

After Hiroshima
Interview with Jim Radford 2
Thursday 28th January 2015

Interviewee: Jim Radford (JR), born 1/10/1928

Interviewer: Sarah Woods (SW)

SW: Um...I was going to – er, sort of dive in a bit and ask, which sort of goes on from what we were saying, about the nuclear weapons and, and why, particularly now, as we're entering into this conversation about them – why you, I presume that you think that's not a good idea?

JR: Who is it, who is it, what are they trying to deter is the question. Um, the argument they made about the deterrent, um, if you go back to the, the fifties and sixties, and before '58. when we formed CND, when I was involved in lots of debates about it then, and the same argument was put forward. And our answer to that was if we need a deterrent to stop people from attacking us, it would be perfectly reasonable and sensible and logical for everybody else to want to try to stop people attacking them! And if everybody gets a deterrent, sooner or later there's going to be an accident. You know, you don't think anybody's going to – hopefully nobody's going to be stupid enough to use it deliberately, but an accident will occur. Well of course there've been lots of accidents since then – lots of occasions when, narrow misses when they've mistaken flights of geese, or whatever, for all kinds of reasons, or assumed there was a - we've narrowly escaped disaster on a number of occasions. And, that will go on, and especially, the, the, the I don't know that Britain and America are that stable but what people regard as less stable states – India and Pakistan for instance, North Korea and South Korea – various countries get it. Israel's got it, Iran wants to have it, obviously (?)...if I was an Arab, I, I'd want to get it to deter Israel from attacking me or us. Er, it's perfectly reasonable, if the deterrent argument holds good, it holds good for everybody. And if everybody has it, it's going to be used, sooner or later it will be used, there's no question about it that that will happen. So, er, even if at some point it deterred, that the knowledge that it was there did deter somebody, er, I doubt if er, if Russia ever thought "Let's launch an attack on Britain or America, oh, we won't", I doubt if that conversation, that concept ever arose. But if it did, that time is long past. Now we're in a, a dangerous world with lots of, er, facts- and – not just states, but terrorist groups, groups operating, political operating within states trying to take over, fanatical groups, all kinds of people that, you wouldn't want them to have a bloody - plane, never mind an atomic bomb, but you'd know if they've got a bomb or if they've got a weapon, they're going to use it. That's what they want weapons for, they're going to use it, and they're not interested a deterrent, they're interested in attacking people, and killing people, and....So it, I would have thought, to me that seems so obvious – I can't see why it's not obvious to everybody else, why they don't see that, the dangerous situation. It's like if you've ever been in a mob situation, whether this is a football match or a demonstration or something, where there's a mob of people and tempers are running high and people are excited. Now that is the last situation, is it not, in which you want to go out and hand out weapons? You know, when, you wouldn't want to go in the, if somebody went into that situation and said, "Hang on lads, I've got a lot of baseball bats here", or a lot of guns, or a knife, you wouldn't do that because you'd know that was almost certainly, almost certainly going to result in violence and death. And yet, that is the situation in the world today, to take any steps that will, that are likely to lead to greater proliferation. And our clinging on to it is doing that all the time. Any nation's got any argument with us or anybody else thinks "I must have a , a nuclear weapon". And from their point of view that's perfectly sensible. I can see, understand that. The only way to stop that is to say "Look, we don't – let's get rid of them, let's not have them."

SW: And do you think we're in a – I suppose the arguments that are used seem to me to still fit with the cold war mentality of , you know, Russia and America and us. And I suppose part

of our clinging on to them is about clinging on to the idea of Great Britain as this great power in the world. Do you think we need to adjust our sense –

JR: Absolutely, yes. We're, we're living in the past, yes. Yup, yes, we're trying to punch above our weight. Um, and if it weren't, I mean...if we didn't have nuclear weapons, we're a reasonably influential power, but not, we're not, we would not be a great, seen as a great threat to anybody. Normally, and er, and certainly not a continuing threat. There might be situations in which , problems arise, and we suddenly become the enemy or are seen as a threat, but by and large we're not a threat. Whereas the United States is a threat now, Throughout the world it's seen as a – I see it as a threat. So I mean, there are some (laughs) lovely people in America, but their foreign policy is atrocious and they have become the bully of the world. Er, Er, I had this, er, I did this gig in Los Angeles last July, and er, I told this story, I told this story to my brother in law who is, er, who is very right wing, and er, he thinks I'm anti-American. I'm not anti-American, I'm, I love America. I went, we gave this talk in LA, and it was, a lot of veterans there, and I got a bit carried away and I laid into them and I told them, you know I told them that they ought to be, I said, "You've become the bully of the world", I said "What you did in Vietnam was just as bad as anything (in the last) you did, if not worse because you did it with more fire power, I said, "You ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourselves," So after I'd finished, after I'd finished, I got a bit worked up. I went down and this big fella came on, a big ex-marine, American marine, he came on, "I want a word with you", and I thought Oh, I thought, well, perhaps I've come on a bit strong! He said "No, you didn't", he said, "Too restrained", he said. He said, "You didn't, you didn't spell it out clear enough", he said. He said, "We've become the fourth fucking Reich". That's what he said, he said I said you were like the Nazis, he said "We are the Nazis!, We are the fourth fucking Reich", he said. That's how he described America. This is a patriotic American, his country, that he'd wanted, been prepared to fight for. The Fourth Reich. And a lot of the veterans for peace in America think like that and they're very bitter and angry about what their country's become and what it's, what it's done. More so than the British veterans. The British veterans are angry too, the, the young newer veterans, that I'm involved with for Veterans for Peace, but the American veterans are very angry, a lot of them. That encourages me of course, that they are angry, they're doing good things over there.

