

## Bruce Kent Transcript

### *After Hiroshima*

#### **Interview transcript**

**Interviewee:** Bruce Kent (BK), born 22/06/1929

**Interviewee:** Samuel Parfitt (SP) and Ruth Dewa (RD)

**Date:** April 29th 2015

**(1:40) SP:** *Could we begin by just saying the date and your name?*

BK: My name is Bruce Kent and the date is 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

*SP: I am Samuel Parfitt and I am going to be interviewing Bruce Kent.*

*RD: And do you mind just letting us know your date of birth as well?*

BK: Not in the slightest, I am quite proud of it. 22/6/1929. So I am now 85 and a half. Anything else? Do want to know about my weight?

*SP: (Laughs) So where were you during the Second World War?*

BK: Er I was in, er, two or three places. When the war started, I was England in Cornwall. We'd been sent away for the summer and then we came back and went to school but by 1940 my father decided that it would be better for his wife, my mother, and the three children if we were out of the country and they were both Canadians so it seemed quite sensible to him to send us to Canada.

**(3:00)** So in, er, July of 1940, we went to Liverpool and got on a big Cunard liner and went to Canada where we stayed until about May or June of 1943 when my father decided that we were probably going to win the war and er he'd get his family back. So it was a complicated way back, we had to go down to America: New York, Baltimore, er got a ship, a Portuguese neutral ship from Baltimore I think, was it Baltimore?...er over to Lisbon in Portugal and then we had to wait there several months and we eventually got a flying boat, a Sunderland flying boat which flew us from Lisbon to Ireland which was neutral. Um and from Ireland, we then got a plane back to England. So we were back for school...I remember going to school around October 1943. So that's how...and from then on, we spent the time in London during the war but at that time the bombing of London had really finished. It was only until the summer of '44 when the flying bombs and rockets began and we were sent off to er a summer farming camp up in Yorkshire. So I was about 17 when the war ended. I was called up to the army when I was 18 which was 1947 I think.

*SP: Ok and did your father accompany you to Canada?*

BK: No, no, no.

*SP: What did he do during the war?*

BK: Well he was a businessman here. He was a Canadian but was running a business here called the Armstrong Court Company and he carried on with the business. He was in the Home Guard and that took a lot of time for him. In fact, he was quite lucky and so were we because the house in Hampstead Garden suburb was actually blown up in a bombing raid but he was out on the Home Guard and the person **(5.00)**...the cleaner or something he had, I think she was in the shelter and so she wasn't injured but we lost the house.

*SP: Ok. And so on V.E. Day, you were in London?*

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BK: I was, yes.

*SP: Where exactly in London?*

BK: In Trafalgar Square.

*SP: Oh really, ok. Right.*

BK: Yeah. In Trafalgar Square. With Mrs Griffin who was a widow and Geoffrey Griffin who was my schoolmate and we wandered around Trafalgar Square. There were a lot of fine games going on.

*SP: And where did you live at that time?*

BK: We lived in Hampstead Garden suburb but when we came back from the war, since we lost the house in Grey Close, my father had then bought or got some rights on a house on the other end of the suburb, Neville Drive. So that's where I spent 1943, 4, 5, 6 'till I left home to go to the army.

*SP: And how old would you have been on that day?*

BK: On V.E. day?

*SP: Yeah.*

BK: Well I'll leave you to work it out. I was born on June 29. You tell me, I must have been er sixteen or something, I don't know. Something like that.

*SP: 16? Ok. Ok. How did it work? Did the public know it was going to be V.E. that day or was the news a surprise? I don't know that much about...*

BK: No. I can't honestly tell you how we knew. I mean we knew we were winning and er after there was a bit of a hitch in that winter when the Germans attacked the Ardennes and er for a moment, people thought that Antwerp and Brussels would fall to the Germans again but that took about three weeks and then the Americans, and of course the people who swung the day were the Soviets because they were coming into East Germany and they took Berlin and (7.00) er they were a long way into Germany before the Allies even crossed the Rhine. But you are talking about a 16 year old boy who really you know...you're not very bright in those days about what's going on. You just think 'our lot is good, their lot's bad and we're winning the war, three cheers'.

*SP: And were you also in London on V.J. day?*

BK: I can't remember that. I am sorry. I cannot remember when that was. Presumably that was August 1945 but I can't remember...I remember going out with Mrs Griffin, the old girl and her son but I don't remember about the end of the war.

*SP: Do you remember that the day the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima?*

BK: Oh very well.

*SP: What could you tell us about that?*

BK: Well I knew from the London paper, the equivalent of the Evening Standard – I don't know what it was then. It had these big headlines, 'Wonder Bomb Ends the War.' And I remember

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thinking to myself, great. They've got what they deserved and we've won. I had no moral scruples because I didn't know anything about it except that it was a 'wonder bomb.' It was only later on that I began to learn about what the bomb was and the alternative ways of ending the war and all those things. But I remember I was in a café, *The Dutch Oven* I think on Baker Street. It's just in my head that that's where I was at that time when I saw this paper.

*SP: Ok and when was the turning point when you started to question the kind of what you'd previously thought about oh 'this was a good thing' and all that? What precipitated that change or was it gradual?*

BK: I think it was gradual. I went off to train to be a priest (9:00) in 1952 after I had done my degree at Oxford. And er... And I think we had lectures on Moral Theology and so on. And though I don't think the bomb was specifically mentioned, the atom bomb, but the idea that you could kill innocent people to achieve an aim er was part of the moral theology of the day. So if you applied it to the bomb, then I began to realise that there were a number of other people who at the very time were opposed to the dropping of the bomb. In fact, one of most significant and unreported man was the Dean of St Albans Cathedral. Do you know this story?

*SP: No.*

BK: The Dean of St Albans um Canon or something Thickness, believe it or not, that was his name. He wouldn't ring the bells at St Albans when the victory...when V.J. came. He wouldn't ring the bells because 'I'm not going to honor a war that's ended with a slaughter of civilians'. Um, but I didn't think like that until later on when I began found out about what was going on and why. And I'm quite impressed with, um, the arguments against the bomb.

*RD: Sorry. Do you mind me just butting in? What were your opinions of the Japanese towards the end of the war? And were they in keeping with the general population?*

BK: With whose population?

*RD: Just those around you. Your opinions, did they fit in with others?*

BK: The Japanese were...this is what we were taught and believed. The Japanese were cruel, nasty people. Um, the Germans had some elements of decency but the Japanese were unscrupulous barbarians who would torture women and children and all that stuff. You know that's what was taught so we had a much lower opinion of the Japanese than we had of the Germans. But at that stage, of course we didn't know about the concentration camps (11.00) and all the things the Germans had done at the time. And of course we thought that we were morally beyond reproach, we would never do anything like that, oh come on, but anyway...it was quite racist in a way. The Japanese were funny little people with slitty eyes and er rather nasty. Whereas the Germans were Anglo-Saxon and rather like ourselves.

