Karl Dallas Interview Transcript
After Hiroshima Project

Interviewees: Karl Dallas (KD) DOB 29 January 1931 and Gloria Dallas (GD)
Interviewers: Ruth Scrase (RS) and Ruth Dewa (RD)
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RS: My name is Ruth Scrase and the date today is the 27th of May 2015, and we're um... here today to interview Karl Dallas...

KD: And Gloria... Because Gloria is part of the story.

RS: Okay, lovely, yes. So Gloria Dallas as well... Thank you... And if you'd like to er... if you'd like to say your names please...

KD: Well I'm Karl Dallas and I'm aged 84 um, and, er, you could say that I've been in the peace movement all my life, er, because before the war, um, we were active – my family that is were, er, **[1:00]** actively anti-fascist, um, and er, we were very much in favour of international security which involved you know Britain and France and the Soviet Union um, and er, but of course Chamberlain sold.. sold out the Czechs and my first memory of a demonstration was in 1938 a protest at.. when Chamberlain came back from Munich having sold out the Czechs. Um... And then of course after the War there was, er, there was the – well there was at the end of the war with Japan there was the bomb on Hiroshima... er, which was a great shock to.. to all of us. And, er, so after... from then 'til now really, we've been campaigning against er, er, nuclear war. **[2:00]** So, you know, Gloria...

GD: I'm Gloria Dallas and I'm 84 too, and, um, I've been involved since I was 17 and I was in the YCL in Bradford...

KD: - Young Communist League –

GD: ...and we used to go round collecting signatures against the Bomb, door-to-door, er, not sort of demonstrating as far as I remember, in the street, but actually going round asking people to put their names to a petition against the.. the Bomb.

KD: This was the so-called Stockholm Appeal...

RS: And what was the Stockholm Appeal...?

KD: This was before CND, er, at the time of the World Peace Council, which um, was denounced by many as, as a Communist front, which in many ways I suppose it was actually **[3:00]** because without the communists it would never have functioned. And then er CND was formed and er I was a songwriter and er when the first Aldermaston march was organised er there was a meeting at our flat of all sorts of musicians and songwriters who were supporting the er anti-nuclear campaign. And then we approached the... the organisers of the march er to offer our services... our musical services and they said "Oh it's going to be a silent march for four days. We're marching to Aldermaston in silence and it will be very impressive". And we said "Yes and also impossible because either you organise **[4:00]** music or people will make music and they may make music which is not really suitable er for the seriousness of the occasion". So they... they agreed that we could provide the music but they gave us a list of songs we must not sing because they were associated with the Stockholm Appeal. Er one was 'Down by the Riverside' which was the Civil War song for the

United States, which my mother used to sing in, er, during the First World War, er, - 'I ain't gonna study war no more' and so on. And then there were songs like, er, um, 'If I had a Hammer' ('The Hammer Song'), which later became a, um, a hit, Billie Jean Lopez, and that was composed by Pete Seeger and so Pete's regarded as, um, persona non grata at that time among a particular circle of I suppose probably pacifists. **[5:00]** They were very suspicious of this but anyway, um, er, I had a skiffle group by this time, and, and we went on the first Aldermaston march but we didn't... actually we went ahead of the march. Our job was to go into the town, shall we say into Reading on its day, and then we would have a... we would perform and then there'd be a speaker who'd say "You're probably wondering why we're here. Well we're in advance of the Aldermaston march, blah, blah, blah..." you know.

RS: May I just ask at this point what a skiffle group is?

KD: Well a skiffle group it's, it's based on American... Skiffle really was an American thing in Chicago that have what they call rent parties. So if people couldn't pay their rent they'd have a party and everyone would pay to come in and then that money would pay the rent. And then, um, Lonny Donnigan, er, who was the banjo **[6:00]** player in Chris Barber's band, er, he recorded... there was a record session of the whole band playing, you know, regular jazz tunes and then there was a couple of songs which Lonny Donnigan sang, er, one which was 'The Rock Island Line'. And the record company issued that as a single, which had an incredible impact on the pop music scene and inspired lots of imitators. Er, I was already singing folk songs, um, and, er, and it seemed to me this was a good way of, er, introducing folk song to a wider audience, so I formed a skiffle group in, er, I was living in Walton-on-Thames at the time and so we called it... and so our theme song was 'Down by the Riverside' and we were called the... The Riversiders. And then in Twickenham on the opposite side of the river, er, **[7:00]** there was another group formed and they called themselves The Riversiders! So we then became The Original Riversiders, um, and we used to play, er, 'Down by the Riverside' every Sunday down by the bridge and make money which we then lost at the folk club that we started, which was one of the first folk clubs in the country. There were a few coffee bars in, in, in the West End of London where there was folk music but, er, no regular folk clubs as such. Er, and er, so er, one of the interesting was... because I was a member of the Communist Party, and one of the great things about the Communist Party is discipline. And it was... and it's discipline... if you are involved in something that you're not actually running, then whoever runs it, you have to fall in with their discipline... that's part of our basic training. **[8:00]**

RS: And what was the discipline that...

KD: ...Pardon?

RS: How was the discipline enforced?

KD: How long...?

RS: How was it enforced... the discipline?

KD: Well it was by just...

GD: It was consensus...

KD: So you see when they said to us "You cannot sing these songs" we didn't argue.

RS: And why did they not want you to sing these songs?

KD: Well because they felt those songs were associated with the Stockholm Appeal, which would er, make the er, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament... which at this stage had not yet been formed, um, but er... they had some such name as, er, Organising Committee for the Campaign, you know, it was an erstwhile organisation and um, so they didn't want the name to be blackened or if you like 'reddened' by association with this Communist front organisation, which we were all supporters of but because it was their... they laid down these rules um, **[9:00]** and it was very amusing because, as I say, I was a member of the Communist Party and my banjo player was a Young Conservative, and he didn't of course have this concept of discipline. He said "They can't bloody tell us what to say, play or sing". I said "We'll do as they say". And um, they, there was this speaker and he... his... he had a dual function. One was to, was to speak to the public, like at an open air meeting and such, and er, but the other was to make sure we behaved. And er, my Young Conservative banjo player er, described him as the gauleiter. And um, the gauleiter – I'm trying to remember his name – he, he lives in Bedford as it now... you know... I don't know I can't... terrible memory for names!

GD: He would be as old as we are.

KD: Eh?

GD: He would be as old as we are. **[10:00]**

KD: He's probably slightly older I think... Anyway, so er, that was... that was our involvement, um.

[To GD] How did you, how did you collect...? Did you go and knock on doors to collect signatures?

GD: I did, yes.

KD: Well we actually went er... cos I lived in south-west London, in Balham...

GD: And I was in Bradford...

KD: And we used to go... and we actually went out in Tooting Broadway, er, with petition sheets getting people to sign. This was the Stockholm Appeal by the way

RS: Um, what exactly was the Stockholm Appeal?

KD: Pardon?

RS: What is, was the Stockholm Appeal?