SW: It's a powerful voice, isn't it, that?

JR: It is a powerful voice, yes, you get listened to. I get listened to. I've never played the veteran card, most of my time for peace I've never even mentioned I've been in the forces, but latterly, in the last year or so since I've got ,er, a fair amount of attention paid to me cause I turned out to be the youngest D-Day veteran, and that, so that, then, so that gives you a voice. I had a voice before, but, but, a different voice. A new constituency.

SW: Well it's that idea, that we can still learn from those things that have happened, that we don't seem to have learnt from really.

JR: Well that's, that's well exactly, another point I make is that - I make it in this video, that you'll see at some point, that when I was a youngster it was taken for granted, when I was a kid, well all the men'd been in the first world war, it was just taken for granted that everybody was anti-war. Every veteran, everybody who'd been in the trenches, everyone who'd lived through the horror of, of , of the first world war – was horror – was anti-war. And they never thought of it in any other, they said, said "That was a terrible thing that shouldn't have happened and must never happen again". That was the point. That was the whole point of what we're trying to do now with Veterans for Peace at the cenotaph – get them back to what the original point of the cenotaph was. It wasn't a commemoration of Britain's military prowess. It was, it was a sorrowful dedication to a, commitment to avoiding that kind of slaughter, any situation that could lead to that kind of slaughter again. It was a, it was an anti-war – the original demonstrations at the cenotaph were anti-war.

Solemn, er, people to go and make a commitment. To peace, and um, that's what we're trying to get them back to.

SW: But we seem to have, I mean it feels like we have sort of come back to, er er, I don't know in quite an insidious way, a sort of militarisation of culture. You know –

JR: Yes, yes, it's as if the – I've got a son in Australia, married an Australian girl, and she's got a step-brother who's started corresponding with me, and he was very interested when he found out I'd been in the war. And, I don't know how old he is, he's a teenager I think, but he's obviously, he's very interested in weapons of war, and he's, he's surprised that I don't know anything about them, I mean, ha, ha, I'm not interested in weapons of war! Apart, apart from getting rid of them. And I understand this teenage fascination with, with er, weapon- technology and such, but, but this is all, this is a teenage thing. But it's got into adults now, so you've got lots of adults now who haven't experienced war at first hand. They've only read about it. And when you've read about it it's different, because you don't – you have a totally different understanding of it, you you, glean the highlights, and the, and the, the victories and the celebrations and and you get this feeling of reflected glory. Er, ah, at the time when you're, that's not, there isn't an elation in victory, there's relief that some battle is over. That you've survived that. Not that you've won and prevailed but that you've survived it and come out of it intact. And, the longer we go on without – even now, people in the military now might have been in the military and not seen service. And my, my, my. When I talk about that I give talks about it sometimes and I say, I, I can guarantee you if I go to an ex service or an association or a British Legion or something, I said, the vast majority of people when you talk to them are anti-war. You see I'm in, I'm a founder member of the deep sea (?) association, the Normandy Veterans Association, and these aren't anti-war associations, you know, they're meetings of old comrades. But when I go and I, they all know what I stand for and what I'm about and I occasionally get the bit between my teeth and go into lecture mode, and I get agreement! Vast majority – nobody disagrees with me because these are all people, the Normandy veterans, the rest of them, who've seen, who've been in action. Now occasionally I'll get, I'll find myself in some place, maybe it's a British Legion club or something, talking to people. Ostensibly veterans, but I don't know them, and I'll get some who are gung-ho... You can bet your sweet life, every time I've checked this out, that any who are there, the minority who are there who are as it were pro-war, or, or --- have seen no action, or very little action. They're, they're, people are anti-war in relation to the amount of action they saw, so the less action they've seen, the more likely they are to be, "Oh, let's nuke the bastards", or, "Let's - what we – send in the marines", or whatever. Er, people who've seen action and have seen their, their comrades blown to pieces or, or actually blown to pieces is, is, is a quick way, there's lots of slow deaths, and, er, if you've, if you've seen death and destruction on any scale, it it stays with you forever, and you don't wish that on anyone. You don't wish it on your enemy, never mind your friend. You don't want anybody to die like that. Er, so, it, it's very much to do with the passage of time and people, generations growing up who've only read the books and seen, er, and seen the films. Again, even when they're realistic, er, sometimes they're quite realistic, and they even show the blood. But they never show the shit. [15.07] There's a lot of shit. You blow people to pieces, a lot of shit flying about and blood as well, you know and there's a nasty smell and it stays with you, it doesn't go away. It's like a nightmare thing and you can't show that on a film and they don't want to show that on the film, obviously, it's understandable, y'know. People have seen so many films, there's so much violence on films that their idea of what it's like to be in a violent situation where people are being shot and killed or blown up or whatever, um, it's harder to tidy it up when people are burnt to death – so they don't show that very often. They don't actually show people burning to death but if you, if you're on the convoy or the tankards(?) you do see people burning to death. They don't make horror films about war, you see. They make horror films but people get a kick out of it 'cos they know it's not real. But a real horror film would be to show war... what it's really like... if you could show what it's really like, or feel like at the time... So... yeah, we are, we are... it seems that we do not learn from experience... not enough of us learn