I think that's what it was. It's hard to be accurate when you remember sixty years ago or something it was. But um, it took a long time for me to start rethinking that er there was another story to be told. A long time. And it was really on this kind of moral issue er the bomb was something that killed indiscriminately. And I was completely unconvinced by the members of my own church er or the bishop's own church, who kept saying that um, well there is a distinction between doing it and intending to do it. Well actually (laughs) they don't apply that to any other moral field at all. If I intend to rob a bank, then there is a moral issue about intending to rob the bank. But they kept on saying oh well, it's the doing of it that is the sin or the crime, not the intention and that never went through with me. In fact I started a correspondence which I suppose is around somewhere in about

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19...er when was I the chaplain of London University...probably about 1967 or 8, something like that, er in the *Times* and I wrote...you know when you're young you think you're bloody clever. I wrote a letter to the *Times* saying er we know that killing civilians is outside the order of things so when they were blessing the new Polaris submarine (13.00) up at Barrow and there was Catholic bishop there helping with the blessing of this thing, I said does this mean that this instrument is never going to be used indiscriminately or that the crew of the thing will refuse to use it. Kind of asked a clever question like a sixth former and um it was wonderful because the correspondence went on for three weeks. Um all over, Bishops and Prime Ministers were writing in to justify what they were saying. It was kind of a moral issue with me before it got real. Er I wasn't campaigning...I suppose writing a letter to the *Times*...I was involved in something called Pax Christi. Ever heard of Pax Christi?

*SP: (nods head)*

BK: Have you really? Amazing.

*SP: We did our research.*

*RD: Yeah and actually we're working with Pax Christi so um I don't know if you know Matt who does the Peace Education...*

BK: Yeah of course I do.

*RD: I was in a meeting with him the other day and told him that I was going to be meeting yourself as well.*

BK: Oh course, oh you deal with Pax Christi...

(Brief interlude for around twenty five seconds as they talk about the snacks in the room)

BK: Oh so you know all about Pax Christi. Well that is where...I started through Pax Christi. I was a youth...I was running a youth club. I was ordained a priest in 1958 and sent to Kensington. There is a big church on the high street opposite the Commonwealth Institute down the end there. That's where I was. And they asked me to run a youth club. Typical the Church, nobody gave me any training...just go and run a youth club. So er someone asked me...some couple of girls said where could they go for a decent holiday. (15 min) And I had seen in the paper this Pax Christi route, r-o-u-t-e, which was this thing they ran every summer. Young people, perhaps one hundred, two hundred, in smaller groups going round some country and I said well this looks very good, why don't you go on that...and so they went on that and they came back very sunburnt. They thanked me very much, pushed off and I forgot about it.

A man came along about two weeks later and he said that he was the Secretary of Pax Christi and I was the first priest that had taken an active interest in Pax Christi. (Laughing) An active interest? I had sent two girls on a holiday. He said would I be the chaplain. So I became chaplain and the first issues were not nuclear weapons. Er I remember the first issues were actually the colonial wars of Spain and Portugal in Africa. I remember going down to the Spanish embassy in Belgrave Square er because the Spaniards...was Angola theirs or Mozambique? One or the other, but er they were being very brutal to the Africans in the civil war and the Spanish Embassy secretary came out and said, you don't understand Father er that to be a Spaniard is to be erm...to be a Catholic and to be a Spaniard is to be a soldier. And I was protesting on behalf of conscientious objectors in Spain who were treated I think abominably. They were called up to two years' service um and if you refused, they gave you...they didn't give you a trial, you got two years imprisonment and you got out after

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about um...after you were out, about a month later they called you up again. If you refused again, you went back in for two years and this process continued until you were over the age of eligibility. And um when some Catholics began this...the Jehovah's Witnesses had been refusing for years...but we didn't care about Jehovah's Witnesses, they're not part of the whole One True Faith so we didn't bother with them...but when the Catholics began (17.00), then I got interested in it and so that was the first radical thing that I got into, was wars in Africa.  
Am I talking too much?

*SP: No, no not at all. Just by way of explanation, we're not trying to talk over you too much just for the benefit of the tape so if we're a bit quiet and just nodding, it's not because we are um...*

BK: It's ok, you're doing well.

*SP: But I was interested in the story you were telling about the priest blessing the Polaris...was it called Polaris?*

BK: Yeah Polaris

*SP: Why did they do that?*

BK: Well they always blessed...any army loves to have the Church blessing and approving what it's up to. I mean the whole business of Military Chaplains is a blessing of the institution of the military. Whether they do that or not, that is what it is. Erm and it became gruesome um when they started blessing Polaris Submarines. The first launching of the submarines. Because whereas if you're not a pacifist and I'm never sure whether I am a pacifist or not. If you're not a pacifist, then some weapons may not be praiseworthy but they're tolerable. Protecting people and so on and so on. Um and it's only an absolute pacifist, a Quaker or someone who would be opposed to all weapons whether it's a rifle or a pistol or anything. But nuclear weapons, to me had an inherent immorality in that they couldn't be used without a massive indiscriminate destruction of innocent people. Er believe it or not, there was a thing called the *Clergy Review* which used to have moral answers to questions and I remember in the *Clergy Review*, some great moral theologian saying 'they will always be used discriminately against fleets at sea (19.00) or against um invasion from outer space or something.' I mean fleets at sea, no civilians. Outer space, well no civilians that we knew about. So this kind of nonsense was being presented as a reality in the light of Hiroshima and Nagasaki when we had dropped them. Not as weapons of deterrents but as weapons of war. We'd used them er when we didn't have to use them.  
How am I doing? Anything else?

*SP: Good. Would I be right in thinking that your problem with nuclear weapons is that they kill a lot of civilians and that they are not necessary? The problem isn't war per se but more as an instrument of war it's totally...*

BK: Well that is how I started er on the indiscriminate use of weapons. Pax Christi is not just against one weapon, it's for a world in which we settle our problems non-violently under the law which we do in every other situation er until you come to Nation States. And so I've moved on. It was the indiscriminate nature that started me but then I got involved in the United Nations Association in Pax Christi and campaigned against the arms trade in all those different organisations. You can't do everything, I don't try to everything but I am sympathetic to people who are working on peace education or on against chemical weapons or conscientious objectors, because many countries currently don't honour Conscientious Objectors. But erm I have always told people that um there's not point thinking that you're God, you can't do everything. Just be sympathetic to other people. Don't knock them but do your bit and do it in a knowledgeable way.

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But your question is...I started in that way, I'd never have dreamt at school. (21.00) I was in the Cadet Corps...our country was always right so we had no problem with erm war. And then the penny began to drop and drop and drop...I don't know how far it will go on dropping I don't know.

*SP: I was wondering when you wrote this letter to the paper when you were objecting to the blessing of the submarine, was there much public debate? Was there much criticism of nuclear weapons at the time or were you one of the first to speak publicly against it?*

BK: There was a lot criticism of me (laughs). Quite strongly! Well sarcasm. I remember we had nice old boy called Canon Keenan. I went down to watch his house for something one day (21:50) about that time and he was coming down the corridor in this great white thing with a whole lot of them, other canons behind him. And he saw me, 'oh Bruce, lovely to see you. Been sitting down somewhere, have you? Haw haw haw.' You know 'sitting down' was the way...if you were protesting you had to sit down somewhere. 'Been sitting down somewhere' and they were all laughing up the corridor with the other old boys as well. This idiot so I was...er I didn't mind the laughter but er it wasn't the first if that is what you were saying...sorry what was the question?

