”. Before you wriggle into the space below

you partly close the two open ends with boxes of earth or sand or heavy furniture”.

Or you can use a table inside your fallout room. Surround it and “cover it with heavy furniture, boxes of sand, earth, books or clothing – then crawl under it and stay there for at least 48 hours”. If it happens that there are stairs in your fallout room and if, by a lucky stroke, there is a cupboard under the stairs, you don’t have to bother about the table and you don’t need to remove the doors from your other rooms. You put bags of earth or sand on the stairs and along the wall to strengthen the wall outside in the same way to the height of six feet”.

A BBC *Panorama* team making a programme on civil defence (broadcast on 10 March, 1980) followed the Government’s instructions. They found that the householder would need 100 bags or similar containers, strength enough to lift a ton of earth, and a number of floor joists to take the weight. You’d better start training now. If you are old or sick don’t bother; just be quiet and wait for death in an orderly way.

Before you retire into your fallout room you will have done a few little preliminary jobs. You’ll have removed anything inflammable from the rest of the house – except, of course, where it is lying on the floor above your fallout room to protect you, or where it is placed on the staircase or around your inner shelter (no, of course it won’t catch fire there). Throw everything else out – there’s a danger from heat and blast. You will remove net curtains or thin material from windows, but leave heavy curtains, for they may protect you from flying glass. Yes, they may burn more fiercely than net curtains, but you can’t have everything, can you. You will have coated each window with light coloured emulsion paint. And you’ll have a fire extinguisher handy – oh, and buckets of water and more sand on each floor.

Well, that’s the inside of the house done. Now you’ll have to go round the outside, moving away any inflammable material, including all that stuff you threw out of the windows when you did your rounds inside.

You must, the Government tells you, be prepared to live in the fallout room with your family for 14 days, after you have been under your table or your doors for 48 hours. Water is the first essential; you’ll need three-and-a-half gallons for each person, but “you should try to stock twice as much water as you’ll need for drinking, so that you will have enough for washing”. If there is any water in your taps it is likely to be contaminated by radioactivity, and boiling it will not help. You must stock up well: “Store extra water in the bath, in basins and in other containers”. You’ll have a choice here; you can take the bath with you into the fallout room (and under the table?) or you can leave it where it is and risk contamination when you dart out of your refuge to scoop up a quick pail full. The same choice applies presumably to the lavatory, for you are told you should use the water there for drinking and washing. You make your own toilet arrangements – buckets and bags in the fallout room.

You must have a stock of food for 14 days: “choose foods that can be eaten cold . . . keep your stocks in a closed cabinet or cupboard”. Or under the table? Being farsighted, you’ll have done well in competition for food with millions of other families; and you’ll have got ahead of the others to acquire your cement,

sand, bags and timber, even if prices have shot sky high.

The list of things you must take into your room and under your table is too long to detail here . . . bedding, sleeping bags, clothing, more sand, crockery, a portable stove, saucepans, first aid kit, portable radio with spare batteries, cleaning materials . . . You should also take some of those inflammable magazines. Toys and games. A clock and a calendar – so that you can check the number of days you’ve managed to live. And a notebook for messages. Messages? To whom? To the people who’ve died before you or those who’ll go after you?

There will be an interval between the blast from the bomb and the descent of radioactive fallout. This, remarks the pamphlet, gives you a chance to do a few quick, last minute tasks:

“Go round the house and put out any small fires . . . if anyone’s clothing has caught fire, lay them on the floor and roll them in a blanket . . .”

You draw the curtains (if they’re not on fire), turn off gas, electricity and water (if it’s night time the light from the fires will no doubt give you plenty of illumination as you go round the house). “Do not flush the lavatories, but store the clean water they contain by taping the handles or removing the chains”. Now check your list of articles for the fallout room (“see list of survival items”).

You’re pretty busy and perhaps a bit out of breath, but if your house has been knocked about a bit by blast you may still have some time “to do minor repair jobs to keep out the weather – using curtains or sheets to cover broken windows or holes”.