KD: The Stockholm Appeal – I couldn't tell you the exact wording – was basically for the elimination of nuclear weapons, um... and an appeal to the world to renounce the use of atomic weapons. Now er, so we were... we actually strode in Tooting Broadway with these petition forms getting people to sign up. **[11:00]**

RS: And when was this? What year was this?

KD: [To GD] When would that be?

GD: If you were, what were you 17, 18? 19?

KD: 16 I suppose. I've probably left school by then...

GD: 1937 then?

KD: Yeah... '47

GD: 1947.

KD: Um...

RS: And you were doing this Karl in London and you Gloria were in Bradford?

KD: Yeah we didn't know each other...

RS: So you didn't know each other but the same petitions across the country...

KD: The Communist Party was a very small organisation, so we tended to know each other. Um, there was a very active man in Yorkshire called Alex Eaton who founded the Topic Folk Club, er, in Bradford, and it's still going – it's the oldest surviving folk club in the world now... um, and he, he for some time had been a member of the Communist Party, but **[12:00]** er, Alex was something of a maverick and, and he didn't get on well with the er, the apparatchiks who, who ran the CP. And er, er he's a great Franc... – he's dead now – was a great Francophile, he spent a lot of time in France and he knew a lot of people in the Communist Party in France. And he was there on one occasion, on holiday, and he made himself known to the local Party, er, Secretary, er who said "Ah we've been warned about you". [Laughs] The word had gone down from, from London to Paris through to this, this village where, where he'd gone on holiday. The local Party Secretary had been warned that this man Alex Eaton was dangerous. Er, he was only dangerous really in the sense that he was er, a very great arguer. Um, anyway, er, um...

GD: And he formed a choir. **[13:00]**

RS: Oh ok...

KD: Yes he formed a Young Communist Choir and then when he left the Communist Party it became the Leeds...

GD: ... Northern Star I think, or something like that...

KD: And then that choir mutated into a... into a folk club. And as I say it's, it's still going. Now things about the date and er, content of the Stockholm Appeal, you'll have to research...

RS: Of course...

KD: ... separately. Um, it's, it's it, it, it's well documented. Um, but um... I remember er, when the explosion of the hydrogen bomb at Bikini took place, lying in bed in Balham, er, tuned to the radio which was covering the event, anticipating the end of the world. Because I really, um, you know, I mean we'd known about Hiroshima **[14:00]** and Nagasaki, um, but actually, terrible as they were – and of course the residual radiation and things like that – more people were killed in Hamburg with

ordinary fire bombs, and indeed in Tokyo. So in a sense Hiroshima and Nagasaki, er, were like more of the same only more so, you know. They were qualitatively different because they escalated the whole purpose and function of war, um, but as I say the er, the Hamburg fire bombs in 1943 and the er, of course the destruction of Dresden, which is notorious, were... you know very similar but the hydrogen bomb took us into a whole new area of, **[15:00]** of life... of death. And er, I was quite surprised to survive that night – I mean I'm not kidding – I, I literally just expected the world to blow up because the hy- you know the exploding, the er, the uranium after the... was rather different than the hydrogen bomb, um...

RS: How did you hear the news of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

KD: That I can't remember, um... I think our initial reaction would be – and here I'm just trying to extrapolate backwards – I can't tell you this is how I felt, but how most of us felt – we wanted the war to end... and since immediately after the bomb... bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki **[16:00]** the Japanese er, er, asked for er... they surrendered, that could only be a good thing. But it was only in retrospect we realised that the real function of the bombs was not to end the, end the war because the Japanese were on their last legs, they were about to surren-, surrender anyway. But you see the Soviet Union didn't declare war on Japan until after Victory in Europe, and they were coming into... through Siberia, um Manchuquo [?] um, and er, of courseif they'd come into Japan then there would have been, of course as there'd been for a time in Germany a er, different spheres you know – there would be the Soviet zone and the American zone – and er, the purpose of the bombs was to prevent that happening, to keep the Soviets out of, **[17:00]** out of the er, um er, Japan.

RS: Is that what you...

KD: Pardon?

RS: Is that what you realised at the time or is that subsequent thinking afterwards?

KD: That's subsequent thinking. At the time we, we had, you know I was only, in 1945, I was 14 years old, though I was very politically conscious because er, er, I came from a family of, of socialists where, um, er, and of course it's a bit like the Jews – they say if you get two Jews in a room you get three different opinions, and we were always arguing. I say we, I, I didn't, you know, I'd be sitting there listening to these arguments like, we had members of the Communist Party, members of the Labour Party, we had people in the Communist Party who, who thought they ought to affiliate to the Labour Party, and people in the Labour Party who thought they – who thought the Communist Party ought to be part of the Labour Party, and then members of both parties who didn't agree with that, who thought that the Communist Party should have its own... And **[18:00]** so I was sitting there listening to this backwards and forwards. I had a cousin, my cousin Frank, who, who er, er, went to Spain during the Civil War – not to fight, I, I don't know whether he would have fought 'cos he, he er, he fought in the, in the, in the actual war, but in Spain he, um, he was a brilliant linguist and he went to Spain, I don't think speaking a word of Spanish and then became a, a very good Spanish speaker, and he, um, er, we used to tune into Radio Madrid and hear his voice on the radio – my, my cousin Frank. And er, so... but he, he, he, he went out to India with the er, I think it was the Eleventh Army, um, Major General Wingate, and er, er, fought with the Four-, no it was the **[19:00]** Fourteenth Army, that's right, um fought in Burma and became a major and, and er, he learnt all the tribal languages there because he was such a brilliant linguist and he, he, he was a member of the Communist Party. And so, um, I, I, I was known, I remember caused a sensation in the playground – and I could only have been 11 or 12 – and I announced that I was a Communist, and they'd never heard of such a thing. But the, it was quite amusing for me, a few years ago – you

know with the internet you connect with people – somebody connected with me who'd been at my school – which was the Becks School in Tooting, it's now the Ernest Bevin Comprehensive – and er, apparently at the school concert – I don't remember this but he sent me a text of a song **[20:00]** which talked about me trying to blow up Buckingham Palace [Laughs] because I was in- you know I identified with the whole of the er, school as, as, as the Red. And in our, our, our fifth form – that would be when I'd be about 14 – er, there was a group of us in the corner, er, and we called ourselves the Red Corner and er, we published a, a er, a magazine – a handwritten magazine, written in red ink, called Red Star and distributed it round. That, that, the contents, er, were political, were musical – because I was very interested in music – um, and I think the... poems, drawings and you know people would, because politics was so much, you know – this was pre-1945. **[21:00]** So one of our, one of my friends was actually a Liberal, and we commissioned – I commissioned – I was the editor so I commissioned an article er, from him about liberalism, which er was named... the headline was 'Not Left or Right, but Forward' [Coughs], so you know I believed, [Coughs] I believed and I've always believed in free speech. So, um...

RS: Even from that young age?

KD: Yes, well it was practiced in my, in my...

RS: Yeah...