*SP: I was just wondering how...was there a climate of criticism at the time?*

BK: Well you must know the history of CND. CND began in 1957 in a meeting of Kingsley Martin and a number of our canon colleagues in a room down at St Paul's Cathedral. And it latched on to what had already existed...the campaign against nuclear testing because one of the great fears in the 50s was that nuclear weapons would pollute the atmosphere and we would all get cancer or something. And so in a way that was as much against nuclear testing as it was against the use of the bomb. But erm this lot, the early CND latched on to what became a great surge of opinion and I think that they were amazed. They called a meeting, I think 17<sup>th</sup> February 1958 in Westminster Central Hall and there were two overflow meetings. Well, Central Hall holds 2,500 people. But they had another meeting in Caxton Hall and somewhere else. So they were astonished by it all. And then um someone launched the idea of a march to Aldermaston and that was 1958. So from '58 until Harold Wilson of '64, and I say that because Harold Wilson fought an election in '64, in which he committed himself to abolishing nuclear weapons. Um within a month he had betrayed that promise. Betrayed is a strong word but he said that the whole programme has gone too far. 'I can't stop it.' Which is exactly what is happening now twenty or thirty years later. And um then CND began to go downhill quite rapidly.

I had been more involved in Christian CND than CND itself but it went downhill partly because of the Vietnam War erm was on the cards and er a lot of activists were taken up in the Vietnam War, position of the war. Because CND has always had people moving from one issue to another issue really. And I remember er going somewhere along Oxford Street with a big demonstration to the American Embassy over the Vietnam War. Erm and that's where the enthusiasm went. So by that time or quite quickly afterwards, they launched the submarines and er it all looked peaceful. (25 min) You know you can't see a submarine so...cruise missiles were different. When they reappeared in 1983 I think it was, er they were on lorries trundling around the countryside and that really woke people up. These are nuclear weapons in your back garden but once they were on a submarine underwater, no one worried. So CND went right downhill. I became the um the Chair I suppose about 1977 or something like that and far from being a mass movement, we had a few thousand left um and we had meetings in a room not much bigger than this, our committee meetings. And that's the way it was until er very early in 1980 when he had a room in Great James Street, two rooms about four members of staff, some volunteers and the er the great pillar of the time was a film called the *War Game*. Ever heard of the *War Game*? Well Peter Watkins' film, that was carted around everywhere by us. And then all of the sudden, and I think nothing to with us, partly President Reagan wanted cruise missiles and I don't know what else, the whole world took

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off erm and looking back, I didn't know at the time, nobody knew that the nearest we came to nuclear war I think was in September 1983 when a Soviet observer er saw in the sky five nuclear missiles coming from the West to the East at a time of high tension, high tension. The Americans or NATO was having the exercise and he saw these things and er he should have told them in Moscow. And if he had told them in Moscow, I think they would have fired five back and that would have been the beginning of World War Three. Um, but he said 'I am not going to tell them until I am 110% sure.' Some of his bunker said, 'no you've got to do it.' (27 min) His name is Petrov, there's a good story about him. Stanislav Petrov. And so he wouldn't do it and after three quarters of an hour, there was this amazing cloud formation that had looked exactly like the trace of a nuclear missile on the way. And he wouldn't do it. That's only one...the Cuba crisis was the other close one. Very close. Very close! It could have gone either way. And it was in fact McNamara, you know McNamara, the American Secretary of State for Defense who said only two or three years before he died, he said we didn't survive because of our good judgment, we survived only because of good luck. I'd say God's Providence. It was nobody's intelligence because the number of times when er missiles could have been let off by accident or under a misunderstanding of what was going on, they were numerable. I'd say twenty five near moments of whom the two worst were I think Cuba and Germany in 1983.

*SP: How seriously do you think the public took the threat of nuclear war in the UK at the time? Was it- Were people really scared or did people think it was bit far-fetched?*

BK: I reckon they thought a bit far-fetched. There were people like, you know the woman Pat Arrowsmith, you know her?

*RD: I met her yesterday actually. She sends her best wishes to you.*

BK: Did you see her at home?

*RD: Yeah.*

BK: How is she?

*RD: She's really well. Really well. She showed me some photos of you back in the day.*

BK: Oh really. Because I heard she was ill.

*RD: No not at all, she was absolutely fine when I saw her yesterday.*

BK: Well she took off. She went to the west coast of Ireland um thinking that a nuclear war was around the corner. Um, I didn't take off. What year would that have been when she went off? Erm I dunno but I never felt... I always felt well we'll pull round somehow. (29.00) I've got that kind of disposition. And I don't know if people realised because they weren't told until afterwards about what was going on. They weren't told. I was rather like the First World War. We're reading all these things about the First World War but people were only told 'wicked Germans are doing this.' They had no idea there were some other possibilities that could have been explored. It was all conversations between Prime Ministers and Cabinet members and so on and that's all.

*SP: Did you take any precautions then?*

BK: No. None at all. None at all. I've always thought 'it will be alright in the end.' Very stupid approach but anyway. You've got to survive somehow. But no I never took any precautions of any sort. Well anyway, the precautions were completely stupid. Um in fact, nothing did more for CND

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than the government's thing called 'protect and survive.' It was a wonderful... I think it was really the reason why the whole thing took off in the '80s was this absurd document which first all said that you were to hide under the stairs. Well most people don't have stairs. They are in blocks of flats. And once you're under the stairs with your parents, your in-laws, your children or you were there for fourteen days. Erm sanitary arrangements weren't even discussed. How five people live under the stairs for fourteen days without it becoming intolerable and then when you came out, the best bit in the book, if you haven't seen it, it's worth it, it's a joke, er was don't forget to wipe your cups and saucers free from radioactivity. That was the - every county produced its own booklet and that was the Sussex one. So wipe from radioactivity... ridiculous it is. And then the Women's Union would come round with soup or something. You know it was all that kind of nonsense. (31:00) And people had seen that film *The War Game* and that had a big effect even though it was mocked by the government. But *The War Game*, if you haven't seen it, you should have a look at it. Very powerful film. And it was so ordinary. An ordinary little family down in Gravesend somewhere and a nuclear bomb goes wrong and what happens to them. It's really worth seeing.

(31.30)

*S: Do you have a copy of that book? The precautions booklet?*

BK: They will in the CND office but I don't think I've got one, no.

*S: Erm...I was wondering if we could talk about...were you at the meeting in Central Hall, one of the...*

BK: No. I was quite hostile. My brain was still in a different world. I was in a church on, erm, High Street Kensington, erm, when the first Aldermaston march, the second Aldermaston march came back, the first one in '58 went from London to Aldermaston. In one way sensible, in another way stupid because they were taking people away from the centre of population. If they'd done it from Aldermaston to London as they did always afterwards there was a great build up of people as it came into London and I remember in the summer of '58, is that right? No, the summer of '59, er..., they were coming in down High Street Kensington and I had about five weddings to conduct on that Monday afternoon and none of my brides could get anywhere near the church, erm..., because of all these mobs and that was really... This was disgusting, what's going on? That's where I was at that stage, 1958.

(32.38)

*R: As an outsider kind of witnessing the march go past, what would you say the atmosphere and the general people in the march, erm... What was your opinion of them?*

BK: Well...er...I thought they were a bit of a rag tag lot really...erm...after all they'd been walking for three days, they were a bit exhausted and I think carrying banners that were flopping about the place, erm..., I didn't think these were Communist maniacs, I didn't think that. I just thought they were bloody well obstructing the main road and that's what got me, it was interfering with my life really and I didn't think more than that. I didn't think about it more than that. It's very easy to remember afterwards by the light of what you think now, isn't it? But, err..., I was just annoyed, that's what I was but, err..., my plans were going wrong.

