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**Planning for a ‘World War Every Second’:  
Reviewing Civil Defence Policy in the Shadow  
of Impending Nuclear Apocalypse, 1977-84**

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Planning for a 'World War Every Second'<sup>1</sup>:  
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<sup>1</sup> O. Greene, *London After the Bomb: What a Nuclear Attack Really Means*, (Oxford, 1982)

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## INTRODUCTION: Nuclear Policy in a Reheating Cold War

By the end of the 1970s, the cold war was increasing in intensity, marking the end of an era of *détente* and friendlier relations. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 led to the USA refusing to ratify the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) in the previous year. Meanwhile in Europe, a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) ultimatum to the Soviet Union of a mutual reduction of arms was coupled with a threat that refusal would be met with a higher NATO defence spending.<sup>2</sup> The period from the late 1970s was typified by this aggressive diplomacy and foreign policy of both sides, which was seen by contemporaries as increasing the chance of global nuclear war. What's more, such a conflict would have proved immensely destructive, with the same explosive tonnage of the entire Second World War being available for deployment in one second: the titular quote is taken from Jimmy Carter's farewell address to the nation in January 1981 in which he said that 'more people would be killed in the first few hours than [in] all the wars of history put together. The survivors, if any, would live in despair amid the poisoned ruins of civilisation that had committed suicide.'<sup>3</sup> This dissertation seeks to examine civil defence policies, which can be described as any policy seeking to increase the number of survivors and alleviate their despair, be it through protecting the population or ensuring government survives to shape national recovery.<sup>4</sup>

If war had broken out, Britain would have been heavily targeted by Soviet weaponry. This was partly due to its leading role in NATO, to which it had committed significant conventional weapons and a British nuclear deterrent. Moreover, its geopolitical position as the site of US missile bases, the disembarkation point for American troops en route to a continental European war and the nation controlling the North Sea meant that it was vulnerable to attack.<sup>5</sup> With this in mind, on her election to Prime Minister in 1979, Margaret Thatcher announced an increase in defence spending and a renewed focus on British contribution to the NATO forces.<sup>6</sup> The Conservative Government continued the nuclear element of this contribution through

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<sup>2</sup> P. Jones, 'British Defence Policy: the Breakdown of the Inter Party Consensus', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (April 1977), 114-19

<sup>3</sup> Greene, *London*, 1

<sup>4</sup> G. Rumble, *The Politics of Nuclear Defence: A Comprehensive Introduction*, (Oxford, 1985), 156-7

<sup>5</sup> L. Vale, *The Limits of Civil Defence in the USA, Switzerland, Britain and the Soviet Union: The Evolution of Policies*, (London, 1987), 125

<sup>6</sup> L. Freedman, *The Politics of British Defence, 1978-98*, (New York, 1999), 7-8

purchasing the *trident* missile system from the US in 1980.<sup>7</sup> This was to support the policy of deterrence, which involved the Western allies having a sufficient number of atomic weapons to deter the Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact countries from attacking, thus achieving a certain amount of stability.<sup>8</sup>

It was within this framework, in the role of supporting the deterrent, that civil defence was designed to operate. As an idea, it had been born during the Blitz in 1940/1. However, this early form was barely recognisable by the period in question, so great was the transformation brought about by the arrival of nuclear weapons.<sup>9</sup> By the civil defence review of 1980, the focal point of this dissertation, the policy was firmly connected to the deterrent in government thinking. The words of Leon Brittan, a minister in the Home Office, support this: 'civil preparedness should be adequate if the credibility of the military deterrent strategy [is] to be maintained.'<sup>10</sup> Thus, the Conservative British Government believed that a well-developed civil defence system would add to its nuclear weapons in deterring the Soviet Union, showing that they were prepared for conflict and would not shy away from it. With this mindset, it set about reviewing civil defence plans in the summer of 1980 and the Home Secretary William Whitelaw announced the results of this study in Parliament on 7th August.<sup>11</sup>

It is this dissertation's aim to analyse this review and to this end, it is divided into three chapters. The first seeks to understand the reasons for the decision to review, examining how a rise in conservative parliamentary interest in civil defence influenced government policy. Additionally, a 1977 shift in military assumptions about the nature of the Soviet threat to the UK is seen to have fed into the review. The second chapter examines the findings and conclusions of the body charged with carrying out the review, the Official Committee on Home Defence (hereafter termed the Committee). It analyses how the Government decided on confirming the existing policy of *stay put*, which saw civilians remaining in their homes in the event of an attack. This was in contrast to plans involving public evacuation or shelter, which were ultimately deemed too impractical and an unnecessary expense. This had been the case from at least 1972, when civil defence had been re-activated under the title

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<sup>7</sup> Jones, 'British Defence', 115

<sup>8</sup> S. Kull, *Minds at War: Nuclear Reality and the Inner Conflicts of Defence Policymakers*, (New York, 1982), 83-5

<sup>9</sup> Rumble, *The Politics*, 156-7

<sup>10</sup> Rumble, *The Politics*, 175

<sup>11</sup> Hansard, Whitelaw, 7 August 1980

home defence, after effectively having been scrapped in 1968.<sup>12</sup> Hence the two terms can be used interchangeably. This section also deals with the review's conclusions on public information propagation to support the *stay put* policy, a greater emphasis on devolving planning to Local Authorities and its decision to increase the funding dramatically for civil defence from £13.7 million annually to £45 million.<sup>13</sup> This analysis is achieved with frequent references to the roots of these policy changes as previously discussed. The final chapter is concerned with the implementation of the aforementioned changes. Two areas in which the government faced opposition, in its public information campaign and its attempts to devolve planning to Local Authorities, are explored, as are the ultimately successful methods employed by the government to overcome them. In both, the Conservative Party draws on the apparent popularity of its civil preparedness policy within its greater attitude to defence. Ultimately, these contribute to its election victory over the anti-nuclear Labour party in 1983, which in turn gives it the parliamentary majority to legislate against Local Authority difficulties.<sup>14</sup> The substantial improvements made to plans in other areas are also discussed, showing the progress made over the period 1979-84.

In evaluating the review of 1980, this dissertation therefore argues that the Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher committed itself to an extensive overhaul of the existing civil defence apparatus. Its financial commitment and willpower to implement policy, even when confronted with substantial opposition, can be explained by the great concern expressed within the party in the late 1970s. This, together with a stark shift in military assumptions and the clear disapproval of the system it inherited in 1979, convinced the leadership that change must be swift and far-reaching. The fact that this transformation in civil defence policy was not a radical revolution, in that it did not lead to a move away from the *stay put* tactic, should not be held up as evidence that the government were not aiming to dramatically improve the civil preparedness of the nation for a potential conflict. It should instead be seen within the context of the review: it was decided that in the densely populated UK, evacuating or sheltering the public would be largely ineffective, and hence unworthy of the immense sums that would be required.