KD: ... in my family you see. I, I had an auntie who wasn't political. She was, shall we say, spiritual – in quotes – because she moved – she became a Christian Scientist, and she became a theosophist, and practiced various, er, esoteric religions. But my aunt, my auntie Bessie – whom I lived with for a couple of years right at the beginning of my, **[22:00]** the war – she was a committed socialist and also a committed Christian, and that was the first time I came across that combination. I sang in the church choir at the age of 8 but that was purely musical, er, mind you I took it more seriously than, er, you know, I was dressed in my surplus and cassock and we used to come out, er, into the church – you know the, the sort of organ voluntary or something like that – we'd come out looking so serene with our hands underneath our cass-, our surpluses. And we were encouraged to bring comics to read during the sermon, um. And I thought that was terrible – I used to listen to the sermon 'cos I was... because that was my background, you know – polemic! Um, er, and I disagreed with it all 'cos I... I wasn't exactly brought up an atheist... I suppose... **[23:00]** you could almost say I was brought up an agnostic but I wasn't brought up with any such belief, you know – agnosticism is a belief system. I didn't think... I didn't believe there was or wasn't a god because it wasn't something that I thought about, at all. And when I went to church and got all this preaching I went "Yeah..." – I mean my mother used to say "The world should be organised on the principles of 'The Sermon on the Mount'", so that's all I knew, you know: 'Blessed be the poor...' you know, 'Blessed are the peacemongers... peacemakers rather!' Um, so that was as close as I got, but as I say I went to church, er, every Sunday – morning and evening – and sang in the choir. The when the war broke out I, I was on holiday with my auntie Bessie – the Christian, Christian socialist – and so it was decided that er, I should be safer in, in the wilds of Northumberland, er than in London **[24:00]** where the... where we... You see we all believed, um, we'd all seen H.G. Wells's 'The Things to Come' or the film 'Things to Come', where there's war and then the sky is black, with the aeroplane coming over to bomb you to bits. That's what we expected – and of course the Blitz even at its worst was never like that, but anyway – so it was decided I should stay in Northumberland. And so my auntie Bessie – who as I say was a committed Christian, as well as a socialist and a prominent member of the local Workers' Education Association, etc, etc, etc – she used to go to church – a three mile walk – every morning for Matins and every evening for Evensong, and she didn't have any such ideas as children have to make up their own minds, so I went with her. So every Sunday I walked twelve miles!

[25:00] – three miles there, three miles back. Lunch. Three miles there, three miles back. And no wonder I slept well. So, and, you know... and I went to Bible classes then, but to me it was... I still didn't take it on board, um, but I... I got to know my Bible very well. But when I began thinking about, about what I believed in that direction, um, I er, could quote the Bible – because the Bible is full of contradictions, um – in fact I'm writing a book called *The Contradictions of Christianity* – because I believe that the contradictions are... because er, because you could call me a Marxist – I don't use that term, um Karl Marx said "I'm glad I was never a Marxist", and I subscribe to that view because, because it puts forward **[26:00]** Marxism as a, as a – 'ism', those last three letters – puts it forward as a belief system. It's not, it's a method, it's a way of thinking, um, um, and it's about dialectics, about contradictions, you know "In the midst of life we are in death", as Jesus said. Jesus was a dialectician – it was a, it was a teaching method used by the rabbis, it's pre-dates Marx. Um, so er, er, but of course when I became antagonistic to Christianity – which I did, you know, from I suppose about the age of 14 – I um, I used to quote these contradictions as arguments against, against it. But then later on I er, became a Christian, which is why I wear a cross. So... I've wondered around all over the place, but er...

RS: So you started developing **[27:00]** *er, um your ideas at a very young age then. And, um, did you feel your family helped in your, and your environment helped you develop those views in that way?*

KD: Well the thing is – you're going to have to speak up a little because I'm having to guess what you're saying – you see our school, our generation... Well I mean all I know about our generation are two things. At the age of 14 I went into hospital for two months – I got estomilitis in my left hip – and there I met – it was a children's hospital, full of working class kids from the East End and thereabouts. And although my mother was a socialist – she separated from my father when I was a few weeks old, that's another... a different story – er, um, she was to be honest a bit of a snob. 'Common' was you know, a real term – 'She was very common, that woman' – um... And she was also an intellectual snob. She came from a family of, **[28:00]** of working class intellectuals, most whom, um – but not she – went to college and became teachers etc, etc. And er, she, she had all sort of things... You had to say "Different from" not "Different to"... er, little rules and, and um, er... but in the hospital I met these really tough working class kids, and that was quite a revelation to me because, er, although I regarded myself, regarded myself – and still do – as a member of the working class, they were totally different, you know, they... they were very sharp and they made up songs, mostly parodies of, of well known songs, um, er, and er **[29:00]** about the, about the er... "Glory, glory halleluiah, teacher hit me with a ruler; nurse he hit me with a bed pan, and we all go rolling home" – you know, that sort of thing. Teachers because we had school in the hospital you see... er, and of course nurse. Um, and er, then um, er, so er... there were, there were two experiences... that, that was one... I can't remember what the other one was, I was going to... sorry, talking about... But um, er... we... After Bikini – and of course the world did not come to an end – but of course there were terrible things that happened like, like the, the er fallout, er **[30:00]** injured Japanese fisherman, and we knew about all that, um...

RS: How did you... how did you find out about it?

KD: Oh in the *Daily Worker*, er, now the *Morning Star*... er, which I started writing for, er, well actually I was, I, I er, was still at school and, um, er, living with my mother in Balham, and Oswald Mosley, who'd been imprisoned during the war under the er, Rule 18B, had been released and er, they fascists set up book clubs around the country to read and, um, discuss Mosley's book *My Answer*. And we got a leaflet through our door inviting us to come to a meeting of this, this book club. **[31:00]** So I decided to go along as, as a spy, um, and er went along and found out about various things that they were doing, and I informed the *Daily Worker* about these things, who

published those, of course. And er, for instance they were going to have a big rally at the Holborn Hall in London, and the *Daily Worker* carried a story about that and Holborn Council er – which is now part of Camden – er, you know the hall had been booked under 'John Smith' or whatever, er, and they didn't know it was the fascists so as soon as they found out that it was the fascists they cancelled the booking. And so my cover was blown, and they came round threatening to smash my mother's windows. But she chased them away with a broom, um, so er... **[32:00]**.