from experience.

SW: So how could that... from what you've said to me makes complete sense and even as you're describing it I can feel, you know, we don't wanna go there do we? We don't really want to imagine it. As you talk about it I know that I don't want anything to do with that...

JR: I've seen things that I never want to see again and I don't want to think about anymore than I have to. And a lot of people saw a lot more than I did. My brother, I had two brothers and we all went to sea. Jack was torpedoed, was lost. Fred was at sea throughout the war, he saw lots of, a lot more of, we were both on rescue turns(?) so we both saw a lot of sinking, burning ships. He saw a lot more of it than I did and he never talked about it. He died last year.

SW: People, there's quite a few interviews that we've done as part of this... someone who was in a concentration camp in Japan. There's another woman who I've been talking to is Japanese, who's a peace protestor over here and there's that theme of things that people don't talk about. Another guy, I think you probably remember reading it, who went back, went to Hiroshima shortly after 3 months after the bomb. And that idea that people don't talk to each other about it. This woman who's in a concentration camp – her father wouldn't let anyone mention the word 'Japan' you know that was too much. And there's something in that isn't there, that it's too much to bear, you know you can't think about it and yet for the people who haven't experienced it and perhaps who therefore are more open to ideas of war, you know, they can't know. So, there's never quite that meeting and I don't know how that's overcome really.

JR: Certainly. Normally I, in my later years now, 'cos I'm still active in the peace movement and all that on the musical front too I talk as well as... and I was the press officer or the [inaudible]. In my later years did some talk-, for years never talked about it sort of never talked about it at all and even when I did talk about it you don't talk about the horror of it you talk about... you might reminisce about interesting aspects of your service life. The only time you get... I've talked about the horror of it on just 1 or 2 occasions, it's if I've been in some situation where I'm slightly drunk, I've had a few drinks... cast off your inhibitions and don't worry about offending people and then sometimes, once or twice, I've spelt out, trying to correct people's misconceptions about war and what actually happened and what ideas they have. Lots of people have this idea that the British never commit atrocities, it's bollocks – total nonsense. [Inaudible] and Normandy too, not as bad as the Nazis but they happen.

SW: So when you say you've had a few drinks, why is it at that point because you say, we mind less about offending people.

JR: Probably that dear, probably that.

SW: But there must also be that thing of not wanting to go back there.

JR: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

SW: I'll think about that some more and I, if you don't mind, my asking a bit of help with some thing at the National. So if we were going to think about what we'd do instead of nuclear weapons, you know, if we said no to Trident what would an alternative vision be? What should we be spending our money on and making our country as good as it can be?