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<sup>12</sup> The National Archives Operational Selection Policy OSP14, 'Home Defence and Emergency Planning, 1972-2001, (Kew, 2005)

<sup>13</sup> Vale, *The Limits*, 140

<sup>14</sup> Jones, 'British Defence', 111

This conclusion directly interacts with a block of historiography penned in the 1980s, the arguments of which can be broken down into 4 discrete, yet connected strains. One common belief, linking many of these historians, is that the government had no fundamental belief in the effectiveness of civil defence policies. Clarke, using a 1986 independent study on the effects of a nuclear attack on the UK, concluded that the government knew, but would not admit, that civil defence would fail.<sup>15</sup> This is supported by Greene, who argues that a civil defence controversy developed because the government argued its policy was effective and practical. Meanwhile, some establishment figures, such as a Ministry of Defence scientific advisor were on record saying that there were 'no means of protecting the population'.<sup>16</sup> This dissertation directly argues against this view; it will be shown that the government thoroughly believed in civil defence, both through its actions and the views it expressed in public and private. This also undermines the second tenet of the secondary literature that argued the government wished to be seen to be doing something, when in fact it was inactive in the area.<sup>17</sup> Rumble argued that a 'divergence between the reality of nuclear war and the plans made to cope with it' developed, yet later analysis will show that civil defence procedures were brought in line with contemporary assumptions on the nuclear threat.<sup>18</sup> Vale's expressed opinion that the British leadership has never been behind civil defence will also be engaged with and ultimately cast aside.<sup>19</sup> A third argument present in the historiography considers the government to be exclusively concerned with protecting itself from nuclear attacks and perhaps even the surviving population.<sup>20</sup> The continuation of the *stay put* policy is used as evidence for this view, as well as the construction of bunkers for protecting the machinery of government.<sup>21</sup> The argument of this dissertation shows this not to be the case at all: whilst efforts were made for the continuation of government post-attack, this was far from being the sole objective or outcome of the civil defence review. Here, it can be seen that these historians were unable to separate themselves objectively from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) sentiments which were widely expressed when they were

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<sup>15</sup> R. Clarke, *London Under Attack: The Report of the Greater London Area War Risk Study*, (Oxford, 1986), 7-12

<sup>16</sup> Greene, *London*, 2-3

<sup>17</sup> L. Hilliard, 'Local Government, Civil Defence and Emergency Planning: Heading for Disaster?', *The Modern Law Review*, Vol. 49, No. 4, (July 1986), 481

<sup>18</sup> Rumble, *The Politics*, 157

<sup>19</sup> Vale, *The Limits*, 123

<sup>20</sup> Hilliard, 'Local Government', 480

<sup>21</sup> Hilliard, 'Local Government', 479-80

writing, revealing the potential advantage of the hindsight later analysis possesses.<sup>22</sup> This is also exhibited in the final component of this historiography that maintained the government attempted to separate civil defence from its entanglement with the deterrent in its dialogue with the public.<sup>23</sup> Clarke argued that some saw the very existence of civil defence as weakening the policy of deterrence by showing that it could fail.<sup>24</sup> Government thinking was, however, that civil defence supported the nuclear deterrent and that this should be emphasised to the public. Fundamentally the 1983 general election, in which the major parties differed on defence, revealed that the public resoundingly agreed with the Conservatives.<sup>25</sup>

Whilst the permeation of the CND movement of academic circles in the 1980s may go some way to explain the contrasting conclusions of this dissertation and the historiography of that time, an inspection of the sources used by both reveals more still. The existing historiography is dependent upon the Home Office circulars given to Local Authorities and the information made available to the public during the period. These naturally contradict; one set is designed for planning officials who have a degree of experience and knowledge, whilst the other is aimed at the 'lowest common denominator'.<sup>26</sup> This dearth of sources has unfortunately led to an over-reliance on these two forms, without an adequate analysis of their intended purposes. This has led to the prevalence of the sort of arguments outlined above. However, as this dissertation seeks to do, this can be corrected by analysis of the government documents created by and available to policymakers. The 30-year-rule on the release of previously secret files means that those relating to this period were not available until 2014, granting this piece the privilege and advantage of being the first to analyse them. The methodology of this work was based on this as anything available on the topic of civil defence was examined for its worth in widening the historical understanding of the review. Additionally, publications that have always been in the public domain were used to add breadth and variety to the source base, such as speeches and publications.

This dissertation, therefore, clearly adds to the current understanding of the 1980 civil defence review and its wider context, which has not had significant input from

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<sup>22</sup> Vale, *The Limits*, 147-9

<sup>23</sup> Vale, *The Limits*, 143

<sup>24</sup> Clarke, *London*, 11

<sup>25</sup> Jones, 'British Defence', 111-8

<sup>26</sup> Rumble, *The Politics*, 157-8

historians for twenty-five years. However, it can also be seen as a comment on the nature of policy making. Using civil defence as a case study, one can see how government policy interacts with the public, both in its development and its implementation. The narrative established in this piece consequently has more value than it appears to at a first glance: civil defence is the microcosm through which governmental policy manufacture in the modern period can be commented upon.

## CHAPTER 1: A Cry for Reform? The Push for Policy Review, 1977-80

This initial chapter will examine the contributing factors that brought about the 1980 review of civil defence preparedness; to a certain extent it can be seen as a simple updating of governmental plans. This was in response to a perceivable shift in the assumptions that informed the procedures, which can be tracked to a report from the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) in 1977. Before the details and consequences of this piece are analysed, it is worth first looking at the assumptions underpinning previous plans, if only to show the scale of the sea change that occurred. Governments preceding the Thatcher administration planned on the basis that a period of mounting international tension of two to three months would precede an all-out exchange of nuclear weapons from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and Warsaw Pact alliances.<sup>27</sup> The impact of this type of thinking on plans is clear: the British government would have had ample time to scale home defence preparations up from the very low level they had been left at since 1968. Moreover, the official model developed around this allowed for milestones of differing levels of international tension intensity, at which parts of the home defence apparatus would be activated. For example, the regional headquarters would be manned initially when war became a foreseeable outcome, whilst a massive publicity campaign would be held back until 72 hours before the estimated attack time.<sup>28</sup>