That’s a good job done. Now, before the roof falls in, you can go into your fallout room and make for the table.

Finally, very finally, there’s a matter about which the pamphlet has, understandably, been silent so far. But we come to it near the end. It is the question of death. Of bodies and how to get rid of them: “. . . place the body in another room and cover it as securely as possible. Attach an identification. You should receive radio instructions on what to do next. If no instructions have been given within five days, you should temporarily bury the body as soon as it is safe to go out, and mark the spot”. (On the other hand, the BBC *Panorama* programme said bodies would be placed at the side of the road after five days, and there would be twice daily collections – almost like the post.)

THE "SURVIVORS"

NO ONE ASSUMES that everybody in Britain will immediately be killed in a nuclear attack. Many will still be living after that first blow (though a greater number will have started on a short cut to death; the poison will be working inexorably within them). These, presumably, are the people to whom the civil defence authorities refer when they calculate that millions will "survive".

Let us stretch a point and suppose that a large section of the population – an able bodied, vigorous section – has managed to construct the fallout shelters recommended by the Government. The bombs have dropped. Millions of people near the centres of the explosions have been blown to pieces in their shelters. Millions more at work, in the streets or in public transport have been killed. That is the first phase – the annihilation of millions, with or without shelters, in a few seconds.

Then the second phase: the deadly fallout, the burning towns and villages, the chaos, the spreading disease, the starvation. Nobody can estimate the death-roll in this phase, but it could be as great as in the first.

It used to be thought that in the more remote areas of the country, or in some corners protected by hills and other natural features, the inhabitants would be free from danger. But it is now admitted that this assumption is no longer valid.

"I think that what we have to tell them will scare the pants off them . . . What we are asking councillors to envisage is so appalling that they will have difficulty in accepting it."

Bernard Brook-Partridge, chairman of the Greater London Council's public services and safety committee, before a GLC seminar on the nuclear threat to London, attended by 50 councillors in November, 1978.

Home Office documents issued for restricted circulation to local authorities, chiefs of police forces, health authorities and a few other organisations, have been more candid than *Protect and Survive*, which is addressed to us, the potential victims. For instance, an annex to Home Office circular *Public Survival Under Fallout Conditions* (ES10/1974) says:

"It is predicted from various possible patterns of nuclear attack on the United Kingdom that there would be extensive and overlapping areas of heavy fallout in which the early radiation intensity (measured as the dose rate in the air) might be of the order of thousands rather than hundreds of roentgens per hour . . . Whereas it used to be considered that the area of high intensity would be relatively small and would be surrounded by large tracts of comparatively unaffected territory, the present assumption is that over a large part of the

country there would be no such areas readily accessible to those who found themselves in the worst affected places. People wishing to move could rarely be given sensible advice on how or where they could go."

If you are wondering what the phrase "thousands rather than hundreds of roentgens per hour" means to your health the Home Office booklet *Nuclear Weapons* tells you that the whole body dose which will give you a 50-50 chance of survival "lies somewhere between 350 roentgens and 550 roentgens if the dose is received quickly within the space of an hour or two". The booklet rules that "a War Emergency Dose (WED) of 75 roentgens will be the maximum permissible in the execution of essential operational tasks..." but "persons engaged on vital tasks may undertake a second period of duty, which could involve an additional WED of 75 roentgens, making a maximum dose of 150 roentgens, provided there is a rest period of eight hours between the two periods of duty".

The booklet adds:

"Persons who have remained in shelter for several days and who have accumulated radiation doses while in shelter, may undertake essential tasks, provided that the total dose acquired in shelter and in performing the task does not exceed 150 roentgens, on the condition that this maximum dose of 150 roentgens is acquired over a period not exceeding seven days."