JR: Well, the Americans had the idea of a Peace Corp and I'm all in favour of a Peace Corp instead of being in the situation when you say "don't do this here or we're going to send troops there and

we're going to do that or we're gonna frighten you by having manoeuvres here." Your concerned about the situation in some part of the world, send people in to help. What is needed in this situation? Well obviously you need a stable government and a government that's not trying to frighten other people and you don't get that by saying, by trying to frighten them in turn. You might get that by befriending them. You know, that's... my next door neighbour but one is a nation guy. He's in Japan at the moment but he goes round-, he's a technician, he's one of these [inaudible]. He's retired now but he's over qualified, all these letters after his name, he spent his life doing that so he goes round the world lecturing still but he's hopeless with people he's terrible at relationships and it took a long time before I broke him down and made him a friend. But the people the other side of him... he calls them... and I say to him – the kids, their kids, throw things over his fence and he won't pass them back. And instead of getting into the confrontation why don't you go out of your way to be sociable? He's got no idea how to do that, he's got no idea how to be, how to charm people or how to offer the hand of friendship. And I think that in a way, if someone is annoying you, take the wind out of their sails by being nice to them.

I used to live, years ago I lived in Beckenham and I used to have this neighbour who was very suspicious of me because I was a known left-winger, I had all these posters up and everything and I was sort of known, notorious. They were very conservative so treated me with great suspicion and wouldn't have anything to do with me. And I'll always remember that our gardens were joined; I had a garden and they had a garden and the fence went about 8 inches, or a foot, from the garden and because the fence was too low and they could see in, lots of meeting in my house and the kids would come in. And they wanted to shut us out so they build a high fence, they built this fence and it was double the height and I came out one day and they were building and I saw by the lengths of the [inaudible] they were putting posts in. So I said to the guy, I said: "Are you gonna build a fence along the... oh yeah..." I said "you don't need to do that". He said "what do you mean?" I said "Well, just, put it onto the garage." He said "well that's your space, you've got [inaudible]". I said "well I can't use it behind the garage, save you a bit of money". He was totally taken aback by it! It was only about that width of ground but for about a few lengths of the ground. But to some people that's important to them. It wasn't important to me 'cos I had no use for it. I wasn't worried about it and he couldn't understand why I'd give it up to him and I noticed that after that, we never became friends but he dropped that hostility. He was no-longer fault finding all the time so, because he couldn't understand an act of generosity that wasn't necessary.

SW: No no, and that territory.

JR: Exactly, 8 inches of square no good to me. I know that if he lived, after 10 or 20 years he'd be done with that space it didn't bother me I didn't need it. So yeah, I think Britain could, well you do to some extent, I mean there's some of these [inaudible] but this could be our effort to-. Instead of having armed forces who spend all their time training to kill each other we could have emergency forces that are ready for... cope with any disasters and that can go into, are prepared to go anywhere they're needed, anywhere in the world and do useful things. I'm sure that would win friends for us, bound too isn't it?

SW: Absolutely. It's interesting this idea of kind of starting from peace. The woman, the Japanese woman I was talking to, she said until quite recently she'd never heard the term 'pacifist' because in Japan everybody was a pacifist. Peace was something everybody wanted and believed in and nobody wanted, I mean not that everyone wants war but you-. She said she didn't think, she didn't realise that being a pacifist was being a separate thing to being a human being culturally. And that's been quite a journey for her. Something she protests against is the Japanese constitution. But um, do you think about what's embedded in our culture, the way that you know, recently with Syria we see ourselves as people who go to war and war is important that it's sort of a mind-set in a way.

JR: Yeah, it is, yeah and war obviously exists in the political class, in the Conservative party, entrenched, they can't break away from it, you know. Their idea of having clout and influence is to big guns and, uh, ships and places and hardware and that's what they need to break away from. You can have a lot more influence with a tea truck. Or going around dishing out emergency supplies, they will have far more effect than sending a gunboat or a plane. I mean, the idea of bombing Syria is just so ludicrous I mean it's it's ludicrous, it's criminal, it's criminal. It's a terrible situation in Syria and it's hard to see what the outcome will be but the last thing that will help it is more planes going and bombing because bombing, despite all the crap they talk about precision bombing, it's never been precision in the American Air Force. It's a nonsense, they always kill innocent people and every time you drop a bomb even if a targeted bomb, even if you... the Israelis they'd bomb a block of flats if they has known a terrorist, what they call a terrorist, a freedom fighter – they'd bomb it to kill him and they'd kill everyone else in the block. Now all those people who have friends and relatives and brothers and cousins - where are those people now? They're in ISIS or whatever. If you are, it's like suicide bombers, you think you're insane to be a suicide bomber but if you are... in any culture, it's happened in every culture, and there are heroes aren't they? [Inaudible] Oh what was the ship? The famous ship during the war that tried to ram a German battle cruiser, I've forgotten the name of it now, well-known story, that was a suicide mission and in certain situations that's what you do because nothing else you can do. You're not prepared to admit defeat. And when you get people so desperate and frustrated that they'd sooner die than submit, they'll kill themselves if need be and [00:31:00] we're creating these people.