(33.32)

*R: Other than the march were you generally aware of the disarmament movement picking up speed around that time?*

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BK: Err..., yes I was aware, erm..., because it would be on the news and things like that but I'd no great sympathy or interest in it at all. Erm..., it took a long time as I say. I started on through a youth club for the Spanish actions in Africa. Probably that was 1959 before I began to think about that. Then I...it was the morality, kind of like...like a geometry thing. An isosceles triangle has these angles or something and for me, there it was in the book, you can't deliberately kill some civilians in order to have a war, that's in the book. So I began to think in that kind of way. I wasn't a Labour Party member or anything like that. I don't think I ever met anybody in the political world. We wouldn't have done in our school. Um...

*S: Was there a moment in which you really experienced a sudden change in attitude?*

BK: In mine?

*S: In your attitude.*

BK: I think it was a gradual process. I don't really change very much when something suddenly happens. I sort of slither into different positions and I think that's what happened to me. Because - I started with Christian CND and never met people like Canon Collins until long after, I met him afterwards but, err..., I just thought it was the morality of it. I remember going down with the Christian CND to Porton Down. Porton Down is where they made the chemical weapons and having a vigil outside there. It was always on this kind of principle position that you...some wars may be alright but you don't slaughter civilians or act indiscriminately. That was my aim. It wasn't until I think the CND was sinking dramatically in the late 60's that I probably joined national CND and was still a member of Christian CND.

*RD: And would you say that CND lost momentum with the signing of the Test Ban Treaty?*

BK: Well that's what they say, well, err..., we did lose momentum at that time, err..., whether it was the Test Ban Treaty or it was the fact that they'd come to a brink, erm..., eh..., between Kennedy and Khrushchev at a crisis and it'd been resolved so I think people felt "oh this crisis can be resolved" and so I don't think it was that everybody knew about the Test Ban Treaty or cared about it but we'd been to the top of the mountain, it's not as bad as they said and then come down again. I think that's the reality of that time. But it depends who you are on the spectrum. If you were knowledgeable like Pat Arrowsmith it probably had a major effect on her. I was never politically very savvy about it.

(36.45)

*SP: Did you think that, erm..., the nuclear issue was the biggest threat to peace at the time?*

BK: I do now.

*SP: You do now?*

BK: I do now. I think it's, err..., it's not an impossible danger though I've shifted my focus a bit because I think now that misunderstanding and accident is a greater danger than some political leader saying "now I'll fire one." But I think what will happen by chance is more threatening than what will happen by design. Not that it couldn't happen in reality because, err..., I think as you read this story about the Cuba thing, that submarine Captain, he was in a submarine and temperature was 40 degrees centigrade, half the crew had fainted and these are the moments when you make decisions which are irrational and so, err..., I think that, err..., the danger of accident and also

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someone doing it deliberately not understanding what's going on. I think we've no right to put ourselves in that position of immense risk. But there are lots of other risks. What's interesting now, completely undermines the traditional nuclear, err..., dogma is that we're dealing with people who don't mind dying and that's a new idea really because the whole idea of nuclear deterrence is your opponent doesn't want to die, if they don't care like ISIS, apparently, you can't threaten them with death and, err..., that's where we are at the moment and the people haven't really woken up to that. You can't threaten them and especially you can only threaten them if they're, they're anxious to preserve their territory or people. If they don't have a territory or a people about whom they care, you know it doesn't work and that's where we're coming to now and we in this country are in the absurd position of saying we've got to have nuclear weapons to protect ourselves when nine countries have got them and they're a hundred and eighty nine countries in the world so the great majority of countries do not think nuclear weapons are essential to their security. It has become a kind of religion on its own, it's a free wheeling religion...have you seen the letter in The Times? Two days ago a letter in The Times, you should read it, from a man, I don't know twelve generals, admirals, ex-Tory Ministers and all this, we've got to have these things to protect us and so on, it's a dogma. It's really like saying the Earth is flat. It's one of those things. You...you...it takes a long time to get someone to realise that the dogma doesn't work anymore. Erm...and the establishment has been built into it for so long that for them it's like leaving one religion and going to another, that they're so committed to peace based on nuclear weapons that err...and the Camerons' of this world know that the ordinary yob who's not very informed about the weapons think they must protect us. They're not into what happened or didn't happen in Cuba so they're weapons aren't they? So they must be protecting us. That's what weapons are for isn't it? But I do think public opinion is shifting on this issue and in Scotland...there's real hope in Scotland, erm..., if, err..., the Scottish Nationalists do well, and it looks as if they will, then err..., and we don't have a major party with an overall majority then it could well be, I don't think Labour will say we'll pack it up but labour might well say there's no rush, we can delay the programme for five years and by the time they've done that for five years, err..., it will be on the agenda.

*SP: Trident?*

BK: Trident, yeah. More cake?

*SP: More cake? I've still got a bit. It's good, very nice cake.*

(40.58)

*SP: Erm...did you end up going on any of the Aldermaston marches?*

BK: I never went on...I did some of my own with Christian CND...I remember going from Salisbury up to Porton Down, it's not quite the same thing. I began to get interested in public demonstrations really at the time of the Greenham Common women and err...and I went down there many times, err..., but I don't think I was ever on the Aldermaston march. I may have been, I don't think I was. I remember when I was Secretary of the Cardinal in 1963 or 4, going past Trafalgar Square where the march just ended and he, who I liked and admired and a decent man, but Heenan said what was typical; "as far as I'm concerned Bruce, better dead than Red" and he meant it. Nuclear war was the price you had to pay to keep those horrible Communists out. Communism was worse than nuclear weapons. Communism was the kind of bogey that was hovering over the world, and we had to be protected against Communism. I remember at school learning...a very Catholic school, that you couldn't have a system of ethics if you didn't believe in God. That unless you believe in God you couldn't have any ethics and so you couldn't...if a Communist said to you something or other you don't have to believe him because he would tell a lie just in order to...get

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through an argument, he wouldn't have any principles. Amazing ignorance the way in which people actually operate as if integrity was only there for theists, it's not quite true.

Time – 42.45

*RD: You mentioned Greenham Common. Could you speak a little bit about erm..., the role of women within the Peace Movement?*

BK: - Yes! Erm...women individually, err..., played a very major part. Peggy Duff was one fair Secretary of CND. Erm...Pat Arrowsmith played a major part. There were lots of people who played a major...very significant parts in CND. But it was a male dominated affair, erm..., and I remember going to...Joan Ruddick was probably the one...have you talked to Joan Ruddick?