There is an enormous difference between this and the safety rules for radiological workers in peace time. A Home Defence College data sheet says:

"In peace time, in order to avoid possible long-term genetic and other effects, radiological workers are restricted to an average dose not exceeding 0.1 rads per week – not exceeding 3 rads per 13 weeks and not exceeding 5 rads per year."

(*Nuclear Weapons* notes that "for home defence purposes the rad and the roentgen can be regarded as the same.")

The first symptoms of radiation poisoning are headache, nausea, dizziness and frequent vomiting, then acute diarrhoea and fatigue. This lasts several days and is followed by apparent recovery. But two or three weeks later the symptoms return, together with internal haemorrhaging. Breathing becomes difficult, hair falls out, sores appear under and on the skin; there is fever, total fatigue and finally death. Of course the severity of the disease will vary according to the amount of radiation absorbed, and some people may make what appears at the time to be a complete recovery.

But the long-term effects can be equally deadly. They include, according to *Nuclear Weapons*, "anaemia, leukaemia (a form of blood cancer developing three to six years after exposure) as well as tumours and cancers of the bones or tissues which may develop much later". Then there are the long-term genetic effects, resulting in weak, malformed and short-lived children and finally, the radiation victim's lowered resistance to all diseases, and, in many cases his complete dependence on other people and his perpetual fear that the slightest illness could mean death.

In March, 1977, 32 years after the two small atomic bombs dropped on Hiro-

Hima and Nagasaki, there were still 366,523 people registered as Hibakusha – sufferers from the effects of the bombs. One may well ask what would happen if the equivalent of 13,000 such bombs dropped in Britain.

A Home Office circular (HDC (77) 1) on *Preparation and Organisation of the Health Service for War*, issued in January, 1977, to Regional and Area Health Authorities, said:

“... it may be assumed that the greater part of the country would be covered in varying degrees by plumes of highly radioactive dust, in many cases overlapping . . . For the first 48 hours after an attack, therefore, little or no life-saving activity would be possible, except on the most limited self-help basis . . .”

The circular warns that general life-saving operations in areas of fallout might not be possible “until days or even weeks after a nuclear strike”. It admits that there are many possible targets in rural areas, and “No part of the country can therefore be assumed to be safe both from attack and from radioactive fallout from attacks elsewhere”. Moreover, “A single attack could therefore destroy the greater part of a Health Authority’s resources or render them temporarily inaccessible because of radioactivity or the blocking of roads”.

Those people who survive the first phase of blast and fire – what kind of world will they find when they crawl out of their shelters? What will happen to them?

First of all, they will not know whether they are truly alive or merely in the first stage of slow death from the poison that has fallen and is still falling. Even if they do not yet feel pain is the corruption working already in the bones, in the blood? That universal question, after the first devastating impact of nuclear explosions, may well numb the spirit and paralysise the minds of millions.

“In the event of a nuclear war there will be no chances, there will be no survivors – all will be obliterated . . . I am not asserting this without having deeply thought about the matter. When I was Chief of the British Defence Staff I made my views known. I have heard the arguments against this view, but I have never found them convincing. So I repeat in all sincerity as a military man I can see no use for any nuclear weapons which would not end in escalation, with consequences that no one can conceive . . . As a military man who has given half a century of active service I say in all sincerity that the nuclear arms race has no military purpose. Wars cannot be fought with nuclear weapons.”

Lord Louis Mountbatten in a speech at Strasbourg, 11 May, 1979.

In the countryside the land will be contaminated, many of the animals already sick and dying (farmers have been told to milk their cows before an attack!). The natural web of life, of which we with the animals, crops and vegetation are a part and on which we depend for existence, will have been torn apart. In the towns, sewage will be disrupted; some of the human excreta from the millions forbidden to use the lavatories in their homes will have been buried, but a great part will not.

Rotting human and animal bodies will await collection in many places – it is not easy to cremate millions of bodies.