SW: I agree. You put a huge amount of energy and effort into the anti-nuclear and peace movement. Specifically thinking about the anti-nuclear movement, you talk about being arrested, and putting yourself at risk in different ways, in ways that a lot of people might not. How did you sustain that? What was it that kept you going? To keep giving that amount of energy to something voluntarily, that you're obviously hugely passionate about? What is it that kept you going through all that?

JR: I suppose the conviction that I was right [chuckles] and it was necessary. I don't know why some of us are more determined than others. I was well-supported. Jenny, my Jenny, supported me. My wife. I remember that in the early days of our marriage, I was involved in the peace movement, and we discussed that because obviously it affects your career.

Actually, probably in the end it turned out to be a good thing, but I did lose a very well-paid job in Fleet Street. I was a group advertisement manager in '63 for London Week, the advertising group. About seven newspapers. I was getting paid more money than I've ever been paid before or since. I lost that job when I got done for the Brighton Church demonstration. So I got a couple of months in prison for that.

SW: What was that? What demonstration was that?

JR: The Brighton Church demonstration in '66. You should look it up.

SW: I will.

JR: The Labour Party always starts their conference with a church service. It's not an ordinary church service. They take over a local church. In Brighton, they took over the local Methodist church. Admission was by ticket only, and of course all the delegates had to come. Well, the Labour Party was in government, so they were all MPs. The church was full of MPs. Harold Wilson and George Brown read the Lesson.

I ran a thing called the Vietnam Action Group, which did stunts, basically. But my skill in the peace movement was the ability to get lots of publicity at little expense. I contrived stunts, a bit like Fathers for Justice. In fact, they learnt from us. I did various things, and that was the one that got the most consequences. I just got the ticket from a friendly MP and printed it off, and got my team in there, a half a dozen people. It was a non-violent team, and it was meant to be a non-violent protest. All we did: I wrote a short, pithy statement, and we made that statement. The idea was, as I've done myself at theatre, football matches, everywhere, if anyone was stopped from doing it, somebody else gets up and continues where they left off. Everybody knew it off by heart.

That's what we did, except that Terry Chandler, who'd printed the tickets for me, who was a peace movement printer at that time, thought it was such a good idea that he printed some extra tickets, and gave them out to other people. Other people we knew, but who didn't know what the plan was, who weren't in that part of this little tight-knit group. So it became a little bit chaotic.

My plan was that nobody was going to speak until Harold Wilson got to read the Lesson. George Brown was first, but Harold Wilson was going to read Isaiah, "Nations shall speak peace and nations shall beat their swords into ploughshares." That was the point at which I was going to say, "Hang on now, Harold. Isn't this a little hypocritical because ..."

I mean, I give Harold Wilson great credit now for keeping us out of the war in Vietnam. At the time, I was condemning him for the extent to which he was supporting morally and in other ways, practical ways, so it was an anti-Vietnam War protest. It went well but we got done and dragged out, and violently assaulted by the delegates and the police, and thrown in jail. They tried hard to get us for riot.

What they do, they arrest you and then they think the charges up. So they wanted to get us for riot, but the constituent element of riot has to be a plan to break the law, yes. There has to be collusion. But there also has to be a readiness to commit violence. Fortunately for me, I'd done a deal with Richard Lindy [sp] of ITN before, when he was [inaudible] and swore him to secrecy, and he'd got cameras into the church, on the balcony, which you don't normally do. As I say, I'd warned him. He filmed the whole thing. So on the 9 o'clock news that night, the whole thing was shown.

When we went to court, I had all the stills, and I said to the judge, I said, "Your Honour, I've got a hundred-odd photographs here, and there's a news reel coming. You can look at that, too. I haven't got that yet, but look at the photographs." I said, "You'll see there's lots of violence." I said, "Lots of violence." I said, "But none of it is from us. It's all directed against us."

So they had to drop that. So they ran us into jail for a week, while they thought up a new charge. Then they got us. They go to great lengths to get you, if they want to get you. A very vindictive magistrate. Herbert Ripper, his name was. [chuckles]

I did a good pamphlet on this, which was reprinted three times while I was in prison, called *Indecency in Church*. They got us. Peter Tatcher [sp] and I are the only two people in Britain who ever boast about their conviction for indecency. Until the Ecclesiastical Courts Jurisdiction Act of 1860, which brought Church law into Civil Law, one of the anomalies was that, under the old Church law, it was an offence of indecency to interrupt a church service in the Anglican Church. That became part of civil law. It's never been used since 1860. We were the first time it was used. So they got us all.