*RD: Only via email so far.*

BK: Well it'd be good if you talked to her. So she and I were in a...we never had a row but we rather parted company because she went on, off to be a Labour Party activist and ceased to be active on this issue and err..., I was always sorry about that...but anyway she was brilliant as a Chair, tell her I said so! She was brilliant erm and we'd got all these bossy men talking about trade Unions err...and we had a number of those that the way to get your opinion over is to shout louder than the other bloke, you held your hand up and so on and all these men were like that, Joan had them absolutely tied up, she brought in women very very cleverly. I think she was good err...now of course I think people are much more sensitive to it, to the err...right of women to speak but it's not what it was in 1960 at all or 1970 or 1980 when Joan Ruddick came on the scene. So, err..., women have played a major part and I remember erm..., who was it? Oh! It was me I suppose...but it'd often happen I did a lot of travelling erm in the 80s, Australia, Japan, God knows where and err nearly always the first questions was "how are the women of Greenham Common?" You know not how are your nuclear weapons or what's Mrs Thatcher doing, how are the women of Greenham Common! Err and I thought that was really impressive they...they, they woke up women all over the place and erm they were invaluable I think. I mean they had all sorts of problems themselves, they had rows between them but that's human nature. Tell me which organisation hasn't had a row err but I think they played a very significant part in the 80s, very...and the legacy goes on. People are quite nostalgic now to go back to Greenham Common...to see the silos are now ancient monuments with big signs up saying "You'll be prosecuted if you do any damage to these ancient monuments". They were silos of nuclear weapons! The wonderful photograph in some book, you see the women were so imaginative, dancing on the top of these silos on a cold winters night. The silos were 20 feet, 30 feet up in the air and they were a lovely moonlight picture of these women dancing in a circle around them. They were so clever! They went through the wire erm and err got themselves dressed up and went to the American dances in the Greenham Common barracks, they were very clever I thought. Yeah...but err I learnt to keep my nose out erm I'm always kind of in a support role not in a dominant role at all err because I could see that that would have been a great mistake and a few men who tried to boss them around...I knew there was going to be on demonstration, a CND demonstration which would be mixed, I don't know what year it was, '59 err '85 perhaps or something and this Trade Union bloke said "well we're members of CND, we want to take part in this thing" and Joan Ruddick was saying "actually this is a women's demonstration so you can stop at the station" or as I did when I went to one of them I...I...became the kind of water carrier erm to bring water to the gates so I was going to the farm house and getting water and bringing it up erm but I never tried to take any active part, it would have been stupid anyway. Very important.

**(47.11)**

*RD: Speaking of demonstrations back in err early days of the CND erm would you say that demonstrations, public demonstrations were kind of frowned upon, speaking to Pat and Walter*

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*Wolfgang last week, they both said that the initial CND were actually against the Aldermaston Marches and doing anything that would draw so much negative attention to themselves and they were quite snobby about that.*

BK: Who was this?

*RD: The original CND committee.*

BK: Oh the original committee didn't like public activity at all, they were not for that, they were for meetings in editorial backrooms and writing articles that's all or getting up in Bishop's meetings, that was their kind of thing and err they were carried away by what they'd started err I think that's the story of what went on. I don't know that they got all that much criticism. What I thought about public demonstrations was they got boring, which is more important than being unpopular and I think I played some part in stopping the Aldermaston Marches because by the time I arrived on the scene in 1980, CND as I said, only had about three thousand members so the people all "we've got to do this, we've always done it". I said "for God's sake we're going to bring in five thousand people, we used to have 150,000! And you're giving the press a field day, the ancient veterans, they can't give up blah blah blah". I said "stop it!" And we did stop it err and nobody protested about stopping it because I think you always have to ask yourself, what is a demonstration for? Err and how effective has it been and there should be a kind of an afterthought about any activity and if you go on being repetitive and repetitive and repetitive it's very boring, people aren't interested. I mean we substituted, we did something different every year but we once had err carried a great rubber globe, about 10ft, like a great balloon across Hyde Park from the American Embassy to the Soviet Embassy, well that had more press coverage than err an Aldermaston March so it was something original.

**(49.33)**

*RD: I think it's really interesting that you should say that because I feel like the actual process of marching is something that's so lacking in our generation and the idea that it could be so prevalent that it actually got boring...*

BK: Boring on the media, I don't mean for the participants. But boring on the media. "Oh god it's them again!" You know? What are you trying to do? You're not trying to show that you can march, you're trying to get rid of nuclear weapons and if you're not converting the bulk of the population to what you think then you're wasting your time. Err that's always been my position and you've got to always assess err what you're doing in those terms, does it work or doesn't it? I get a bit cross with people who that people who've gone to prison for this like Pat Arrowsmith are all very brave to go to prison. I always say an old lady that writes a letter to a local paper that makes sense and gets it in and is read by six or seven or ten thousand people is probably just as effective as anybody who's gone to prison or fasted for six weeks or something. You've got to assess it by what it achieves erm and err there was a kind of obsession with what they called Direct Action, which I've taken part in but never with wild enthusiasm because once you break the law then you're raising other issues as well about your democracy. When are you intent to break the laws and so on. So I've been very hesitant about that, although I have, I got prosecuted for ...what was it?...I went to a base in Norfolk, there's a woman called Angie Zelta, have you come across Angie Zelta? Well she's a real Direct Actionist and she had this thing about, called snowball, that we would take a thousand people to Scunthorpe and if that didn't work we'd take two thousand, if that didn't work we'd take fifty thousand and snowball. It didn't work err I don't think she ever got a thousand. But I went there with her and with a pair of wire cutters, children's wire cutters and the great thing was that I had the wire cutters but I was arrested before I cut the wire which was fantastic because that meant that I was going to be charged, I had to be charged with going equipped to commit criminal damage not committing. If I'd cut the wire it would have been £50 worth of damage, wound up in Magistrate Court and that would have been that but as it was I got

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the Crown Court in Norwich and I could argue for two days about nuclear weapons or this good bit of theatre, that's all. But it was a very clever judge because the judge said "Well now this, all this legal stuff is a bit boring for the jury. I'm going to send the jury out and they'll deal with the factual matters". So I didn't realize what was happening. Out went the jury and so I continued about the Geneva Convention and the Hague Convention, this that and the other and he was nodding and then he called the jury back in again and said "now did Bruce Kent intend to cut this wire or not? That is the only question for you." And of course they said "yes! He said he was going to." Well then he's guilty! That was it. And then a woman came to me from the jury who was a CND member in tears because she said "I came here to help you but when they put that questions to me, I couldn't do anything else except that because that was the question." Not why had I done it. Am I talking too much?

*RD & SP: No!*

*RD: Sorry, I was just wondering if you had a date for that?*

BK: For that trial?

*RD: Yeah...*

BK: Oh yeah...well I could find it for you. I don't know. I'll ask Valerie. It must have been the late 80's when that happened.

*SP: No, I thought that was a really good anecdote, heh.*

BK: Oh yeah...

*SP: Things like that will work quite well as well for the kind of project we're doing*

BK: Yeah it was true. I remember driving up there, staying with Roger Spiller, it must have been '89 or '90. It was after...I think it was between '85 and '90, you get vague after a while... Um, it's funny, but it was a mistake on their part. They should have let me cut the wire! And then I'd have been in the Magistrates Court, guilty, you know £10 fine or something. And then of course I could have erm – I could have refused to pay, which means I'd have ended up in...I did try later on, there was something I was charged for civil disobedience and I had to pay something or other and what they did was say "we're coming to your flat to take something that will pay for the..." whatever it is we had to pay for. So the bailiffs came round one day, I was in the Presbytery down in Holloway, the bailiffs came round and they came into my room and it was really funny because the head bailiff kept saying "would you please just pay up? Don't put us through any inconvenience" And I said "I'm sorry". So after about ten minutes he said to Charlie something "Do your duty". So Charlie then got up and began to look around the room for something worth £350 and he couldn't find anything, I don't think. Then they found – they were in my room next door, a pair of candlesticks and they went off with the candlesticks. Well actually they were plated, they weren't worth more than about fifteen quid but they went off with them. And then they were auctioned buy the Government in some court and the local CND bought them back again for me. So I've got them there now! But the fine you see, that's where the Church came in, the fine was paid anonymously and I'm sure it was paid by my Bishop who didn't want to have any fuss about a priest being in a court.