RS: Was, was that the first time you'd written for the Morning Star*?*

KD: Yes – the *Daily Worker* – yes, well I didn't... I just gave them the information. But then of course I, I er, left the... and became the... I knew the News Editor, er, Douglas Hyde, er and er, I, I didn't write anything much for them until I, I became active as a folk singer. I produced folk supplements and I'd get in touch with all the record companies and the few folk clubs there were – seldom advertised – and write a... it was really advertorial, you know... er but I built up quite a reputation then, as a, as a commentator on folk music – which I knew nothing about! You know, I became er... it's funny, there's three areas in my **[33:00]** life where I've been, er, had a sort of position of authority. One was folk music, the other was fashion, and the other was computers. And in each stage... in each case I started writing about these things before I knew anything about them and learnt on the job. You see, um, fashion, um, in... when I was at school, er, we used to go to the um, Co-op Youth Club in Tooting, and kids used to come over from the er, from Bermondsey... not Bermondsey, er... Elephant and Castle, and they were – I discovered later – they were gypsies, travelling people, and they had this strange way of dressing: long coats, er, velvet collars, very narrow trousers, because our trousers then were **[34:00]** as baggy as these ones now, which became fashionable again after the... And I didn't want to emulate them because I thought the way they dressed was weird, but that interested me in having an image. And of course there was... there was clothes rationing. We had a school uniform, which was proscribed – we had to wear a cap, um, a tie – and these were not on the ration... clothes were rationed so we had to wear the cap, we had to wear the tie, but anything else was... was laid down as recommendations, so we had to have... we *should* have a navy blue blazer with a... the er school badge on, on the breast pocket, but that was on… on coupons so if you didn't have coupons you could get away with not doing it. So I of course didn't have coupons so I didn't wear the uniform... I wore the cap and the tie erm... **[35:00]** and my mother used to buy, er – I think of them as nylon but it can't have been nylon because nylon hadn't been invented, er, so they were probably cotton or probably rayon I would imagine... But she used to... I remember I had a purple shirt which I used to, which I wore to school, and the teacher said "You must wear a white shirt, erm, 'cos that's the school uniform", and I said "Well sorry sir I don't have any white shirts", um, so I used to get away with that. And so, to me, clothing became er, er, an artefact of rebellion

RS: Oh ok...

KD: Um, And then I was working on the um, the *Marylebone Record* – covering St John's Wood as I told you earlier – um, and then I, I decided to become a freelancer, and er, I was no good at that, and er, a friend of a friend of a friend who was in the Communist Party **[36:00]** er, was the editor of er, a magazine called *Style for Men* – a trade magazine not a profession-... not a consumer magazine – and he needed a sub-editor, and I heard through the party, er the grapevine, er, and got er, a job as er, a sub-editor on *Style for Men*. And of course I was given jobs like writing captions and things like that. And that was when the er, Edwardian look came in, er, and that was adopted by the teddy boys, teddy boys was based on it – because it was supposed to have been based on the clothing... on the style of clothes worn by Edward VII, er the Prince of Wales, but it wasn't, because I recognised – as soon as I saw it – "That's the clothing... that's what the Travellers used to wear from, from er,

Elephant and Castle!" Um, and so when... so I was in this strange position **[37:00]** because we had the established, er, orthodoxy that this was inspired by Edward VII, the Prince of Wales, um, and the teddy boys stole it from Saville Row – Saville Row's the centre of world tailoring, it still is... not so much as it used to be but it was then – erm, and I knew that was nonsense, because I knew from my own experience, um. And this was not the first time in my life, nor certainly was it the last, when the received wisdom is wrong, in my estimation. And um, that of course came to the fore when I became a Christian, because er, my comrades in the Communist Party thought I'd gone crazy. In fact so did my daughter, because she said "Daddy, when your friends come round, why do you always talk about God these days?" And I said "Well it's not me it's them", er... **[38:00]** Er, we had a friend, er, a sculptor, who lived on the opposite side of the road in Bloomsbury, er, and I was crossing the road and he was coming in the opposite direction, um he stood, he said "Karl, tell me you're taking the piss". And we're standing there and the cars are going 'Joom, joom, joom' on either side of us and I said "Look this is not the right place to have a theol- a theological argument". I said "Come round and we'll talk about it". So um, it, it caused great outrage in the Communist Party. But also, I remember we had a, we had a Secretary in the Communist Party branch in those days, which was the South St Pancras branch – and he was a drunk. And er, I'm an alcoholic erm, and I had given up drinking by then, and, er, our Chair came round, she said "I don't know whether I'm coming to see you as a Christian or a comrade" she said **[39:00]** "But we've got to do something about this Secretary 'cos he's turning up at our meetings drunk". So I said "Well why can't I be both – a Christian and a comrade?" So there was this dichotomy going on... I'm wandering away from... but it's all... you see all these things are interlinked. Um, when I became a Christian I realised we'd been given stewardship over the world, er, of the whole of creation, and that meant we had to look after it. But that's... that's when I begun to understand about ecology and um, the importance of, you know, what we now think of as climate change. Um, er, and, and of course it's, it's all there in, in Genesis, er, how we've got to look after the world. So you know, um... but we... it... this is relevant I think because we... it's a mistake **[40:00]** and, and er one must own up to one's mistakes. We had this idea of the peaceful uses of atomic energy. I remember a comrade coming back from the USSR who was a miner, and he'd been taken round the mines in Siberia or somewhere like that. And he said "They were very decrepit", he said "I said to them 'How can you have... you know, this is the advance guard of humanity, and your mines are not fit to work in'". And they said "Well comrade, we will be having atomic energy, we're not going to be using coal for very much longer". And that was our idea, that atomic energy... I remember when I was in hospital, um, in St Thomas's for a while – not the time... not the children's hospital, later on – er, I was trying to have children and discovered that I couldn't – um, very painful exercise, taking slices out of your testicles, it was very unpleasant... **[41:00]** Anyway, er, I'd been working as a publicist, I gave up journalism and became a publicist for a short while, um, and one of my clients was Pan Books, and we had a book about er, there was a book about atomic energy establishments in Britain, er, which I did the publicity for. And I sent out press releases to all the pa-, to all the papers in the towns where these were, saying this was the future: This book - you see my idea was to sell the book – er, "Get this book, you can have a review copy" – but, you know, you've got like, what's it called in, in Cumbria? Um, er Sellafield – you know, "That's the future!" You know, "Forget coal mines, forget gas", you know. Um, er, um, there was a cartoonist in, in, in the *Daily Worker* called Gabriel **[42:00]** and he used to have this regular... he'd have characters who'd appear over and over. And one of them was a worker, with his hand like this, and he'd... then there was this symbol for the atom – a nucleus with ellipsis all round it, um... And he was like tossing into the air and, and that was the future you see, er... And, you know, what we didn't realise of course was the intimate connection between the er, the so called peaceful use of atomic energy and the er, nuclear weapons programme – er, the enriching of er, you know... I don't know too much about the technicalities but you know, er, er a lot of the by-products go into atomic weapons.

RS: So when did you become aware...? Sorry go on Gloria...

GD: If you feel like a biscuit **[43:00]** just help yourself.

RS: Oh, thank you [Laughs]... I was going to say – when was it that you... when did you first become aware of the adverse effects of nuclear energy?

KD: Well... That's an interesting question. I'm not sure. You see here was I publicis-... We had the Gabriel cartoon with the worker, you know, strong jaw...

RS: And when was this?

KD: ...overalls on, you know, and with um, an atomic nucleus in his hand... Um, me sending out these press releases. Um... so I must have been about 20 at that time... 20 or 21... Um... How did we become aware that there were in fact no peaceful uses of atomic energy. [To Gloria] Can you remember?