Nicolas Walter and I both did our two months in Brixton for indecency. In spite of the fact that the head of the Methodist Church – Donald Sopoe [sp] was the head – he was a witness in our defence! And he said, "This is absolute nonsense." He said, "This is in the finest traditions of Methodism to

stand up for what you believe in and oppose hypocrisy.” He said, “I totally support them.” That didn't matter. They were out to get us, so they got us, and they do. They ignore anything that stands in the way of conviction.

SW: I'll have a look at that.

JR: Peter Tatcher [sp] got it. He interrupted the Archbishop of Canterbury. But he only got fined for it, you see. The climate changes now, you see. In 1966, they seriously thought that those of us who were actually turned ... who did dangerous things like marching from Aldermarston, and occasionally sitting down, they actually thought we were dangerous subversives, you know, who had to be put away. So they spied on us, and tapped our phones, and followed us around as well.

SW: I think that's very interesting. So I've a whole section of the script which looks at the smallish actions, and then it gets bigger. The police reactions to people. How did it feel? You obviously knew you were in a bit of a cat-and-mouse situation, where you were being watched.

JR: Oh, yes, yes.

SW: Was it scary? Or was it what?

JR: It didn't scare me.

SW: You knew quite a lot about what they were doing?

JR: I did this gig at the Royal Albert Hall in 2015, and somebody said to me, “Weren't you nervous?” I said, “What's to be nervous about?” I said, “People either like you or they don't like you. And the worse thing they can do if they don't like you,” I said, “is boo. Nobody in the audience had a gun.” [laughs] Mind, some people are nervous. I'm not a nervous type. I don't scare easily. I'm scared when somebody points a gun at me, or fires a gun at me. That's scary, but otherwise, no.

SW: So the idea of being arrested or going to prison, or even being treated roughly by the police, or any of that, you ...?

JR: Well, we had some of that, yes. It didn't scare me. It didn't scare me.

SW: Is that innate in you as a person? Or do you think that's sort of partly the journey of your life?

JR: A bit of both, I think. I grew up in the back streets of Hull. It's a very tough seaport town, a very tough childhood. The only thing I was scared of when I was a kid, was I was very scared that anybody might think I was scared. I was very scared of being a coward, and I didn't think I was brave, so I used to make myself brave. I'd do everything [laughs]. I used to get in an awful lot of fights because ...

There were two options: there's a situation where you might get into a fight, and you're afraid of getting hurt in the fight, if the guy's bigger than you, but I was more scared that anybody watching would think I was scared. So I would start the fight. It took me years to realise that I was starting fights just to prove that I wasn't scared. Once I realised that, I stopped starting fights. I stopped doing it. I got to know myself. I don't know whether that's a common thing with kids, or not.

SW: Maybe, yes.

JR: I was determined not to be scared. Or not to let anybody think I was scared. I think, it's part of your upbringing, yes. My father was an absolutely fearless man, scared of nothing and nobody, so I admired him enormously and I wanted to be like him.

SW: So that early part of your life was filled with some quite extreme experiences, including D-Day, when you were still within childhood, really, at the time.

JR: Yes, I suppose so, yes. I suppose you didn't think of yourself as a child in those days, when you were fifteen. You were a man. Once you left school, you tried to behave and act like a man in every way, so you made yourself into a man. I made myself into – I didn't make myself into a hero, I made myself into a non-coward. [laughs] I made sure though I would never ... I wouldn't care what other people thought, it was what I thought mostly. I was more concerned with my own view of myself.

Once I realised, as I did, certainly after D-Day ... I did talk to school kids, and I said, "Being a hero is not about not being afraid. Anybody who's not afraid in certain situations is a fool, an idiot. You need to be afraid. That's what keeps you ..." I said, "Being brave is having the ability when it's necessary, to overcome that fear. Once you've been through that situation where you've been afraid, but you've realised that you can overcome it, you can make yourself do what you have to do, your duty or your job, or whatever, what is necessary for you to get out of, once you know that you can do that, you change your attitude. You'll become confident."

So I'm a fairly confident person. In a situation, I don't fluster and I don't scare. That's because I know that to some extremity, I will do whatever I have to do to the best of my ability. I mean, obviously, there might be a situation where whatever I do is going to be no use, but I know that I will do the best I can. I won't walk away from it, or run away from anything, or collapse and hide my head. I will do ... Once you know that, once you have that confidence in yourself ...

SW: I'm thinking of some of the younger campaigners, some of the people I know who were part of the Heathrow 13, who have just been convicted, which I think was a bit of a shock to them and everybody. But that feeling of things tightening up, and perhaps less of a tolerance for protest at the moment. What would you, with everything you've said in mind, what would you say to young campaigners? Perhaps people who are thinking of what's happening with Trident at the moment, and how to bring that to people's attention? Do you have any thoughts or advice as to effective things to do, or to think?