The aforementioned JIC report in 1977 threw all of this into doubt; it asserted that the best contemporary conclusion on the nature of a conflict would not follow this regular and measurable pattern at all. Instead, the committee decided that a government could not expect to have more than seven days warning of a likely conflict with the Soviet Union, which was in stark contrast to the previous assumption of a few months.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the report stressed the likelihood of a massive conventional bombing attack to the tune of roughly 650 tons per day for three weeks, before any nuclear weapons would be used. This would be designed to knock out nuclear retaliation facilities as well as command and control centres. Much of the intelligence that this is based on remains unavailable for public analysis and so it can only be concluded that this was based on the rising Soviet conventional arms budget.<sup>30</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup> R. Banks and R. Hodgson, *Britain's Home Defence Gamble*, (London, 1978), 13

<sup>28</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 13-15

<sup>29</sup> Kew, The National Archives, (hereafter 'TNA'): HO 322/927 - JIC (77) 11

<sup>30</sup> TNA: HO 322/939, 'Conventional Air Attacks'

fact that the committee indicated that it feared that this conventional air attack capacity could have doubled by 1982 evidences this notion too.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, this is made further likely by the repetition of it by the Home Secretary in May 1980, as a reason for the need to reconsider policy.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, the 1977 JIC report posed a significant challenge to the foundations of the contemporary home defence plans. It raised questions later to be voiced by Conservative MPs such as: what would happen if there was no warning phase as was the case in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962? Would the government have the courage to drastically build up home defence if that very action could escalate international tension and increase the chance of a conflict?<sup>33</sup> It is fair to say then, that a shift in assumptions did in itself call for a review of policy, as it was shown that plans now needed to take into account a much shorter warning period and the likely presence of a lengthy conventional bombing phase. It was precisely this response to a change that was recalled in 1984 as a reason for the 1980 review, in that it intended to bring 'plans into line with current assumptions about [the] threat'.<sup>34</sup> This was recognised by Conservative MPs at the time in 1977, one of which reminded the House of Commons that the last civil defence review had been in 1971. Since then, he argued, technological changes and international developments had meant that a re-evaluation was required.<sup>35</sup> With this in mind, perhaps it is then possible to see that a policy review came about in an evolutionary manner; that is to say that it was seen as required in order to update plans.

Such a view, however, does not take into account that a revolutionary movement within the Conservative Party believed that civil defence should be accorded a greater priority by government. The growth of this movement can be seen as early as 1978, when the two conservative MPs Robin Hodgson and Robert Banks produced the influential *Britain's Home Defence Gamble*. In assessing the contemporary plans of the then Labour government, they concluded that Britain's home defence was 'an ill-coordinated shambles'.<sup>36</sup> The two men deemed it to be suffering from a chronic

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<sup>31</sup> TNA: HO 322/979, 'Civil Preparedness Implications', 13 June 1980

<sup>32</sup> TNA: HO 322/937, 'Home Defence Review', 14 May 1980

<sup>33</sup> *Britain's Home Defence Gamble*

<sup>34</sup> TNA: CAB 148/240, 'Home Defence: Current Civil Preparedness and the Way Forward', 20 November 1984

<sup>35</sup> Hansard, Hodgson, 7 April 1977

<sup>36</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 15

lack of central organisation and most importantly, a severe deficiency of funding.<sup>37</sup> It is clear that this belief was present throughout a significant section of the Conservative Party in their last three years in opposition and into the Thatcherite administration. In the months preceding the review in 1980, two separate home office memorandums make reference to a greater commitment to civil defence within the party. The Home Secretary wrote on 12<sup>th</sup> May to inform the Home Office that an influential part of his party wanted spending on it to increase significantly; moreover, less than a month later a Home Office document recorded that conservative backbenchers, no doubt including Hodgson and Banks, demanded the government increase annual spending on civil defence specifically by '£20 to £40 million'<sup>38</sup>. This is an astronomical increase when contextualised: the 1978 spending figure was £25.8 million.<sup>39</sup> This desire is clearly thought by the conservative frontbenchers to be complemented by an equally developed keenness for civil defence in the general public. This is shown by the early dismissal by the Home Secretary of a mere £5 million increase per annum which he said was 'not only insufficient to meet the necessary minimum requirement, but more importantly is insufficient to convince the nation that the Government even accepts a genuine commitment'.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, this view that the public and parliament were both demanding action and could not easily be fobbed off was clearly prevalent amongst the upper hierarchy of the Conservative Party, as the Prime Minister was forwarded a copy of this memorandum. Even the Committee, the very body established to guide the review, was recorded as being created due to a drive for it from the commons itself.<sup>41</sup> It seems likely that this was a clear nod to the publication of *Britain's Home Defence Gamble*, but also to a motion signed by 101 MPs asking for the Government to note their concern in the matter in April 1980.<sup>42</sup> Hence, it is clear that the Conservative Party leadership in opposition and then in their first months of government, experienced pressure from their own backbenchers for civil defence reform and believed this to be representative of the general public.

As well as in response to a change in threat and an increased British interest in the subject, planned civil defence improvements can be seen as part of an effort to set it

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<sup>37</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 16-9

<sup>38</sup> TNA: HO 322/940, 'Home Office note on Home Defence Review', 13 June 1980

<sup>39</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 11

<sup>40</sup> TNA: HO 322/939, 'Civil preparedness for Home Defence', 22 May 1980

<sup>41</sup> TNA: CAB 148/193, 'Establishment of Official Committee on Home Defence', 20 May 1980

<sup>42</sup> Hansard, Atkins, 28 April 1980

better within defence policy as a whole. In 1980 the Home Secretary declared 'the government is determined to ensure that our civil preparations are in line with our general defence capability'.<sup>43</sup> This ties in with the notion that civil defence was key to the nuclear deterrent and that it fundamentally underpinned it. It is clear from the surviving evidence that this was the Conservative Government's view. The Home Secretary effectively surmised this in June 1980 with 'the credibility of our deterrent strategy probably depends partly upon the demonstrating to the Soviets that we have faced the prospect of nuclear war by taking meaningful steps to safeguard the survival of the nation and at least some of its people'.<sup>44</sup> Hence home defence, both in terms of measures to protect the population and the machinery of government, was clearly set within the deterrent narrative. The reference to the Soviets, who reportedly had themselves elevated civil defence to an armed service status with 600,000 personnel, reveals that this was where the government believed a very real threat came from.<sup>45</sup> Whilst they were often at pains to say that war was neither inevitable nor even likely, as was reiterated in the announcement of the review to Parliament, a renewed commitment to civil defence clearly has a Soviet attack in mind. Such an attack is deemed less likely still if Britain maintains a decent level of civil preparedness.<sup>46</sup> This opinion can be further explained by its resonance throughout NATO, which the Conservatives were fully committed to supporting. Throughout the period in question, the US-led group petitioned its constituent nations to spend more on civil defence due to its vital importance to the potency of the nuclear deterrent.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, in British defence policymaking in general and in relation to the review in particular, civil defence's supportive role to the prevalent nuclear ideology of deterrence generated a renewed interest and commitment to it.