Disease will be spreading rapidly, unimpeded, for the most part, by medical action because the hospitals that have not been destroyed will be unable to cope with the mass of injuries and sickness. It will be dangerous to drink water that has not been covered. Water mains in many areas will not be working, for pumps depend on electricity and the national electricity grid will have been disrupted. Many survivors will have no light, no heat, because oil and gas will be cut off.

Food and all other commodities will be scarce because manufacture will have stopped, farms will be contaminated and ports closed. People will be starving. There will be little transport, no newspapers to tell us what is happening beyond our immediate surroundings – though arrangements have been made for an official broadcasting service and we may hear a government voice telling us to obey orders and keep quiet. Secure, 50 feet below ground, the official few will be governing, even if, as one television commentator has said, there are only cinders to govern.

The Official View

Is this picture exaggerated? Well, let's see what the Home Office says, remembering that its estimates are usually cautious.

HEALTH SERVICE: The circulars quoted above indicate that the Health Service would be disrupted. Circular HDC (77) 1 says that even before an attack many patients would be sent home, and discharge should not be held up “merely because home conditions were not ideal or could not be checked”. The circular adds: “It might be expected that the number of patients to be discharged would be of the following order: maternity cases 70 per cent, sick children 70 per cent, acute cases 60 per cent, non-active infections and chest cases 50 per cent, psychiatric cases 15 per cent, convalescents 100 per cent”. All staff not required to operate an emergency service would be sent home – but where and how would they be reassembled? “After an attack, the number of casualties might be quite beyond the resources of existing health services”. Trained health service staff “should not be wasted by allowing them to enter areas of high contamination where casualties would, in any case, have small chance of long-term recovery”. Hospitals should accept only those casualties who would “be likely to be alive after seven days with a fair chance of eventual recovery . . . People suffering from radiation sickness only should not be admitted. There is no specific treatment for radiation injury . . .” In high casualty areas “no arrangements for the deployment of ambulances could deal adequately with the numbers involved”.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: An annex to Home Office Circular ES 8/1976 *Environmental Health in War*, issued in August, 1976, says “. . . the breakdown of these services, on which most of the public unquestionably rely, would be inevitable over much of the country. Water would not flow from the tap or into the sewage system. Electricity would be cut off, refuse collection would cease. Large numbers of casualties would lie where they died. In such conditions, certain diseases would spread rapidly”. In a passage on “Disposal of human remains” the

circular says: "In choosing sites for the mass graves it would be important to avoid additional contamination of water supplies". After the initial clearance had been made there would still be "an above average rate of dying from disease and radiation effects".

The circular emphasizes the danger of contamination of food and drink in rest centres and emergency feeding centres: "Enteric infections in these overcrowded centres and elsewhere, coupled with lack of proper sanitary facilities, could spread rapidly to assume epidemic proportions". A section on sanitation says: "The drainage of urine and the burying of faeces into the ground, provided these do not lead to an immediate contamination of drinking water, would be infinitely preferable to allowing random distribution over the surface of the ground . . . living conditions would not be conducive to bowel control and regular habits".

A document issued by the Government's Home Defence College at Easingwold, Yorkshire, says: "There would be overcrowding in the remaining habitable accommodation with a rapid increase in fleas, lice, bedbugs and the diseases they spread and an increase in airborne respiratory diseases . . . For some time people would have an inadequate and unbalanced diet, and it would be difficult to maintain satisfactory standards of food hygiene . . . Morale would be low and with it a loss of pride in trying to remain clean and healthy".

FOOD: An annex to Home Office circular ES 1/1979, issued in January, 1979, says: "After nuclear attack food would be scarce, lacking in variety and unevenly distributed throughout the country. It would be prudent to plan on the assumption that no significant food imports would be received for some time, that peacetime systems of food processing and distribution would cease to function . . . no arrangements could ensure that every surviving household would have, say, 14 days supply of food after attack".