JR: I think you have to take at different times, you have to take a ... Quite often, those things have come up, and I've not done them, or advocated not doing them, not because I was scared to continue, but because I didn't think that the possible consequences ... For instance, I've got a friend who's done prison time for smashing up military equipment, trying to damage American bombers, and things like that, in Britain and America, and one in Australia. I'm not saying you shouldn't do that, but I mean, in certain situations, I would certainly resort to sabotage.

I did a paper on this once, which I'm sure the Special Branch got hold of, advocating sabotage, certain types of sabotage. My concern was not to do anything that would risk any life or limb, of either side. It ought to be proportionate. There's no point ... I was into gestures, in a way, and that seems to have got publicity, and I still am. But I wouldn't want myself or anybody else, to see them go to prison for a long time, for something that gets five minutes in the news.

There are things I'm prepared to go to prison for a long time for, if I could see some effective way of having some real impact, but not ... Most of the things that we can do in the peace movement, the non-violent things we can do, are designed to get publicity. Designed to get people to look, to

think about what they're doing, and say, "Well, what we're saying... and look at the issue," and hopefully revise their views, and come round to our point of view.

So I'm prepared to do lots of things to achieve that, but not make the ultimate sacrifice. I'm not going to commit suicide in order to get somebody to think, "Well, we shouldn't do things that make people like Jim Radford commit suicide." [chuckles] It has to be proportionate. There have been lots of demonstrations, Friars Lane in particular, and Holy Lock, where people have tried to get on board nuclear submarines. I support them, but I wouldn't want to see, and I wouldn't want to encourage somebody to do anything that might risk them a very ...

Like in America, they're very punitive there. They've got people doing long prison sentences for minor, relatively minor, acts of sabotage or demonstrations. Clearly, when I say 'sabotage', clearly done for publicity services. They're not really doing serious damage. I mean, even if you take a crowbar or a hammer to a bomber, unless you know exactly what ...

You might do a lot of damage, but it's nothing they can't patch up fairly quickly. They'll patch it up before you've gone to trial. You don't want to be ... If I was going to, if somebody is going to jail for a long time, I want them to achieve something very significant to justify it.

SW: What about the sort of people who might come and see the show? People who might get engaged with some of these ideas, perhaps in a way they haven't before? What sort of actions do you think people should be taking as sort of a first move?

JR: I mean, the main and obvious thing to do, is that you want people to come round to see that, in the case of nuclear weapons, that they serve no useful purpose. They threaten, not only us but everybody else. They threaten civilisation. So how can they be got rid of? Only by political action. What influence do you have on the politicians? They depend on your vote. What we want is a movement that makes it absolutely clear that we will not vote for people who support the retention of nuclear weapons, who believe in possession. Never mind using them, obviously. Most of them say they won't use them.

If we could develop – if that movement could be developed in that way. Originally, you see, in the Committee of 100, we wanted to promote civil disobedience, and we thought if we get enough people to commit acts of civil disobedience, they'd lock us up. We'd fill the jails. They wouldn't be able to cope. So a lot of us spent a lot of time getting arrested, and doing jail time. We obviously didn't get enough people to fill them up, so what was the point.

There's no risk involved in saying, "I won't vote for you." So if you get a movement and a simple statement, "Dear Candidate, my name is so-and-so. I live here. I'm in your constituency. I will not vote for you unless you sign this statement. Commit yourself to this statement, and then I'll consider voting for you. I'll not say I will, but I will not vote for you if you don't." If we could get that, that would be a movement. I've suggested this once or twice at different times, taken up generally by the peace movement.

But the pledge, we call it 'the pledge'. I wouldn't call it the anti-nuclear pledge, you have to give it some positive name. The pro-life pledge, or something. No, that's got connotations to it. Think of a good name for it. That could take off. That would be a way. And it's simple, isn't it?

SW: Anyone can do it.

JR: It's easy. It's easily understood. There's not much room for misunderstanding what it's about, what you're doing, what you want. We could get people to sign up for that.

SW: That's a good idea.

JR: And you get a little badge to indicate that you're committed to this. This person will not vote for anyone who believes in weapons of mass destruction, who wants Britain to have weapons of mass destruction. That would be ...

SW: It's good. Yes, it's a good idea.

JR: That's my proposal.

SW: I'll put that in. I think that's a good idea. I think that's everything, really. Is there anything else that strikes you, that you think needs...

JR: I'm not sure what gap you're trying to fill here?