Have some more cake I keep saying hopefully!

*SP: \*laughs\**

BK: I'm going to put the kettle on very shortly, make a cup of tea. I'm sure you could have one.

*SP: I'd quite like one, yeah*

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BK: Would that be a good idea? Have you got some - you can think up some more questions while...

*SP: Yeah*

BK: I'm not kicking you out, you can go on as long as you like. Well, no you can't but you can certainly go on a bit longer.

*SP: Would you like a bit of a break?*

BK: No, I'd sooner get rid of you! I'd sooner get it done.

*RD & SP: heh heh heh*

BK: But I will put the kettle on and make some tea if you like? Are you tea drinkers?

*SP: Yeah*

BK: I'll put the kettle on then

Time - 56.45

BK: Tell me, what is this project you are doing? Is there a team?

*RD: Yeah, there is. I just put out a call over the internet really, if anyone's interested and erm Sam's a UCL student. I went directly to their Union erm and put a call out there. But we've had a really great response, really great, so as this stage in the project considering we've only just started really, we've got about sixty volunteers working on it.*

BK: Sixty volunteers working on it?

*RD: Mmmm, yeah.*

BK: Wonderful.

**(57.28)**

*SP: What exactly was the Church's stance on nuclear weapons? The Catholic Church stance...*

BK: Ambivalent would be the best word. There were individuals, in fact the best one on our side by a long way was an old Jesuit Archbishop called Roberts, Thomas Roberts. Now he's worth looking up 'cause he was completely consistent. He wasn't a pacifist and he was quite suspicious of the Soviet Union so he couldn't be written off as a Communist.

Oh you are going to have some!

*RD: Yes, yes, of course I am!*

BK: So Roberts, on the Anglican side, who would you say Valerie was a Roberts?

Valerie: Bell? I don't know what his reaction to the bomb was. I expect it was negative, don't you think?

BK: Hmm yes but I don't think he was alive, I'm not sure if he was alive

V: Really? When did he die?

BK: I don't know but I would have thought before CND began, I don't know

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V: We're talking about 1945 or 1958?

BK: Well CND began in '57, didn't it? But erm I don't know of any Anglican apart from Collins erm who was opposed to CND

V: Opposed to CND?

BK: Opposed to nuclear weapons err vocally in the same way as Archbishop Roberts.

V: But I think that Bell at the time of the dropping of the bomb would have spoken about it because he was certainly against it.

BK: So where did we get to?

*SP: Erm...so...So I asked what the Church's stance was on nuclear weapons?*

BK: Well I think by and large they went along with what the establishment was doing...

*SP: Ok...*

BK: But there were heroic people, individuals in all communities who opposed it.

*SP: Did the Pope ever make a comment?*

BK: Well err I think he did. The Second Vatican Council had a wonderful comment - "any act of war aimed indiscriminately at entire cities and whole areas along with the population is a crime against God oh man to be on his readiness and condemned". 1964. Erm that's why I stressed the gap then between doing it because those who heard that, "readiness and condemned" all said "oh but we're not going to it" and because we've got nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrent we'll never have to do it and that's how they wriggle out of it so err erm certainly the Pope, the Church as a whole had a very strong position, my church on a whole on the use of nuclear weapons. But that wasn't the argument, it's what is keeping them in order to stop happening was the err err endless, endless argument that went on all the time. If it wasn't for nuclear weapons we would have had war...We had war anyway! We had dozens of wars! Vietnam, I think Vietnam was one of the most interesting moments when erm the Americans were driven out in the most humiliating form sitting on top of the embassy in Saigon, being evacuated by helicopter, do you remember? That was the most powerful military in the world! Nuclear weapons up to its elbows! And it couldn't do anything with them. And then other one was in the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and was driven out two years later. Nuclear weapons no significant use at all. Well even our own little Falkland enterprise, we may have won it but the Argentinian regime wasn't worried that we had nuclear weapons. They should have been! Because they were people like Winston Churchill Jr. who were urging us to go and erm nuke err the Argentinians.

**(1.01.56)**

*SP: You mentioned earlier that you had been to Japan*

BK: I'm not hearing you now

*SP: You mentioned earlier that you've been to Japan*

BK: Yes...

*SP: Did you go to Hiroshima?*

BK: Course! That's why I went. They have a big annual ceremony at erm Hiroshima and Nagasaki three days later and I went to participate in that I think, two or three times...twice anyway I went

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there. Very moving too, very moving. And they've done the place very elegantly, the whole garden, the Hiroshima garden is beautiful and err there's a lovely statue I think to the youth of the world or something or other like that and at the bottom is says; "may this..." and the word is 'mistake'..."may this mistake never happen again." Well I think that's a very moderate way of describing what went on erm this "mistake" err quite impressive. Nagasaki is different, have you been there? Nagasaki, a much hillier place so the casualties were much lower, well, not lower, there were about 65,000 or something in Nagasaki but because of the hills the blast didn't have the same effect as it did in Hiroshima. But, but it wasn't the blast as much as the erm ongoing radiation that killed people subsequently which people didn't realise at the time, the Japanese didn't realise it would go on killing people.

**(1.03.25)**

*SP: When did you go on these trips?*

BK: Well again I think probably about '81 or '82 were the first one and err later on I went again, very exhausting trip going out in those days, it's a long journey by air, you stop off here and there. But I went in the '80s, I went all over the place, I went everywhere except South America. I don't know why, no nuclear weapons. I was in demand all over the place.

*SP: Who did you go on behalf of?*

BK: CND.

*RD: And do you think it's important to commemorate the two bombings over here?*

BK: Oh yeah! To make people realize what...what we're talking about. But in a way it becomes "ah but we've never had it again have we? So it must have worked" and all that...you've got to do it in a way that shows that it's only a sign of the dangers that are there. It can become like the cenotaph. You'd think no blood had ever been shed at the Cenotaph when they have their thing err Remembrance Sunday. It's all like a High Mass sometimes. Processions, dignitaries and so on but Nagasaki and Hiroshima were major crimes, unnecessary crimes. That's why that book is so important.

*SP: And who exactly organized these commemorations?*

BK: In Japan?

*SP: Hmmm*

BK: Oh the Kensukio (sp) was the major...there were two major peace movements, one the Socialists, Kensukien (sp) and err the Communists are the Kensukio and I think Kensukio was the major organizer and they began to distance themselves from the Soviet Union as time went on. But there were other groups there too, Buddhists and people who were taking part in it, Christians too.