The implication that some people would starve is clear in the remark: "Nevertheless, even without food many would survive for quite long periods provided they were not too long without water". (Provided also that the little water available was not contaminated by disease or radioactivity.) The documents conclude with a threat to those who do not follow official instructions. They can starve: "There would be no question of implementing emergency feeding arrangements during the pre-attack period for those persons who chose to ignore the government's advice to stay in their own homes".

"Mr Robin Mead, vice-chairman of Civil Aid, said at a press conference yesterday (13 February, 1980) that after a nuclear attack people would have to take what they could get. 'If you saw a frog running about you would have to wash it down to get rid of active dust, cook it and eat it'."

Times, 14 February, 1980.

WATER: Annex to Home Office Circular 6/1976 issued in June, 1976: "It can be said with absolute assurance that any widespread nuclear attack would quickly disrupt the distribution system for domestic and industrial water, and much of the sewerage system". The document says, astonishingly, that survivors should, for

planning purposes, be deemed to have sufficient water to keep them alive for 14 days after attack. If, in fact, you haven't it's just too bad – officially you'll be living without water.

ENERGY: Annex to Home Office Circular ES5/1976 issued in April, 1976: "For planning purposes it may be assumed that, after a nuclear attack, all energy production and supply would soon cease . . ." With the fall of gas pressure, special arrangements would be necessary to reduce the risk of explosions.

The Horror and the Lunacy

Many more quotations from government circulars could be printed here: they all come to the same thing: an official picture of a devastated country in which, with or without civil defence, a small remaining population, steadily reduced by disease, malnutrition and radiation sickness, exists in a state of semi-barbarism and deep psychological shock.

This is not what the Government wants us to see; it is not what propaganda boosting the civil defence campaign is meant to convey, but it looms, grim and unmistakable, through the fog of official reassurance about "survival". We are not, we cannot be reassured; we see horrors beyond all comfort; we see lunacy; the official voices from Whitehall sound to us like demented howlings from a madhouse. Some of us, listening to these unbelievable plans for our future and our end, despair. A reader writing to the *Guardian* newspaper on 13 March, 1980, said of the TV programmes on civil defence and the contents of *Protect and Survive*:

"Watching these programmes with an increasing feeling of distress and alarm, I realise that if there is to be a nuclear attack I do not want to survive and I do not want my children to survive . . . I do not want us to spend days and weeks behind an improvised and useless screen of sandbags and cushions, probably suffering agonies from radiation burns and sickness, aware that friends, neighbours and countless others are dead and dying.

"And if we were relatively unscathed and did come out after some time from our shelter, whatever sort of world would we find? How could we begin to cope with the destruction and the devastation, the lack of food, water, light, heat, communications, the knowledge of suffering all around, and the certainty that we ourselves were doomed to die, lingeringly and in pain . . .

"My feeling at the moment is that if the unbelievable does happen, I want my preparation for it to be a pill for all of us, quick, painless and final."

We can understand the despair of the woman who wrote this poignant letter.[†] But it would be better if desperation drove her, and thousands like her, to action, organised action against the nuclear weapons that threaten us all and all our children.

Most civil defence workers are, of course, sincere and public spirited people. What many of them do not realise is that civil defence preparations in a country that has definitely committed nuclear arms to one of the two great alliances – NATO or the Warsaw Pact – are an important part of the arms race. "We have to do it to show that we intend to fight", said a speaker in one TV programme. Precisely. This is one part of the government and military view. Another part is that "we" have to do it to persuade people that nuclear war is not so bad as they think, that they may, after all, survive. We are being told that the Soviet Union has wide-

spread civil defence arrangements and that therefore she is preparing for war — so we, too, must be prepared. But let us not forget that our preparations are seen by the Soviet Union as a threat — so they too must be prepared. With these escalating moves goes a race to increase the power, accuracy and numbers of the bombs. It is part of the general madness that civil defence is being organised at a time when each side has reached the stage where it knows it can destroy the other several times over — when the total explosive power of the bombs equals three tons of dynamite for every man, woman and child in the world.