GD: No, no. It was all "Isn't this going to be wonderful? Nobody will have to go down the mines in these dangerous **[44:00]** things... Not realising that nuclear energy was more dangerous...

KD: Yeah...

GD: ...than any coal mine.

KD: Yeah I must say I'll, I'll have to think about that and... But um...

RS: So was it sort of sold to you in the media and in public opinion that in general nuclear energy was a good thing?

KD: Yes. You know, there were, there were two ways of using atomic energy: one was for peace and one was for war. We were against the war. We were for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy because you know, it would mean that, that you'd... Well probably that you wouldn't pay for power at all, you know, it would be free, it would be so cheap to produce, you know, from that glass of water we could power a whole city, you know. That was... and they... and of course technically you know, that's still a possibility, you know. Um... but I was **[45:00]** very interested in science fiction at that time – well still am – and um, er, I remember there was an article in a magazine called *Astounding Science Fiction* where he wrote 'The next war will be fought using atomic weapons'. And I wrote a letter of complaint. I said 'There is not going to be a next war because we're going to stop it'. Um, and er, I er, because of my interest I got to, got to know quite a group of science fiction writers who in, in, in, in Britain, and we used to meet in a pub called the Globe in, in Hatton Garden. And well known names, you know, John Wyndam who wrote *The Day of the Triffyds*, um, Michael Morecock, er, and er...

GD: John Bronner...

KD: John Bronner, strangely enough... Now John Bronner was a science fiction writer **[46:00]** – er, he died quite recently – but er, he... this meeting where we had, I said we gathered together to create songs... and he came with a poem, effectively, which is... these words are... these verses... But he didn't have a tune, and it had no chorus. And I remember I said "It's gotta have a chorus, gotta have a chorus," um, and so er, we, we, we tried it to [Sings] "Do you hear the H-bomb's thunder echo like

the crack of doom?" um, but we thought "Well you know, it's 'John Brown's Body'". Um, and I was very keen on a song – a miner's song – an American miner's song called 'The Miner's Lifeguard', which actually has a very old **[47:00]** ancestry – it actually came from Wales. Miners... Welsh miners took, took a song called 'Cullen Lamb' in Welsh to the er, American coalfields, and it was translated into, into, into English, and then became a gospel song: 'Life is like a mountain railroad, sometimes up and sometimes down' – it's one of my favourite lines. Er, um, and er, then it was [Sings] 'A miner's life is like a sailor's – dah-dah-dee, dah-dah-dah-dum'... Anyway, so I said er, [Sings] "Don't you hear the H-bomb's thunder echo like the crack of doom?", so he said "Yeah, yeah, that'll do". I said "we've got to have a chorus", now the chorus of 'The Miner's Lifeguard' is [Sings] 'Union miners, stand together. Do not heed the owner's tale. Keep your hands upon your wages' – sometimes 'your eyes upon the dollar' – [Sings] 'Keep your hands upon the dollar, **[48:00]** and your eyes upon the scale' – the scale, that was, you know, they were paid by piece rate so you, you had to make sure that they weren't... you know they put the coal onto the weighing machine and you were paid according to how much coal. 'Keep your eyes... keep your hand upon the dollar and your eyes upon the scale'. So I suggested, you see, we'd got [Sings] 'Union miners stand together', so it's [Sings] 'Men and women stand together. Do not heed the men of war. Make your minds up now or never. Ban the Bomb for evermore.' But I never got a credit. It says 'John Bronner to the tune of "The Miner's Lifeguard"' – even in the er, official book about CND it doesn't mention that I helped write the chorus. It doesn't matter...

RS: Were songs normally collaborative?

KD: Yes; yes, yes, yes. Um, yes we... there was a magazine called *Sing* edited by a man called Derek... Eric Winter **[49:00],** and the Music Editor was Professor – well Doctor and then Professor – John Hastit, who was Professor of Atomic Physics at er, Birkbeck College. And um, he went to – he was a member of the Communist Party – and he went to the... he was asked to go to America to help with their atomic er... to put his expertise into, er, to, you know, have dialogue with the er, atomic scientists. John always drew the distinction, he said "I am not a nuclear scientist. Nuclear science is about bombs. Atomic science is about understanding the structure of, of the material world". And um, er, er, and he er, er, he introduced the twelfth string guitar to England, and the five string banjo, and er, **[50:00]** I used to er, every time I wrote a song – 'cos I don't write music – I'd ring him up on the phone, you know – ring Birkbeck College, and they'd put me through to his extension – and I'd say: "I've got a song John" – "Hang on a second Freddie" – 'cos that's what he called me. And he'd get some paper: "Ok, go on". And I'd sing it to him over the phone, he'd write it down. And all the songs of this era, John noted them all down, um, and er, he was, he was one of our, our crowd. Er, but when he, he got this special dispensation to go to, go to the Unites States, and when he got to immigration the, the guy looked at his passport and it had some kind of cryptic um, er, remark on it, and he said "You mean to tell me that the Communist Party is legal in your country?", and John said "It's legal in your country too, you know, by the way", [Laughs] **[51:00]** which it was, but only just. Um, and when I went to the Unites States, many years after, um the... Pete Seeger's manager used the... used his influence at the – this would be the er... would it be the Carter administration? No I think it was the Kennedy administration... anyway to get me a visa to go. Er, and er, I still, I still have in my passport, it has that cryptic... And of course there was a time when my passport had visas for er, Iraq and Israel and all sorts of places, and er, the er, immigration officials in the United States always found that very interesting. So um, thats... this... we had this collaborative thing **[52:00]** you see, so er, um, and we would, you know, I would, some... And there was this magazine *Sing* – that's what I wanted to say – and I would take my new songs to – we had an editorial committee where we decided on the, on the content. Er, and I went to a photographic exhibition which was at the Royal Festival Hall in London called 'The Family of Man', which was actually sponsored by the Unites States Information Service...

GD: It was a wonderful exhibition, absolutely...

KD: Yes...

GD: I was walking around it with tears in my eyes.

KD: Yes...

RS: What did it include?

KD: It's... it was... it's basically about – as T.S. Elliot put it in a different context – birth, procreation and death. So there were, there were lovers, there were marriage services, there were children being born, being breastfed, growing up **[53:00]** and dying – the whole progress, and...

GD: And they were, they were big photographs, big blow up photographs of... Very, very impressive.

KD: Yes.

RS: Do you remember any ones in particular that stay with you?

GD: Pardon?

RS: Do you remember any one... any images in particular?

GD: Well there was a baby on a bed, the bed was smooth, and the mother just leaning over on her side looking at the baby.