*SP: And err did you, could you tell that, erm you know that a bomb had been dropped here in the past? Were there any physical remnants? Or did you see any people that were still suffering?*

BK: They've kept err I forget what it was, but there was a building that had its roof half broken off. It's a big thing with a dome on it, that is still there and the metal struts are there on it, that's the only sign of damage that was there. All the rest is now Si High Park, its ponds and things. First time I went there about 8 o'clock in the morning, the first bomb was dropped at 8.17 or something on Hiroshima on a clear day, one aeroplane going over the top and err we were there and an aeroplane went over and err it was presumably a Japanese aeroplane, Japanese air force plane, went over the top about that time. And we always looked up and thought it was beautifully done, choreography, whatever it's called, the way they laid it on. And they have the most gruesome museum in

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Hiroshima of the whole event of what went on and the people...but we've had so many cartoons and pictures of that now. It's like we don't want to make it a ritual thing like err like November the, whatever it is, Remembrance Sunday. It's got to make people think. The Japanese do it well.

*SP: Ermm...*

BK: You've probably run out, it's been going very well.

*SP: I have run out looking at my notes. Do you have anything?*

**(1.07.19)**

*RD: Just kind of really wanted to unpick more your reaction as a teenager as a schoolboy to the dropping of the bomb and erm you know you're...you said your reaction was kind of "they deserved it" and they designated it as the 'Wonder Bomb' etc. Can you just tell me a little bit about how it was reported in the paper? As I understand it thought there were different stands on it but also, you know, the information kind of filtered through over a period of time about what actually happened. Is that right?*

BK: Well, you see I'd be inventing if I told you all I remember is feeling "thank god the war is finished." It didn't actually finish until about three days after Nagasaki erm but you felt this is the end of it and a great sense of relief and joy. I didn't have any family or friends out there so I wasn't saying "oh good my brothers coming back" or anything like that. So I had no personal feeling about what went on in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was just "it's over and they bloody well deserved it" erm and err "and I don't give a hoot about..." Well I didn't know, you didn't see pictures of Hiroshima, who was that wonderful man...the journalist, Australian...Valerie will know...who went there about three days after it was bombed, who wrote the first account of it erm and that really began to wake me up, seeing and telling us about erm...was it a friend of James Cameron? Do you remember James Cameron? Never heard of James Cameron? James Cameron was a wonderful journalist and author, look him up erm and he had a friend who I met in James' dining room in Swiss Cottage...I don't know whether Valerie will know, anyway I'll find out for you.

*RD: I know who you mean, about the photographer, I can't think of the name off the top of my head but I've got it written down somewhere.*

BK: Yeah...He wasn't just a photographer, he was an author and journalist and he was an Australian and he was the first one who got in. In fact he got in erm...how did he get in? After the surrender err but he was in Tokyo before the thing was signed on the American battleship and he got a train and went down to Nagasaki with Japanese soldiers and others on the train and I think he was very brave because if he'd been found they'd have been really nasty saying "you've just done this to us, we're chop you up on the spot." I think it was quite brave. So he was in Hiroshima within a week of the bomb being dropped. Oh, it'll come...anyway I'll tell you later on.

**(1.10.13)**

*RD: Erm...when you said you had this kind of opinion of "they deserved it", when you say 'they' do you mean the Japanese as a whole? Or was there any distinction between Japanese erm the army and the civilians at that stage?*

BK: I'm seventeen, no distinction, they're just nasty people who did dreadful things and err and I'd just no interest in them at all. And I'd never thought about...but anyway we were also told if you remember that erm Hiroshima and Nagasaki were military camps and all that was being played up err so took over justification so civilians were kind of...I don't know if they ever said this but the implications was civilians were kind of accidental consequence of knocking out a major Japanese

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base. It was all so casual. As you know that erm err Nagasaki was an afterthought, they were going to bomb some other place erm Kyoto or somewhere, Kyoto I think and err but Stimson (?) or what some American who'd been to the place knew it was a great historic city and ruled out dropping one on that place. And then there was another one but the fog was over that place and Nagasaki was the last one on the way out which ironically was the Christian city in Japan. If there was a Christian city in Japan it was Nagasaki err...I remember going, I didn't go with him, but I remember meeting Leonard Cheshire. Do you know Leonard Cheshire? VC? Heroic bombing pilot for Second World War? Well he went out err on, I think it was an observer on the first bombing trip and he justified it in all sorts of papers, what had happened. In fact, I remember him saying the Japanese ought to be grateful because we brought the war to an end. He actually said that! And he went out to Japan to Nagasaki err kind of to get the applause or the praise of the sensible Japanese. Of course they didn't kill him but they didn't want to talk to him at all. And he retreated to the Catholic Cathedral in Nagasaki which had been half bombed anyway and came home. That was the kind of thinking. Incredible. "They should be grateful."

**(1.12.48)**

*RD: Erm...just completely going off that topic... so within the CND there were lots of kinds of different sections and you said you were kid of the CND Christian side of it. How did you all work together in terms of these different kinds of collaboration between the Quakers and the Pax Christie and erm kind of other Christian sides coming into it? Was there any tension or was it all under one umbrella?*

BK: I think that we managed on the whole to work quite well together. There was certainly different priorities in different groups as to what would happen erm and we had these specialist sections, Christian CND, Trade Union CND, Labour CND and all this erm and I remember when I was Chair trying to stop and succeeding in stopping groups who actually believed in Nuclear Disarmament latching on and becoming specialist sections because I realised what they were doing was actually trying to move CND into their particular philosophy or whatever it was. Erm it's like Christian CND trying to covert CND to Christianity. Erm I think one of the groups that I opposed was Green CND erm great people but they were all committed to getting rid of nuclear weapons anyway so why did we need a Green CND? Trying to convert the Green's. And I was really saying to myself err CND is not there to be converted by somebody else to another philosophy. CND is there to get rid of nuclear weapons, that was my kind of attitude. Whether that's everybody's attitude, I don't know, at the time but erm I don't think we ever had any err any trouble between the different sections. If there was any it was normally on a personality basis that someone's got a bigger voice or wants a louder profile or that kind of thing. That's what caused the frictions... Why don't they shut up and let someone else have a go, that kind of thing. And there was always the suspicion of the Communist end of CND. The Communists didn't take part in the first CND, they only came in about a year later erm some ideological thing about disarmament got to be multilateral and not unilateral. Something like that. So we always wondered whether they were kind of travelling Soviets or not. Some of them certainly were! But one or two people, but they were so unusual that they stood out erm trying to sell the Soviet message and there was no Soviet message that we'd accept, except nuclear weapons were out. But they were just one or two like that, not very many. Of course the accusations from the Right Wing was non-stop, that you were agents of the Soviet Union, non-stop. And there was a particular man called Julian Lewis, he's an MP now, Julian was absolutely ruthless about this. Smearing everybody. 'What is CND? Communist? Neutralist? Defeatist?' on great banners all over the place. Paid for, this is a bit of it I haven't talked about, paid for by whom? They had an office in Whitehall, 27 Whitehall. Where do you get an office in Whitehall? Who paid that money? They had a helicopter fly over the Greenham Common demonstration, where'd they get the helicopter from? You know these are all funded and probably funded by the American Heritage lot so err you had to be very cautious about where we took money from, what we said and so on and then that we didn't offer erm wide open doors to

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attacks from err from Right Wing people, we were very cautious. The only time we had secrets, we used to go for a walk in the park on the grounds that they probably haven't bugged all the trees. So we had to plan something that might be dodgy or illegal or something, we'd just go for a walk and talk about it. We wouldn't do it in the office. But they sent a spy. There was a well-known man who came to our office as a would be volunteer and we learnt afterwards that he was an agent sent by the Government, sent by the Foreign Office into our office and he'd had a very interesting history thorough his own career of going to organizations like the college in Birmingham that fell apart. And he'd go to those organizations and after he left it fell apart because he was always the agitator who managed to bring it down and I think he was put into CND with the same aim. And he left CND and he wrote some memoir or other, he said "Bruce Kent is a pseudo-Marxist" Pseudo-Marxist! Let alone a real Marxist! But we...I knew what he was there for but there was nothing to learn really 'cause we always said that everything we do is open, what's it matter? Bring them along and they can find out what we're planning, it's no secret.