In conclusion, it is clear that the 1980 civil defence review was undertaken due to three contributing factors, each of which influenced the governmental mindset. On one level, a shift in the nature of the perceived threat to the UK forced a subsequent change in planning. However, this did not lead to a simple updating of procedures. The cause for civil defence benefitted from a renewed zeal for it from the conservative backbenchers, who questioned the outgoing Labour Government's low-

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<sup>43</sup> TNA: HO 322/927, 'Home Secretary's Statement on the Home Defence Review', 14 May 1980

<sup>44</sup> TNA: HO 322/940, 'Note by the Home Office', 13 June 1980

<sup>45</sup> Hansard, Grant, 7 April 1977

<sup>46</sup> Hansard, Whitelaw, 7 August 1980

<sup>47</sup> TNA: CAB 148/201, 'NATO papers on Civil Defence'

key approach and petitioned their own party to engage in radical improvements. The final part of this chapter showed that the government were also influenced by civil defence's significant contribution to the overall defence of the UK and NATO as a whole. Banks' and Hodgson's view that 'home defence is a small but essential brick in the wall that protects the citizens of Britain',<sup>48</sup> expressed in 1978, had become government-endorsed rhetoric by early 1980. Overall then, it is not surprising that the Home Secretary framed the review as being in 'response to the threat, public anxiety and parliamentary concern'<sup>49</sup> on the subject of home defence; it has been demonstrated in this chapter that each played a role in influencing the government.

## CHAPTER 2: The Long Awaited Review, May-June 1980

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<sup>48</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 27

<sup>49</sup> TNA: CAB 148/193, Official Committee on Home Defence Meeting, 26 June 1980

After the analysis of its context and roots in the previous chapter, this section of the dissertation will turn to examine the conclusions reached in 1980. The part of the review with the greatest scope for policy change was undoubtedly that regarding the *stay put* policy. This concerned the existing plan in 1979 for the general population to remain in their houses in the event of an attack, conventional or nuclear. They were to use general household objects to improve the protection offered by their home, following the guidelines provided by the government literature 72 hours before an expected international confrontation.<sup>50</sup> It is important to note that this plan included no dispersing evacuation plans or communal shelters for the general public; they would be on their own. As Labour's Undersecretary of State for the Home Department in 1977, Dr Summerskill, rightly argued in a House of Commons debate successive governments of both parties had a 'remarkably consistent policy in civil defence' both had decided against public underground shelters due to the lack of suitable sites near cities and the sheer size of the population.<sup>51</sup> Here, therefore, was a policy area where the review could cause a real sea change by deciding to centrally plan for evacuating major cities or building huge public shelters for the general public. One such move was anticipated at the Home Defence Study from 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1979 which published a discussion paper stating that 'implicit in all these considerations was some form of provision of shelter for people under attack'.<sup>52</sup>

Despite this a public shelter or evacuation scheme was clearly deemed in the summer of 1980 to be an unsound policy choice; yet the reasons for it are open to interpretation. The treasury sent a memorandum to the Home Secretary on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1980 informing him that it must veto anything other than the *stay put* policy, as it was the only cost-effective one available, offering one potential explanation.<sup>53</sup> However, reviewing the policy was still an explicit aim laid out on the establishment of the official committee on home defence later in May.<sup>54</sup> This allows us to see that ultimate authority over policy lay in fact with the minister rather than the civil servants in the treasury, whose demands he appears to have simply ignored. Historians crucially must not see the fact that Whitelaw ultimately arrived at the same decision in the following month as evidence that the treasury made it for him, or that he was overly

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<sup>50</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 13

<sup>51</sup> Hansard, Summerskill, 7 April 1977

<sup>52</sup> TNA: HO 322/928, 'Home Office Home Defence Study', 19-23 November 1979

<sup>53</sup> HO 322/937, 'Home Defence', 12 May 1980

<sup>54</sup> TNA: CAB 148/193, 'Official Committee on Home Defence Meeting', 22 May 1980

influenced by financial arguments. In the following meeting of the committee on 26<sup>th</sup> June, it is clear that the constituent members, having gone away to their different departments and reviewed the policy, concluded that there was no effective alternative to it.<sup>55</sup> A report from the committee to its superior, the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, earlier in June goes some way to explain the thought processes involved when assessing *stay put*. It argues that the Soviet intentions were unpredictable and that therefore people were as safe in their homes as could be hoped for.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, in his announcement of the conclusions of the review in August 1980 to the House of Commons, Whitelaw emphasised that dispersal was impractical in the densely populated, relatively small UK. Additionally, on the raising of the point that Sweden had implemented a public shelter programme, the Home Secretary emphasised that the two countries had completely different geographies before also arguing that such a policy would be 'enormously costly'.<sup>57</sup> Hence, it can be seen that alternative policies to *stay put* were not simply dismissed because of costs, although that must inevitably play a role in government decisions. Instead, alternatives were seen as impractical and ineffective and therefore an unnecessary expense.