SW: I've got most of my gaps filled. I suppose where I'm trying to get to at the end, I've got a young woman who works for CND, and this young Japanese woman, who is sort of campaigning now. I suppose what I was trying to do was to paint a picture of where we are now, and what a possible future might be, or at least the idea of what actions people might take. Just the possibility of a UK without nuclear weapons. We talked about that earlier, that sort of vision of a peace corps rather than weapons. I suppose the only other thing, which a couple of people have talked about, is if we don't spend on Trident. If whatever it is, the one hundred billion or whatever, and however much its running costs, its 15 billion a year running costs, if we're not spending that, what would you be spending the money on? What do you think we need more than those?

JR: [inaudible] Houses. I've been very actively involved in housing campaigns in my community action career. Houses on a large scale, hospitals, schools, better schools, better houses, yes. I mean, social services are being whittled away year after year after year, and diminishing. In many areas we've got a poorer quality of service now than we had 15 or 20 years ago, you know.

I mean, I never wanted to be in conventional politics in that sense, but I've worked very closely with councils on a number of occasions. I feel very sorry for people now, council people now, because they're forever having to ... They're agents of the state, and they're required to act as agents of the state, and make these ridiculous savings every year. Which means local people get annoyed with them, but they've no control over it. They've been ordered to do it.

So again, if there wasn't this vast economy drive, then local authorities would have more power, more control and more responsibility. It would be more legitimate then to criticise them for failure. At the moment, most of the criticism aimed at the local authorities should be directed to the government. Local authorities have got very little choice.

SW: We've talked a bit about a sort of a different vision of the world. But I guess that at the end of World War II, when you were in Normandy, did you have a sense that there was something that people were fighting for? That there was a sense of a different world?

JR: I think – well, my feelings are not the most ... Most of the war, we were fighting against something, something that we increasingly understood was ... I was a kid when the war began of course, but people knew and learnt more and more as the war went on about how nasty it was. But they knew it was pretty nasty to start with. I think there was a sense most that people were fighting against something. But in the last, towards the end of the war, when it was clear that we would win

the war, once it was clear with the breakthrough in Normandy, the Ardennes defences after that, and we were into Germany, it was pretty, fairly clear, we were going to win.

We didn't doubt that we were going to win. Then people started thinking about afterwards, and I think there was a general increase in political understanding, which accounted for the landslide which the Tories weren't expecting. In the forces, there was lots of things going on, and lots of discussion that was taking place. The famous newspaper they had in the Middle East, that the RF people produced out.

I think there was an expectation that we were going to change society. We weren't going to go back to the pre-war system. Pre-war Britain was a pretty – not feudal, but still had feudal overtones. There was the old deference to the upper classes that the war had more or less swept away. I think there was an awareness. I was dashing around, when I was home, with the Young Communist League, sticking up posters and things. [chuckles]

We expected there was going to be big changes taking place, so there was a bit of a euphoria after the '45 election. Yes.

SW: And that was about what? Greater equality?

JR: Yes, we expected changes, and we did get changes. That government delivered them. It brought in the National Health Service, it brought in the National Assistance Act, all kinds of things, some of which didn't get implemented. When I got into the homeless campaign, and formed the Committee of 100 behind the homeless campaign, in the early '60s, I certainly realised that my criticism of politicians, good and bad ones, is that they focus on legislation. They think, "Oh, we'll get ..." and they work and do their research. They get the act passed, and then they sit. "Oh, we've done it. We've achieved it." They haven't achieved it. They've legislated.

So the National Assistance Act was passed in 1948, and it required every local authority in the country to provide accommodation for homeless families. And it required every local authority to submit a scheme saying how they would do this in a certain length of time. Then in 1966 – 1963, I think, or 1964, Newington Lodge. After the Newington Lodge demonstration, which you know was a big homeless hostel in Southwark, I started researching it.

I found out that the Act had never been implemented. Not one local authority had put forward a scheme. Every local authority was pretending to comply with the law, that they arbitrarily interpreted to suit themselves. So, when they said they were required to provide accommodation for homeless families, they said, "Oh well, a homeless family consists of women with children under 14." Husbands not included, children over 14 not included. "Provide accommodation", well, it doesn't say forever, so it must mean temporary. So we give it for three months and then we chuck them out. This had been going on since 1948, and that's when the King Hill campaign put a stop to that in 1965, the King Hill campaign, and we stopped that.

One year hard campaigning, with relatively few people, but we involved about a thousand. My greatest achievement is the King Hill campaign. I think it's the thing I'm proudest of, even more important than the squatting campaign was, which was also about housing people. The King Hill campaign, as it was called, changed the law throughout the country. Two circulars were issued, practically requiring every local authority to do what we'd been telling them to do throughout the campaign, which was abolish the three months' rule, abolish the arbitrary definition of what's a family and admit whole families. So we did some good.

SW: That's good. I think that's everything.

[recording ends]