“I quote the Lord Chancellor, who, talking of nuclear war, said in 1965: ‘Perhaps the Chinese will survive, perhaps Asia and Africa will survive, perhaps the United States and Russia, after suffering frightful damage, might survive. But this I know. We in this island will not survive’.”

Lord Noel-Baker, in the House of Lords, 18 December, 1979.

The provision of civil defence in such neutral, non-nuclear countries as Sweden and Switzerland is presented as a reason why Britain should adopt the same policy. In fact the truth is precisely opposite. A neutral country can elaborate its precautions just because it is a neutral country, without nuclear weapons, threatening nobody. It is not part of the nuclear arms race and cannot be; nuclear weapons would be wasted on it, the targets are elsewhere. But it could be affected by the radioactive clouds that might drift over its borders in an all-out nuclear war, and with this in mind it can take its own precautions — even though those precautions may be futile in face of universal contamination and international famine. But Swiss and Swedish precautions do not support nuclear bases or arms that would invite attack.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

WHAT IS THE NETWORK of weapons, bases, warhead dumps, airfields, nuclear factories, command centres and other installations that makes us all a target for attack? The unpleasant fact is that a very large part of this network – certainly the most powerful part – is owned and controlled by a foreign power – the United States. Our lives are, in the end, held in balance by American computers.

The most deadly weapons, those that could do the greatest damage in the Soviet Union, are the nuclear-armed submarines, and they are all based close to Scotland's most thickly populated area, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, the Clydeside and the Scottish coalfield. America has 14 of the world's most powerful nuclear submarines at Holy Loch, 30 miles from Glasgow. These overshadow Britain's four smaller and older Polaris submarines at Faslane, nearby. In Scotland there are also nuclear arms stores.

America has a fleet of nuclear bombers at bases in Scotland and England – particularly in East Anglia. British nuclear bombers are stationed in various parts of the country with emphasis on East Anglia, the Midlands and the South.

The Government has agreed to accommodate in England ¹⁶⁰ American owned and operated Cruise missiles. These missiles could be moved from place to place, spreading the area liable to attack. The Americans have not yet revealed where they want the main bases to be, but Lakenheath in Suffolk and Upper Heyford in Oxfordshire have been mentioned. The agreement to accept these weapons, against which Russia has repeatedly protested, was made without any reference to Parliament – and indeed there has been only one House of Commons debate on nuclear weapons in the last 15 years.

More details of this network may be obtained from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. You should know where the local targets are; after all, they are of some importance to you. (You might also enquire about prevailing winds, for on those winds the atomic fallout would reach you.) But these places are targets not only for bombs but also for protests, for action by all who see them as the greatest peril that Britain has ever known. The campaign against them is the only civil defence that can save us.

In this campaign we have growing support. One of the consequences of the Government's civil defence propaganda has been to remind people of the threat we face while we have nuclear arms – for you cannot reasonably urge defence against a threat without telling people the nature of that threat and its cause. Having been told of the fate that awaits them, more and more people are refusing to be condemned to death by a few politicians and generals who will themselves take care to be a long way underground if the bombs fall.

"If a way out of the political dilemmas we now face is not negotiated, our leaders will certainly learn that there is no technical road to victory in the nuclear arms race. Both sides are bound to lose such a race, a race in which there is no finishing post. Defeat is indivisible in a war of nuclear weapons."

*Lord Zuckerman, Government Chief Scientific Adviser 1964-1971,
in a Times article, 21 January, 1980.*

In this pamphlet we deal only with the fact that possession of nuclear weapons means national suicide. But there are two other important factors: one is the immorality, the brutality, the barbarism of possessing and preparing to use weapons that can kill millions of people and destroy civilisation; the other is the expenditure of immense sums of money on these weapons when the National Health Service is crippled for lack of money, housing is brought almost to a standstill, education cut to the bone and social services everywhere starved.