Although it has been shown that *stay put* was seen as the best option, that is not to say that the government did not see it as in need of reform. With the decision made to continue on the same course, the source evidence tells how it was surrounded by other debates and conclusions on how to make it more effective and defensible to opponents. Two major fears were aired at the time: firstly, it was mentioned by various concerned parties that people might self-evacuate if left without government support. Hodgson summarised this argument well in a House of Commons debate with 'if we ask people to stay at home and we cannot give them shelters, they will just disobey the instructions and literally head for the hills'.<sup>58</sup> The knock-on effects of this were all too clear to the members of the official committee on home defence who feared that the exodus out of major cities during a war scare would obviously prove terrible for industry.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, the Ministry of Defence was concerned that it would not be able to reinforce its continental allies if roads were blocked by civil

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<sup>55</sup> TNA: CAB 148/193, 'Official Committee on Home Defence Meeting', 26 June 1980

<sup>56</sup> TNA: HO 322/979, 'Civil Preparedness Implications', 13<sup>th</sup> June 1980

<sup>57</sup> Hansard, Whitelaw, 7 Aug 1980

<sup>58</sup> Hansard, Hodgson, 7 April 1977

<sup>59</sup> TNA: HO 322/939, Treasury to Home Office, 11 June 1980

disorder.<sup>60</sup> This was a particularly salient point given that the government assumed a conventional stage of conflict would occur in Europe and had pledged its full support to NATO. The second fear concerned public information. Under the pre-review government plans, the publication *Protect and Survive* would be given to the public at very late notice in order to prepare them for the impending conflict, as was alluded to at the beginning of this chapter.<sup>61</sup> Various worries were raised by the backbenchers of the Conservative Party about the quality of this publication and many of its facets were widely discredited. For example, 72 hours before the expected attack time, the public would have been asked to stock up enough food for 14 days; MPs such as Hodgson openly highlighted that this ineffective plan would have generated civil disorder and riots when supermarket shelves emptied.<sup>62</sup>

In response to these two prominent issues with contemporary plans the Committee decided to significantly alter the type and depth of information available to the public. This was announced to Parliament by the Home Secretary with the simple line 'the public has a right to knowledge of these matters'.<sup>63</sup> The phrase and the following section of the speech represented the Committee's decision to research the effectiveness of different types of household shelters before making the results accessible to the public.<sup>64</sup> Through giving them a greater level of knowledge on the subject, the committee believed that much of the feared self-evacuation could be avoided.<sup>65</sup> Concerned members of the public would, it was hoped, be able to construct or purchase shelters that would fit in or nearby to their homes or businesses. The government indicated its intention to create and distribute publications to supplement the clearly insufficient *Protect and Survive*, with particular regard to private shelters.<sup>66</sup> Hence, on the issue of the *stay put* it can be seen that the Committee decided on a clear plan of action. It was aimed at improving the policy's interaction with the public by spreading accurate information when it was desired, rather than waiting for it to be needed. This was a deliberate deviation from the previous government's civil defence public information strategy which was explained by a minister to the House of Commons in 1977: 'the general public do not

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<sup>60</sup> TNA: HO 322/928, 'Ministry of Defence statement to Home Defence Study', 19 November 1979

<sup>61</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 12-14

<sup>62</sup> Hansard, Hodgson, 7 April 1977

<sup>63</sup> Hansard, Whitelaw, 7 Aug 1980

<sup>64</sup> TNA: HO 322/942, 'Spending Estimates'

<sup>65</sup> TNA: HO 322/979, 'Civil Preparedness Implications', 13 June 1980

<sup>66</sup> Hansard, Whitelaw, 7 Aug 1980

wish to be informed about the action that they might, and would be expected to take in a future war, until they and the government of the day regard that threat as more imminent than we all do today!<sup>67</sup>

Nonetheless, despite the prominent role of ideas in the formation of policy, the financial constraints of the time affected the review. It has already been seen that the immense cost of a public shelter scheme was present in the minds of the Committee, although arguably to a lesser degree than its practicality. In fact, these considerations were part of a much greater debate about the amount of money to be spent on improving the civil defence programme. Yet again, in the overall discussions as well as the aforementioned specific one on *stay put*, the treasury attempted to prevent a large increase in the financials earmarked for civil defence. This was in response to a message from the Home Office warning that significant funds would be required to accomplish the tasks set out by the review.<sup>68</sup> The treasury officially responded by offering a limited spending plan for increases of £1 million for 1980-1 rising to £5 million for 1984-5 on top of original plans.<sup>69</sup> The limitations of treasury control over ministerial policy making are again made very clear here, as these figures were branded as inadequate in a memorandum by the Committee.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, this zeal to add substantially to the civil defence funding is driven by one of the same factors that brought about the review initially: the Home Secretary argued that only an annual increase of £20 million would satisfy the public.<sup>71</sup> Surprisingly, this commitment actually exceeds the increase of £3 million annually discussed as ideal in *Britain's Home Defence Gamble*.<sup>72</sup> The two conservative MPs described any greater increase as 'naïve ... in the current economic circumstances.'<sup>73</sup> The Committee and the government it worked for must not have agreed with this assessment at all. In the summer of 1980 they produced a financial plan for an extra £45 million for civil defence over the next three financial years, representing an increase of approximately 60%.<sup>74</sup> Having accepted the need to review, it is therefore clear that a large expansion of the budget was seen as necessary to complete the objectives it produced and that this action was defensible.

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<sup>67</sup> Hansard, Summerskill, 7 April 1977

<sup>68</sup> TNA: HO 322/939, Home Office to Treasury, 12 June 1980

<sup>69</sup> TNA: HO 322/940, Treasury to Home Office, 20 June 1980

<sup>70</sup> TNA: HO 322/979, 'Civil Preparedness Implications', 13 June 1980

<sup>71</sup> TNA: CAB 148/193, 'Official Committee on Home Defence Meeting', 26 June 1980

<sup>72</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 25

<sup>73</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 25-6

<sup>74</sup> TNA: HO 322/942, 'Spending Estimates'

This move was positively received in the House of Commons on 7th August demonstrating that the parliamentary concern element was somewhat alleviated by the review.<sup>75</sup>

Such high levels of spending by a government otherwise committed to curbing public expenditure call for further examination.<sup>76</sup> One persuasive argument for this move, apparently out of character for the Thatcherite Administration, is that the structure it found in place in 1979 was unacceptably incoherent with its previously discussed rhetoric on civil defence. The previous Labour Government had consistently reduced its spending on this area from £27.2 million in 1974/5 to £13.7 million in 1978/9, as the conservative Home Secretary discovered on entering office.<sup>77</sup> Through the analysis of parliamentary questions posed in 1977, it emerges that the Home Department was accused of running down food stockpiles in order to save costs, an accusation that the ministers did not deny.<sup>78</sup> Conversely, the Conservatives felt that these supplies were crucial to the civil defence effort, as they would allow for the survivors to feed themselves post-attack.<sup>79</sup> This is evidenced by the striking decision by Whitelaw to spend £18.8 million on food stockpiling in 1979/80 to reverse this.<sup>80</sup> Hence, it has been demonstrated that in the years following the conservative election victory, the party was willing to grant civil defence substantial financial resources. This was done initially at the Home Secretary's discretion, before continuing officially under the Committee responsible for the review. Moreover, such large spending increases can only indicate that government was utterly committed to improving civil defence policies.