KD: Well the theme of the exhibition, which was on the cover of the magazine, you know – the catalogue – and on the posters was of a flute player. So although the exhibition wasn't about music, music was very much part of its subject matter. Anyway, this was at the Royal Festival Hall in London, and I came... I walked back over Hungerford Bridge and sat in the garden by what was then called Charing Cross sta... **[54:00]** anyway Charing Cross, um and I wrote these words: I belong to a family, the greatest on earth um, a thousand every day are coming to birth'. Um, and I took this song to the editorial committee, and they said "it's very, very um, prosaic isn't it, you know, what are you saying here Karl?" 'Cos it says 'The family of man keeps growing; the family of man keeps sowing the seeds of a new life every day'. And the funny thing was, many, many long years afterwards I was singing at a folk club in London and there was a, a, a er, a, an English country singer called Harry Cox from Norfolk there. And I sang this song and he came over to me in the interval and said "Karl", he said, "That song be all about fucking!": sow-, sowing the seeds of a new life every day. He saw **[55:00]** the whole point of the song! Which many people didn't, which I found very interesting. So anyway they agreed – they all voted – "No we're not going to publish this song", and I voted for it. And they said "We respect your judgement Karl, and so we'll publish it anyway, even though we think it's a terrible song". And er, that song – which I wrote in five minutes – has earned me between ten and twenty thousand pounds a year – not a year, since then: 1953, and here we are in 2015 and I get a cheque for about twenty or thirty pounds still for the er, cos er, the folk group The Spinners, from Liverpool, they said "We'd like to record your song – is that alright?". "Well, yes of course you can". Er, they'd just got a contract with er, um...

GD: Novello.

KD: Which?

GD: Novello.

KD: No, no, no – they were the publishers. **[56:00]** No the record company...? Anyway it doesn't matter – they'd got a record deal. And er, so they said "Well we'll get, get our publishers to publish it if that's alright" and that was Novello, um now part of EMI Music – so every time I write a song I write on it at the bottom 'Copyright Karl Dallas / EMI Music – it looks good. I, I, I've had three songs recorded by other people, um, er and...

RS: Which ones are they?

KD: ...'Family of Man' makes me more money than anything else. I wrote a song about Derek Bentley, the young criminal who, who was executed, er, um, Craig... Chris Craig and Derek Bentley. Er, and there was a film, er, called 'Let Him Have It', which was made many, many years afterwards. But that song, my song was recorded by Ewan McColl, 'Derek Bentley' **[57:00]** Er... [Coughs] And then a song called 'The Conscript's Farewell', er, which was about soldiers going off to fight in Malaya and, and Kenya, because this was the time of the colonial wars that were taking place. And er, so that's been recorded and I get a few, a few pence out of that. Um, er... and I remember Pete Seeger saying to me – er, he wrote to me – he said: "Do you have any other songs Karl? I don't like 'Family of Man' very much" [Laughs]. Er, but, you know... 'cos they had a magazine called *Sing Out*, which the British magazine *Sing* was modelled upon. And they were very much involved... and Bob Dylan put some of his early songs in *Sing Out*. So music and, and political activity – and particularly the peace movement – all were interlinked, in my life. **[58:00]**
RS: From the very beginning? When did you first get involved in, with folk music?

KD: 19-... well er, 'Derek Bentley' – the song that Ewan McColl recorded – was my second or third song. Erm... er... With the outbreak of the Korean War, I, I, I wrote a song called 'The Red Hills of Korea', which had some good lines in it – and it also has some terrible lines: it's sung by a woman and it say's 'I'm only an old... I'm only an ignorant woman and I don't know many things, [Laughs] I don't know many tricks; I'll die myself before I let my son get killed in politics', which is ter-, you know, awful.

RS: So what was your first song then?

KD: My first song was called, um, 'We Will Impose Peace'. Um, this what at the time of the International **[59:00]** Youth Festivals, organised by the World Federation of Democratic Youth in er, places like Warsaw and Vienna and um, er, Moscow. And er, 'We Will Impose Peace' was very much in line with the sort of socialist anthems that were coming out of the USSR, er... But I never did anything with it. Er, it was never... it's never been published anywhere. But the idea 'We Will Impose Peace' – peace is not something we're going to ask for – we're going to force the powers that be to be peaceful. Um... but of course there were lots of wonderful songs: 'Last night I had the strangest dream; I dreamed that men had all agreed to put an end to war. I dreamed I saw a mighty room... er, the room was full of men; the paper that they were signing said **[60:00]** that they'd never fight again. And when the paper was all signed and a...'

GD: 'And a million copies made...'

KD: 'And a million copies made, we all joined hands and...'

GD: ‘Bowed our heads...’

KD: ‘And grateful prayers were prayed. And people in the streets below were dancing round and round, as guns and thorn-... and swords and uniforms were scattered on the ground’. Haha, lovely.

RS: That’s really nice...

KD: That was a Canadian song. And er, so of course we had all these songs and of course, music had been...

RS: How did you learn them?

KD: ...part of my political life. I remember in 1938, er, May Day demonstration, er, which actually I said, er, um, my first demonstration was a demonstration against Chamberlain but er, in fact it might have been 1937, the May Day demonstration **[61:00]** when all the, the the bus drivers were on strike and they brought all their buses on this – I don’t know how they did it – on, on the demonstration. And er, um, we were singing er, ‘As man is only human, he must eat before he can think. Fine words are only empty air but not his meat and drink. The left, right, left, and left, right, left: there’s a place comrade for you. Join with us in the workers’ United Front for you are a worker too’. Now I didn’t know... we just sang this song.

RS: How did you learn it?

KD: Just other people singing it and I joined in, you know. Um, the words are by Berthold Brecht – somebody I discovered many, many years ago. But the other interesting thing was **[62:00]** that at that precise moment the political line of the international Communist Party movement had changed – I’ve just been reading a book about the Comintern when this actually happened. There’d been a, what they call Red Front – a workers’ front, er, which was, er, the Social Democrats – the Labour Party if you like: the equivalent in Germany – were described as ‘social fascists’ and the, the Communists were saying “We’re going to go it alone, we don’t need these people”. And of course that was a disaster: it’s one of the reasons the Nazis took power, because the er, the, the split in the labour movement between the Communists and the socialists, or the Communists and the Social Democrats. Um, now the song I’ve just sung you was, um, exemplified that previous period, ‘cos you... ‘Join with us in the workers’ United Front... **[63:00]** ‘cos you are a worker too’. You know, the bourgeoisie were the enemy, but then the line changed and it became the Popular Front. And the Popular Front incorporated what were known, er, the progressive or the national bourgeoisie who themselves were being oppressed by fascism in Germany, you know the er, the big combines like Krupp and Junker, er, they were, they were taking over all the small companies with, er, for the greater glory of fascism. Um, and, and, er, it wasn’t only Jewish people who got kicked out of their, their businesses. So, so we were singing an obsolete song, which I think is really amusing, ‘cos I still sing the song. I, I’ve got the words in **[64:00]** German too, er, of course. And of course Brecht became one of my great heroes, um, many, many years afterwards. I was asked, er, because my, me and my then wife – before Gloria came on the scene – she was on the scene but she was married to somebody else – [Coughs] my then wife Betty, er, because we’d played a big part in the, in the Aldermaston marches and so on, er, an East German film director came to England. He wanted to do a programme on East German television about music on the Aldermaston march. So in the end he invited me and Betty to go to Berlin to sing in this television programme, er, which, which we did.