**(1.18.13)**

*RD: That's what I was thinking. Would there have been any point in having a spy there? But no...*

BK: Well they always hoped they'd be something they would turn up. I don't know what. And there was this one man in Yorkshire who clearly was a very fundamentalist Soviet Communist who was anxious to use us to promote the Soviet Union. There was that element in the Communist Party. They'd all grown up on the idea that the Communist Party was heaven on Earth. And it was a terrible shock. Like a Catholic leaving the Catholic Church to discover that the Communist Party were actually the Soviet Union, behaved abominably in all sorts of situations. I think they really had a trouble some of those people. Anyway, we survived, that was the important thing. We never had a great major fall out. I remember reading about Canon Collins and Bertrand Russell and they only met at the end with a tape recorder on the table between them, the level of trust has gone down so long, so far. Well that never happened in CND when I was around. It hasn't happened now I don't think. So we managed to get on.

**(1.19.36)**

*SP: So the CND weren't on the Right but they weren't on the Left either? Did you try and, I don't know, because it...*

BK: We had a naive belief that somehow we would convince the Labour Party. If anything CND was Labour focused. They surely...and of course in the days of Kinnock erm it looked promising when Kinnock was completely committed. He was on platforms in Trafalgar Square, his wife erm Gladys or Glennis, was err equally committed. I remember he came on one of my walks, two of us standing on a motorway bridge saying "get rid of nuclear weapons". Err so it was quite a profound shock when the Labour Party almost overnight changed its policy and first of all said we're only keeping them to negotiate, they're of no military value but they help to negotiate. Within about a year that had gone too.

*SP: Ok...hmm.*

BK: What do you do when you're not doing this sort of thing? You're a student?

*SP: I'm a student.*

BK: In what year are you in?

*SP: I'm doing a Masters.*

BK: Doing a Masters? Oh god! Heroic!

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SP: *\*laughs\**

BK: Where did you do your first degree?

SP: *In the Netherlands.*

BK: In the Netherlands, are you Dutch?

SP: *No.*

BK: No...what did you do it in?

SP: *Erm...literature, comparative literature.*

BK: Why the Netherlands?

SP: *Erm...because I already lived there, my father got a job in the Netherlands and so we moved and then I decided to stay there because it was much cheaper.*

BK: What is it? Do you have to pay for a degree?

SP: *Erm...it's a...ummm..a grand in tuition a year.*

BK: Is it a survivable grant?

SP: *Ummm yeah. Well basically the fees are say a thousand pounds but the government give you two or three so you have a bit to live on as well.*

BK: Oh! That's good.

SP: *Yeah.*

BK: And is the course studied in English or is it in Dutch?

SP: *It was in English.*

BK: English.

SP: *Yeah.*

BK: You fluent in Dutch?

SP: *I'm pretty good but I'm not that good.*

BK: Hmmm...I think that's the problem with two, the motivation to learn a language is so marginal in the world.

SP: *I mean Dutch people don't expect you to learn, they're quite ok with, they realize their language isn't that widely spoken. They could be more proud of their language even.*

BK: Yeah...well if they were Welsh they would be. If they were Scots they would be.

SP: *Yeah.*

BK: Well I grew up in the days of Esperanto. I thought I might even learn Esperanto but now English is...every bus driver in Beijing can speak English so you don't need another language. It's like Latin isn't it? Medieval Latin.

SP: *Makes things easy but it is also a shame in a way because there's no need to...*

## Bruce Kent Transcript

BK: I know. I feel ashamed really when I meet a German. I can stumble through in French but err after ten years of learning French I could only say 'good morning' and 'how are you?' and 'what's the weather like?' That's all, in French. A bit feeble.

(1.23.17)

*SP: I had a question because before I started doing research for this project, when I thought of the CND I thought of the Aldermaston Marches or I had an image in my head of long haired hippies standing outside of a base and I was wondering was that a thing? Have I got the right image in my head? Were hippies a thing? And involved in the movement? Or was that more of a kind of...maybe I'm confusing the Peace Sign with the Peace Movement in the States and all that? 'Cause I feel like that when people my generation, when they think of the CND that's the kind of image they have in their head.*

BK: It's probably the image they were given. A part of demeaning CND would be to present them as a lot of loony hippies and so that's probably what did come over to you on the media, but it's not true. But it is true that in the States and elsewhere the CND sign became a kind of universal protest sign so it was always present whatever it was, races or race demonstrations or anything erm so yeah...

*SP: I think it could be something to do with how the Peace Symbol was taken up by a whole amalgamation of groups and maybe that's...Yeah.*

BK: Actually I think CND was very middle class and student erm not all that many lorry drivers or whatever. Some but not all that many, but that's my own impression.

*SP: Ok*

BK: But err it's hard to sort out the propaganda from the reality really, looking back. If you look at some of those early films erm who is that Welsh actor who died? Made a wonderful story of the first Aldermaston Marches? Erm...and they just look such ordinary people, duffle coats and going getting wet, umbrellas and that sort of stuff. They didn't look at all bizarre.

*SP: Yeah...it could be an attempt to delegitimize the movement, that image.*

BK: Oh yeah! Oh it goes on. To this day it goes on erm I mean how many times have you seen the Trident issue being debated in the current election? Nicola Sturgeon is the only one who's brought it up at all, it's a major issue for this country isn't it? You ok?

*RD: I'll just wait till you finish.*

BK: Nothing will make me finish! But an issue that's going to cost £100 million is not being made an issue in the election. Yet three parties fly it. Scotch Nationalists and Green are all opposed to it. I'm just hoping that they'll have an effective British position of some sort in the next election. Is that alright then? Have I done enough? \*laughs\*

*RD: Yup! Brilliant!*

*SP: Yeah*

BK: Well if you want some more come back again, you're welcome. I'll get some more cake.

*RD & SP: \*laughs\**

*RD: We've eaten a great deal of it!*

BK: You're welcome, you're absolutely welcome.

## Bruce Kent Transcript

*RD: Thank you.*

BK: When you both started off drinking water I thought “oh god what have I got here?” Very austere pair

*SP: \*laughs\**

*RD: We've just literally come from Costa in that complex across the way.*

BK: Oh I see! Oh, you didn't think you'd get tea here? Don't worry, that's one thing we give away in quantity.

*SP: \*laughs\**

BK: So come again if you want to, if you need to.

*RD: Ok, brilliant*

BK: And I'll try and remember those names. One was the name of the err friend of James Cameron wasn't it? And the other was the name of the spy in the CND office. I'll ask Valerie, she may know. If not have I got your email? I probably have somewhere.

*RD: You do, yeah.*

BK: Well I might send it to you, you'd better remind me.

*RD: Ok, brilliant. Well thank you very much.*

*SP: Thank you so much.*

BK: Great pleasure, great pleasure.