This inquiry will now turn to the policies this funding was aimed at supporting, as determined by the review in the summer of 1980 and announced publically on 7<sup>th</sup> August. Three civil defence focal points for improvements emerge from the documents from this period and can be traced back to the very documents that influenced the development of the review. All are listed in the concluding recommendation list in *Britain's Home Defence Gamble*, indicating still further how

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<sup>75</sup> Hansard, Whitelaw, 7 August 1980

<sup>76</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 25

<sup>77</sup> Hansard, Whitelaw, 29 November 1979

<sup>78</sup> Hansard, Summerskill, 7 April 1977

<sup>79</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 20-2

<sup>80</sup> TNA: HO 322/939, 'Min of Agriculture, Fish and Food Memorandum'

influential parliamentary interest remained throughout the process.<sup>81</sup> In fact, one of the authors received a nod of thanks in the said speech for 'important document on the subject' which he believed 'would make many people think very carefully.'<sup>82</sup> The Home Secretary announced that the equipment of the United Kingdom Monitoring and Warning Organisation (UKMWO) would be modernised to ensure that Britain had the maximum amount of warning time before an attack. The organisation was also responsible for taking accurate fallout measurements in the recovery period to aid the national survival. The second major area to receive support from the reviewing Committee were the facilities generating information for the public and enabling central training, primarily the Home Defence College at Easingwood. This institution was responsible for researching nuclear attack implications, publishing its findings and for organising national and regional exercises to both test and develop civil defence forces. The third and final major focal point for funding expansion were local authorities, which were to be afforded more money for planning at a community level.<sup>83</sup>

Whilst the first two do not require further examination before looking at the effectiveness of their implementation, the funding of Local Authorities does. The review process divided this investment into three parts: increasing planning capacity, improving the integration of volunteers and the building of sub-regional headquarters. Of these, the latter was undoubtedly given the greatest priority by the Committee, for they would ensure the survival of the machinery of government in a nuclear war.<sup>84</sup> Hodgson and Banks had decried the fact that these bunkers had not been finished thirty years after the onset of the cold war in their influential work.<sup>85</sup> Regarding the use of volunteers, the Committee recognised that existing national and local voluntary organisations could be utilised by authorities in their civil defence strategies.<sup>86</sup> It was planned that funding would be made available for the liaison with and equipment of such groups.<sup>87</sup> In terms of Local Authority planning funding, the 1979 Home Defence Study had determined that more money was needed for training

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<sup>81</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 20-3

<sup>82</sup> Hansard, Whitelaw, 7 Aug 1980

<sup>83</sup> Hansard, Whitelaw, 7 Aug 1980

<sup>84</sup> TNA: HO 322/941, 'Home Office Memorandum', 14 July 1980

<sup>85</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 22

<sup>86</sup> TNA: CAB 148/193, 'Official Committee on Home Defence Meeting', 26 June 1980

<sup>87</sup> TNA: HO 322/979, 'Civil Preparedness Implications', 13 June 1980

at a community level.<sup>88</sup> The Committee ultimately agreed with this when it decided that more planners should be recruited for local government, allocating at least £3m annually for staffing increases.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, the role of some of these new positions would be to perform surveys to explore the suitability of domestic, business and government buildings for sheltering people from a nuclear attack and its aftereffects.<sup>90</sup> Thus by the end of the review, central government had substantially increased the Local Authority's civil defence budget with a clear vision of how this funding would be spent. It has been demonstrated that this was part of a determined and comprehensive review of the entire civil defence apparatus, which generated a clear set of policies to complete its objectives.

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<sup>88</sup> TNA: HO 322/928, 'Ministry of Defence Statement to Home Defence Study', 19 November 1979

<sup>89</sup> TNA: HO 322/941, 'Home Office Memorandum', 14 July 1980

<sup>90</sup> Hansard, Whitelaw, 7 Aug 1980

### CHAPTER 3: Implementation and Opposition: the Aftermath of the Review, 1980-84

In the period of policy implementation following the review in 1980, the very idea of civil defence as a valid government preoccupation came to be challenged. The issue became a highly contentious and increasingly politicised one, leading to resistance to two of the main policy areas. Firstly, the manner in which the government defended the review, civil defence and its role in relation to the nuclear deterrent will be analysed regarding the criticisms from CND and the Labour Party. This will chiefly involve looking at the official public information campaign on the subject. Secondly, it has been shown that the government desired an increased Local Authority role in civil defence; the animosity and subsequent difficulties this generated will be studied. Ultimately, it will be demonstrated that the government was able to overcome opposition in both areas through utilising the general public acceptance of the review's conclusions. In the former, the public made a clear choice at the 1983 general election to reject the Labour Party's support for CND in favour of the pro-nuclear, and therefore pro-civil defence, attitude of the Conservative Party. This granted them a significant majority in Parliament that they utilised to create legislation to enforce Local Authority cooperation.

As was seen in the previous chapter, the *stay put* policy was chosen by the review as the best option and it was decided that it would be subsidised by increased public information. This decision was stuck by throughout the entire period in question; yet the particular publications designed to achieve this varied. In October 1981, it was decided that the much-criticised *Protect and Survive* would be redrafted.<sup>91</sup> Great consideration seems to have been given to supporting this move, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food decision earlier that year to print ration books. This was to prevent overconsumption and the civil disorder this would bring when the document told people to stock up for 14 days.<sup>92</sup> However, in 1983 a decision within the Home Department chose to completely replace the *Protect and Survive* pamphlet in response to the completion of the research programme on homemade shelters.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, scientific research in 1984 shifted the governmental assumptions about the blast radii and casualty figures due to radiation,

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<sup>91</sup> TNA: HO 322/980, 'Protect and Survive Re-Draft', October 1981

<sup>92</sup> TNA: CAB 134/4544, 'Meeting of Planning Sub-Committee', 13 April 1981

<sup>93</sup> TNA: HO 322/1031, 'Research Programme 1983/4', 16 June 1983

which in turn lead to publications.<sup>94</sup> This decision should not be seen as change in tack though: it was simply a cosmetic remodelling. The same sort of information would still be conveyed to the public, in line with the policy ideas of the review.