RS: What did you sing?

KD: Pardon?

RS: What did you sing?

KD: About East Germany.

RS: Oh, in particular what song did you sing? **[65:00]**

KD: Oh what song... Well we sang 'The Family of Man', erm, we sang 'Where Have All The Flowers Gone?', which nobody knew then, it was totally unknown, er, I probably introduced it to Germany, er, although, er, Marlene Dietrich sang it in German round about the same time, a little bit later I think. Um, and er... when we were there, er, we were asked to go to various other towns and sing, and er, I've got pictures of me singing in Leipzig. Er, we got to know East Germany very well. But the point I wanted to make was, er, we were invited to go to the er, to the theatre of the Berlin Ensemble, which was Brecht's theatre, so we er, we saw a number of Brecht's plays in, in er **[66:00]** the Teatre of Schiffbowdon [?]. Yes the Theatre of... built by the shipbuilders 'cos it's right on the, on the banks of the, of the er, Albert is it in Berlin? My geography's terrible... But anyway, um, an so then I became a great admirer of Brecht. And um, one of the plays we saw when we were there was the... about... was a series of playlettes about the Third Reich and we had a, a German comrade who was our interpreter – er, an old man – we had a younger one as well but that was a different story. And he lived in Germany right through the Hitler time as **[67:00]** an underground member of the Communist Party. And he was a funny old guy, er, he had a British silk tie which he was very proud of, you know, he was a bit of a dandy... Anyway he took us to see this, this er, play in, in German of course, the er, *The Fear and Loathing* – or something like that – *of the Third Reich*, a series of little playlettes. And I remember him getting very angry because there was this scene of a woman on the phone talking, and then she'd pick it up, make another call – and people around us were laughing. And he said: "Why are you laughing? This isn't funny". It... because this woman, it was a Jewish woman who was going into exile and saying goodbye to all her friends. And to this day I don't know why they were laughing, but he got very angry, and of course he was shouting at them in German in the middle of this play. **[68:00]** Er, so anyway, many long years afterwards I was... I'd got into writing plays, and I took this playlette about this woman on the phone and I rewrote it in its entirety, because I didn't want to... I wanted to make it my own. But I... this... I used the same woman's name and the same situation where she was saying goodbye to all her friends. And, and this was put on by, by a local theatre company and um, after the production the way it was done was they had a discussion with the audience, and somebody said "I want to know what happened to that woman next" and... so I wrote the rest of the story, which was done as a radio play. And each scene, each **[69:00]** act was introduced by a poem which I wrote, um, and the man who read the poems was amazed. He said, he said er: "Did you get permission to use those poems?" I said: "Why would I need permission?" I said-, he said "Well you know, they were by Brecht weren't they?" "No, I wrote them." [Laughs] And he said, he said: "Well they're very like Brecht!" So I've been influenced by Brecht all my life. So that United Front song, er, it's part of my musical background. But we had other songs where um, and of course my other used to... we used to gather round the piano and we used to sing songs. [Sings] "England arise, the long night is over..." [Coughs] by Edward Carpenter. **[70:00]**

RS: And how did you learn that one?

KD: Er, it was in a song book that my mother had. And, er, Carpenter was interesting – which I didn't know at the time: he was just the name under the book – but he was actually a very, very early gay activist in the, er, er, on the Left, and he, he er, he um, corresponded with Walt Whitman, who of

course was bisexual. And one of my many projects – I have more projects than many people have hot dinners – is, is to write a play about this correspondence between Whitman and Edward Carpenter, um, because, er, questions of sexuality I think are very interesting.

RS: So do you always think that, er, music is a very important part of protest and showing political ideas?

KD: Yes, um, I was... it was always for a purpose. **[71:00]**

GD: Ruth, would you like to sit here? Just to...

RS: Are you sure?

GD: Yes go on, because you're so uncomfortable

[General laughter]

KD: Are you uncomfortable?

KD [to GD]: Where are you going to sit?

GD: I'm going to sit where she was sitting but I don't mind if I roll down the, down the cushion.

KD: We came... you see we were a musical family. Every Sunday afternoon we would gather round the piano. 'Cos you know, my mother came from Northumberland, and of course all her sisters came from Northumberland – she had five sisters and one brother – er, and you know, we'd sing 'Blade and Races', um, and er, [Sings – words unclear] **[72:00]** ... Um, and er, [Sings] "Have you seen a, what aye bonnie lad. Are you sure he's [Words unclear]... And of course "We'll mae the key roe, the key roe, the key roe. We'll mae the key roe. My laddie's in"...

GD: That's right

KD: And 'Blow the Wind Southerly', which is not a folk song, um, which um Kathleen Ferry did a terrible recording of. I'm a great admirer of Kathleen Ferry but I wish... and she, you know, she came from the North East but she didn't know how to sing north eastern songs. Er, my mother's teacher was W. Gillies Whitaker, er, who was a, a, **[73:00]** a collector of folk songs, and one of the things I've lost is, she had a, she had a two volume edition of er, North-, Northumbrian folk songs collected by W. Gillies Whitaker, which she'd had from school, but um, that's gone astray, probably when my first wife and I separated, it stayed with her or something. Um, so, but I thought folk songs, you know, soppy, because we used to sing it, you see Cecil Sharp: he thought folk song was dying out, but the only thing to do was preserve it be getting kids to sing 'em in schools. Well ,there's two problems about that. Firstly, a lot of the songs are very rude so they couldn't... they either couldn't be sung or they had to be cleaned up...

GD: Bowdlerised.

KD: What? **[74:00]**

GD: Bowdlerised.