So now more than ever is the time when opposition to nuclear weapons can be effective. It can be most effective when it is mobilised as a mass movement. If such a movement is strong enough nothing can stand against it – Government policies can be changed, decisions cancelled, bases dismantled, weapons scrapped. The campaign against the neutron bomb is an example. When America proposed to arm NATO forces with this horrible weapon – to bring it to European countries, and of course, Britain – a massive campaign forced the postponement and possible cancellation of the project. It can be done again.

We in Britain are not alone. Action in Holland, Belgium, Germany, Scandinavia is strong and growing. Holland and Norway have refused to accept Cruise missiles. The movement in West Germany is said to be greater now than at any time since the 1950s.

In Britain the Labour Party, the TUC and the British Council of Churches are among national organisations that have passed resolutions against nuclear weapons. One object of CND groups is to see that local branches of these organisations press their headquarters to follow up resolutions with definite national action. Overseas aid organisations also should stress the clear link between the arms race and world poverty.

CND has organised demonstrations against the nuclear submarine bases in Scotland and the bomber bases in East Anglia. Many more can be conducted at supply depots, at nuclear command posts and at every factory, arms store or base where nuclear weapons are stationed, manufactured or stored.

In the House of Commons there is a substantial group of MPs linked to CND, who are able to put pressure on Ministers, ask questions in Parliament, elicit information and provide useful publicity. Here again there is interaction with CND groups which interview and write to local MPs – and most MPs are sensitive to opinion in their constituencies. As new supporters join CND, more local groups are being established – and of course the local groups are the basis, the strength of

the campaign, they influence opinion, distribute leaflets, write to the press, hold meetings, sell literature, collaborate with other bodies, organise film shows, contact local radio about programmes on the arms race, and put forward their views on disarmament on phone-in programmes. But don't wait for a group to start before taking action yourself – rouse interest in your own area through doing these things as part of starting a group. A CND leaflet says: “We try to get the facts and arguments through to everybody. Ultimately it is on people that peace depends, on people making their voices heard decisively”.

CND is the most experienced and largest of the anti-nuclear organisations. In the year ending October, 1979, the Campaign produced and distributed 200,000 of its own leaflets and many more thousands produced by other organisations; it distributed 10,000 posters, showed anti-war films all over the country and distributed thousands of pamphlets. It works with all other peace organisations and with every trade union, political, religious, environmental and other body that opposes nuclear weapons.

But for all this work we need more members, more power. There is an immensely important job to be done, the most important this country has ever had to face. You can help by supporting CND, or if not CND, some other organisation with similar aims. You cannot save yourself on nuclear doomsday by sitting in a fallout refuge. **You are your own civil defence; your defence is action against the policy that makes you a target.**

ABOUT CND

CND campaigns for a world free of nuclear weapons and of all other weapons of mass destruction. CND's immediate policy is for Britain to abandon nuclear weapons, and policies based on nuclear weapons, as a first step to the creation of a British foreign policy based on the principles of peace and co-operation. Such a policy will seek, as a priority, to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

CND also campaigns for British withdrawal from NATO, and for the winding up of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

CND is not only opposed to British nuclear weapons, but also to all other nuclear weapons, and campaigns against any international development which threatens the survival of the world.

In addition, CND is active on other matters relating to military and foreign policy.

The Campaign is supported by individual members, groups and affiliated organisations.

All members and affiliates receive *Sanity*, CND's newspaper, direct by post. *Sanity* can also be obtained from shops or direct from the CND national office.

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Are you one of the millions who will die if there is a nuclear war? The Government's Civil Defence plans say that you can be saved by sitting under a table. In this pamphlet, Philip Bolsover exposes the deception behind current Civil Defence policy and argues strongly that the only defence against nuclear bombs is to make sure that they are scrapped.

Philip Bolsover is a journalist and a member of the National Council of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Cover illustration: Minutes after a one megaton hydrogen bomb has exploded, 2½ miles away the survivors are being sucked into the centre of a fire storm by winds of up to 150 mph . . .

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THE CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