Criticisms of this increasing bank of publications, however, did cause a meaningful development in government information policy. In parliament, the Labour Party consistently implied 'no civil defence organisation ... could really achieve much, if anything, worthwhile.'<sup>95</sup> Moreover, the Committee recorded that some people believed that plans for the survival of basic government within regional headquarters were designed just to protect the privileged few.<sup>96</sup> It is clear from their subsequent action that they believed this feeling to be significant enough to warrant their efforts to reverse it: in November 1981, *Civil Defence: Why We Need It* was published on the Home Secretary's orders to combat these criticisms.<sup>97</sup> It asserted that civil defence measures would be of use against any attack and that contemporary NATO predictions indicated that a conventional war was more likely than an all-out nuclear conflict. Moreover, it was argued that even the most ardent unilateralist should be supportive of civil defence for its humanitarian value, comparing it to a seat belt in a car. In direct response to the accusation that the government was only looking after itself by constructing bunkers, the pamphlet read that 'most senior ministers, government officials, and service chiefs would have to remain at their desks if war threatened.'<sup>98</sup> The implication here is that they would be situated in likely Soviet target areas and would be killed in a war. Whilst, that document sought to discredit claims that civil defence was worthless, a ministerial directive brought about another publication to defend the entire deterrent strategy. In a 1982 meeting of the Committee, the Home Secretary, in summing up the group decision, said that 'there was a need to coordinate closely the presentation of civil home defence policy throughout the UK with that of the Government's defence policy generally and the nuclear deterrent policy in particular'.<sup>99</sup> This sentiment can certainly be picked up on in the tone of *Have You Ever Wished You Were Better Informed?* as it denounced

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<sup>94</sup> TNA: CAB 148/240, 'A Programme for Civil Defence Publications', 4 July 1984

<sup>95</sup> Hansard, Res, 7 August 1980

<sup>96</sup> TNA: CAB 148/210, 'Meeting of the Official Committee on Home Defence', 28 January 1982

<sup>97</sup> TNA: HO 322/982, 'Civil Defence Publications', 10 Nov 1981

<sup>98</sup> Central Office of Information for Her Majesty's Government, 'Civil Defence: Why We Need It', (London, 1981)

<sup>99</sup> TNA: CAB 148/210, 'Meeting of the Official Committee on Home Defence', 28 Jan 1982

Labour's policy of a non-nuclear defence force. It argued that a conventional force of any size would never be able to defeat a nuclear one and that the Soviet Union would not surrender its atomic weaponry. Hence, civil defence would always be required as part of the deterrent.<sup>100</sup> The success of the arguments deployed by the government in these publications is best measured through their subsequent massive election victory in 1983. The Conservative Party campaigned on maintaining Britain as a nuclear power, with significant, highly developed civil defence apparatus. This is shown by there being a large section of their manifesto dedicated to explaining this to the electorate.<sup>101</sup> As the Committee noted after the 1983 general election, therefore, the Conservatives and their policies were more than capable of defeating anti-nuclear opposition. They concluded in the only way that they could from this: the people, as well as its government, believed in the findings of the civil defence review and in the greater policy of deterrence.

This popularity allowed the same government to solve the issue of Local Authority hostility to central interference through using legislation. The Labour Party propagated and coordinated this animosity from June 1981, when it told the 27 Local Authorities it controlled to call themselves *Nuclear Free Zones* and to not take part in civil defence.<sup>102</sup> Naturally, this created an issue for the implementation of the central government policy created by the review, which had heavy emphasis on authorities being prepared for relative self-sufficiency after an attack.<sup>103</sup> To this end, national exercises were planned to simulate an attack on the UK, as had originally been suggested by Banks and Hodgson.<sup>104</sup> These were designed to maximise their utility for planners and often included complex debates beforehand about the number and location of targets. This was in an attempt to get the right balance in casualty and damage figures so that officials were challenged, yet not overwhelmed. Additionally, the simulations featured different phases including a conventional bombing raid, in line with the new military planning assumptions.<sup>105</sup> An example of one such exercise, codenamed *Hard Rock* and scheduled for October 1982, became a battleground

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<sup>100</sup> Conservative Central Office Publication, 'Have You Ever Wished You Were Better Informed?', (London, c1980s)

<sup>101</sup> Conservative Party Manifesto, 1983 General Election

<sup>102</sup> TNA: HO 322/982, '1981 Progress Report for Ministers', November 1981

<sup>103</sup> TNA: HO 322/911, 'Meeting of Communications Sub-Committee', 2 December 1980

<sup>104</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 24

<sup>105</sup> TNA: HO 322/983, 'Letters Debating Ex Hard Rock Targets', early 1982

over which the government and its critics fought.<sup>106</sup> The Home Secretary believed that the anti-nuclear forces were resisting it in order to discredit the entire deterrent system.<sup>107</sup> It was presumably this mounting left-wing pressure, that the Committee referred to as the 'publicity reasons' behind its decision to reduce the nuclear phase to a 'bare minimum' of 55 bombs on the UK and to scale up the conventional stage.<sup>108</sup> It was clearly hoped that this would appease the local authorities, which did not dispute the need to plan for conventional bombing raids. However, the exercise was ultimately cancelled on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1982.<sup>109</sup>

Whilst if taken on its own this result may have looked like the government being forced to back down against superior opposition, it is actually the point where they realised that Local Authorities would need to be legally compelled to comply. That is testament to the Conservative Party's commitment to this policy, and therefore to the review that determined it. As early as 1977, backbenchers had queried the very loose grip that the Civil Defence Act of 1948 granted central government over local. The reason for this was made quite clear in a House of Commons debate for when asked what the Home Secretary could do to ensure Local Authorities did plan for civil defence under the Act, the encumbered Undersecretary replied that he relied on their 'good sense ... to discharge their civil defence functions.'<sup>110</sup> The worry this caused was echoed in *Britain's Home Defence Gamble*, which called for a strengthening of legislative control.<sup>111</sup> On this area, the Committee had decided not to act during or immediately after the review, to their obvious detriment by 1982. That the main UK political parties were very much in agreement on having a nuclear defence in the 1979 election may go some way in explaining this; in effect, they did not foresee this situation developing.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, in early 1983, it decided to put forward legislation to ensure that Local Authorities planned effectively. At the same meeting, it was mentioned that if plans were not there locally if they were ever

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<sup>106</sup> TNA: CAB 134/4541, 'Meeting of the Official Committee on Home Defence', 6 Oct 1982

<sup>107</sup> TNA: CAB 148/210, 'Meeting of the Official Committee on Home Defence', 22 March 1982

<sup>108</sup> TNA: CAB 148/210, 'Meeting of the Official Committee on Home Defence', 22 March 1982

<sup>109</sup> TNA: CAB 148/228, 'Meeting of the Official Committee on Home Defence', 25 July 1983

<sup>110</sup> Hansard, Summerskill, 31 March 1977

<sup>111</sup> Banks and Hodgson, *Britain's*, 20

<sup>112</sup> Jones, 'British Defence', 116-7

needed, it would be the central government that would be blamed for the inevitably high death toll.<sup>113</sup> This indicates that the Committee still believed in the review policy that much of the civil defence preparations should occur at a local level, albeit under central advice, guidance and direction. Under the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations (1983), each Local Authority was required by law to have between 20 and 80 civil defence planners. The requirements of the regional headquarters were also laid out, with a minimum standard in terms of food, water, space, fuel and equipment per person for 30 days. Authorities were entitled to grants in order to complete any remaining construction work and central government agreed to pay 75% of planning costs.<sup>114</sup> The level of government commitment to the policy, not least financial, is clearly significant. Furthermore, the closure of the legal loophole enabling disobedience, granted by its substantial parliamentary majority marked the end of any considerable resistance to its devolved civil defence policy.

It has been demonstrated that the government were able to overcome significant resistance to policy implementation in two fields. All that remains to do is to assess how much of a difference the review had made by the end of the period in question; what had the Committee's 1980 decisions achieved by 1984? Primarily, there is no doubt that the review granted civil defence a much higher priority in government thinking. In fact, the Committee noted in January 1982 that it was now played a big part in overall defence policy.<sup>115</sup> It has been shown that it was, in part, a supportive rhetorical role in relation to the deterrent. However, its role also had a physical element: civil defence apparatus did improve substantially in the early 1980s. A review of progress in November 1981 highlighted the advances made in six discrete areas including machinery of government and protection of population. It noted more specifically that the Home Defence College was to expand by Easter 1982 to allow for more research and training.<sup>116</sup> This is a very reliable indicator that more civil defence planning was happening in the UK, because the College provided national guidance and training seminars. Hence, its expansion must have been fuelled by an increased use of its facilities. By 1984, it was recorded that all plans involved a reference to being able to endure lengthy conventional bombing raids as well as a

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<sup>113</sup> TNA: CAB 148/228, 'Meeting of the Official Committee on Home Defence', 25 July 1983

<sup>114</sup> TNA: HO 322/981, '1983 Legislation'

<sup>115</sup> TNA: CAB 148/210, 'Meeting of the Official Committee on Home Defence', 28 January 1982

<sup>116</sup> TNA: HO 322/982, 'Review of Planning', November 1981

nuclear exchange and included the shorter warning phase of seven days.<sup>117</sup> It was well established that 'significant groundwork' would have to have been completed before this short period of heightened tension and that since 1980 a policy of 'gradual and incremental improvement in the readiness and effectiveness of arrangements' had worked towards this.<sup>118</sup> By the end of the period of study, the government were spending roughly £63 million to achieve progress in nearly 40 fields. Most of this spending fell onto the flagship review policies of improving central planning by the relevant departments, investing substantially in modernising the UKMWO and financing local civil defence development and the construction of regional headquarters.<sup>119</sup> It is therefore clear from the state sources that they believed much had been achieved and it has been shown that the evidence is very difficult to disagree with it.

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<sup>117</sup> TNA: CAB 148/240, 'Home Defence: Current Civil Preparedness and the Way Forward', 20 November 1984

<sup>118</sup> TNA: CAB 148/240, 'Home Defence: Current Civil Preparedness and the Way Forward', 20 November 1984

<sup>119</sup> TNA: CAB 148/240, 'Home Defence: Current Civil Preparedness and the Way Forward', 20 November 1984

## CONCLUSION: The Historical Significance of the Report

In brief, it has been argued that the 1980 civil defence review was a clear attempt to improve the preparedness of the nation for a nuclear conflict. The implementation of policies in line with the objectives established by the Committee was determined, even in the face of considerable opposition. It has been shown that this was due to the permeation of the belief in the inherent value of civil defence within the Conservative Party. Evidence has revealed that this existed at least from the late 1970s, when it manifested itself in publications and House of Commons debates. The concerns raised at this early point, surrounding the very low-key priority accorded to home defence up to 1979 and the supportive value of civil preparedness to the nuclear deterrent's potency, featured heavily in the reviewing Committee's decisions. These concerns, as well as the shift in the military analysis of the Soviet threat's potential nature and timeframe, are clearly present throughout governmental thinking of the period. They are reflected in the review's conclusions to greatly increase civil defence funding and to modernise the plans made at both a central and local level. Furthermore, it has been shown that the *stay put* policy was earmarked for improvement through an upgraded public information campaign; a policy commitment that was not simply the payment of lip service. This was to the extent that, arguably, the continuation of the use of the term is inaccurate due to the scale of the policy changes brought about by the review.

Overall, this dissertation has added significantly to current historical understanding of the civil defence policy of the Conservative Government in the years 1979-1984. It has gone some way to filling the current void of historiography with access to the contemporary government records and will hopefully encourage further research and debate on the topic. It has shown that the existing secondary works, all written in the 1980s when emotions ran high, are severely out-dated and under-evidenced. As time advances, dragging the limit of the thirty-year-rule along with it, more of the government archive will come to light to expand this understanding still further.

The effects of this research, however, are not limited to the specific field in which it lies. For instance, conclusions can be drawn on the nature of policy making as a whole in late twentieth century Britain. This dissertation has displayed how parliamentary and public interest, expressed by seemingly unimportant backbench opposition Members of Parliament, can lead to considerable change when they cross the floor to form a government. A continuation of policy outlook, such as in the belief

that much of the planning should take place at a community level through devolution, can clearly be seen from 1978 to 1984; from the expression of the view, to the implementation of the policy it inspired. Additionally, this work has shown the crucial role that popular support plays in the British political system. In particular, the Local Authority opposition and subsequent legislation would not have been possible if the Conservative Party had not won the 1983 general election. As they campaigned on the basis that the UK needed the nuclear deterrent and its sister-policy, civil defence, this victory can be interpreted as a popular endorsement of the conclusions of the review and subsequent attempts at implementing its findings. Likewise, it was a complete rejection of the unilateralist, anti-civil defence ticket that the Labour Party had campaigned on.

Therefore, not only has this dissertation argued that the 1980 civil defence review was comprehensive, single-minded, popular and ultimately successful in its aims; it has also shown that concepts can develop from a grassroots base within the opposition to a force capable of changing national policy, if it enjoys the support within the general public required to win general elections.

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