KD: Yes, um, or um... But the other things is folk songs are not that... singing folk songs in schools made them part of the establishment, and folk is by it's very nature not part of the establishment. It's not no-... necessarily 'progressive' in quotes, because in, in many ways it's reactionary it goes... it harks back to a form of society so old that it pre-dates feudalism. Er, but um, it... they are our songs as opposed to their songs. Pop music is their songs, er... Classical music is basically their music, although, you know, it's more complicated than that **[75:00]** 'cos of course, um Beethoven dedicated his 9th Symphony to, to Napoleon. [Coughs] So, er, music was very much part of my life, but as I say, we... when, when I was at my auntie's in, in Barnmill in Northumberland, going to the village school, we had a school teacher who used to stand on a, stand on a table and lead us in singing folk songs, and we boys were trying to look up her skirt, that seemed to be the most interesting thing about that, but you know, and, and, you know 'We'll mae the key roe' I thought was a soppy song, um, although I think it's quite good now. So er, when I started writing songs, um, it was... I was more interested in American music and in jazz **[76:00]** particularly, but also blues. And I, I had a friend who had a wonderful collection of blues records – 78s 'cos LPs didn't exist in those days – and he had a whole wardrobe – shelves of these records, all in alphabetical order. [Coughs] And er, it was from him... on one of his records that I heard a song called [Sings] 'That's alright mama, it's alright with me' by er, er, a singer called er, Arthur 'Big Boy' Krudup, who many years later taught it to Elvis Presley and it became Elvis Presley: [Sings] 'That's alright mama [Clicks fingers in the background], that's alright with me'. Um, which when I heard that I was furious: "How dare he bowdlerise and commercialise that song?" But what I didn't realise was the Blues itself was commercial **[77:00]** music. Um, I had lots of ridiculous ideas. I was, I was a purist and I didn't know what, what was pure. Um, and so er, he had some records... I was writing poetry [Coughs] and I remember when on the outbreak of the Korean War there was, in Wandsworth, there was a peace conference called to see how we could er, bring about peace in, in, in the Far East. And I'd organised the er, Wandsworth and District Arts Association, which usd to meet at my house – well my mother's house – and we used to read plays. We did 'Morning Becomes Eclectic', which is one of my favourite plays. And [Coughs] um, I went as a delegate, er, from the Wandsworth and District Arts Association to er, this peace conference **[78:00]**. And er, there was a time when you could... and they said er, "Well does anyone else want to say anthing?" and I said "Well I'd like to read a poem". So I read a poem about the outbreak of the Korean War, er and it went down like a lead balloon because no-... nobody would, you know – poetry was about daffodils and things like that, not about war. Well then I'd been very influenced by the Soviet poet, Vladimir Myakovsky, whose most famous early poem was called 'A Cloud in Trousers', I love that. Anyway, er, this friend of mine with the Blues record collection, he had some recordings of Woody Guthrie – Dustbowl Ballards. And he played them to me and I thought "He's writing songs about what I'm writing poems about". So I went out and bought a guitar for some... I don't know... and I taught myself some chords and started um, er, **[79:00]** I wrote the song 'Derek Bentley', which er, then... by then I'd become a member of the National Union of Journalists and er, we... my branch of the NUJ had a social and Ewan McColl had been invited to come and sing there, at the social. Er, and his guitarist at the time was a calypsonian called Fitzroy Coleman, er, and I was fascinated by calypso and I couldn't work out how, how you did it. So I asked Fitz in the interval and I said "Can you show to play calypso?" And he said "Yeah man you do it like this" – and he had these huge hands with fingers that could... I looked at him and I thought "There's no way I can do that". So that ended my flirtation with calypso, but then as the evening sort of descended **[80:00]** into general sort of drinking and dancing and, you know, that kind of thing, the guy who'd organised it said "Ewan and Fitz are downstairs in the kitchen. They're working on some songs and er, we're going to go down there and listen to them and just, you know". So we went down there and Ewan and Fitz were working on a song called 'The Gardener', and Fitz said: "What this song needs is an electric guitar man. When you sing [Sings] 'la-da-daa', wow!" And I thought "How can – he's an acoustic guitarist – how can he think of playing electric guitar?" – 'cos as I say I was very much of a purist at that time. So anyway, we were

listening to this, and suddenly Fitz picks up his guitar, tosses it across the table to me. He says "Now you do one." And **[81:00]** I thought "What can I do?" So I sang my Derek Bentley song. And Ewan said "That's a good ballad. I'd like to record it." And you know, this is like God coming from on high, you know, er saying "I've just... you're going to be my son Jesus. That guy, he's not the right one: you're going to be it." And er, so, he was still going... His relationship with um, er, what's his name – the woman at the Theatre Workshop...?

GD: Jeannie?

KD: No, Jeannie was his... The woman at the...

GD: Oh, Littlewood.

KD: Joan Littlewood, yes. Er, this... it was coming to an end but he was doing concerts at the, at the Theatre Royal Stratford to raise money for Theatre Workshop, and he invited me and my wife to go and sing there. So that was incredible, and I can remember **[82:00]** it was the day after the Rosenbergs were executed in the, in, in America because of a stupid remark that someone in, in the same, same row of seats as me. So I sang my Derek Bentley song and Betty sang a couple of songs as well. And um, so that's how I got in-... got involved with Ewan, and this was a totally different thing and er, er, so with this... with his encouragement, the *Sing* magazine, demonstrations, um, you know, the Aldermaston march – 'cos I went on all the marches, um, er, and there was a lot of music, there was a band called the Alberts who played sort of bugles and things... they played sort of jazz, **[83:00]** but um, and it was really... it was a wonderful time. And of course people came to the Aldermaston march from all over the country and they went home singing the songs - not only the songs that, that we composed but this book has got some of the songs that other people put together, like [Sings] "To hell with all the humbug and to hell with all the lies. To hell with all the strontium continuing to rise. To hell with all the Charlies with a gift for compromise, if they won't ban the H-bomb now." Er, that was er, a student song and um...

GD: There's ads on the back for things as well – on the back cover...

KD: Yes, well that was... Gloria's husband worked in College record shop for a while. Er and er... **[84:00]** [Sings] "We're marching to Trafalgar Square; oh yes oh. Today we're marching to declare that the Bomb has got to go." And so on and so on... And so they came away and set up... there were CND folk clubs – they started as CND folk clubs but then of course the subject broadened. People had songs about whaling, and fox hunting and you know, things like that.

RS: So that was inspired from Aldermaston mainly was it?

KD: Yeah. Aldermaston is, was very, very important social event. And of course they took pic-... people... there were young people who made up their faces to look like skulls or whatever and of course they got, they got photographed for the national press to **[85:00]** satirise what we were doing. How are we doing for time? I haven't got me watch.

GD: It's quarter past three nearly.

KD: Oh, 'cos we're going down to the rally.

GD: Yes

KD: So I think I've run out of steam.

RD: Do you mind if I just ask you a couple of questions that...

KD: Yes

RD: So when you were doing the Aldermaston marches, did you consider yourself an actual member of CND or just a supporter of the anti-nuclear movement?

KD: Well I'm not sure there was any such thing as a membership for CND.

GD: No.

KD: Um, er, there was a sort of organising committee and they'd have conferences and debate policy although I never went to them. But then of course there was the Committee of 100, which was led by Bertrand Russell. Um, and er, I supported them: I went and sat down with Bertrand Russell in Trafalgar Square. That was terrifying because of all these police with dogs. **[86:00]** And, and we didn't do any music there. Um... 'cos basically I considered myself a political activist and I would use anything. I mean last night we were drawing... I was teaching people songs and people were making placards for this demonstration. And these were all grist to the mill, you know. And, and Gloria of course, she was a designer. She designed all sorts of things: record sleeves and um...

GD: Yes there's a 10 inch record 'Songs Against the Bomb' by ?? Records, which I did the cover for... Black and white.

KD: Yeah... So you see music was a tool. But now you see I don't think of things in those sort of compartments, um, any more than I think, you know, when I go to church on a Sunday it's the same as going to this **[87:00]** demonstration this afternoon. It's all part of... It's like my work: I've been writing a sequel to *Oliver Twist* this morning: now, having fun. So is it work or not? You know... And I say everything I do is work, or none of it is. It's all playing, but you know... I wrote a book about Pink Floyd, who I was very close to – many years later to what we're talking about – at the time of... you know, in the Sixties – peace and love and all that stuff – um, and er, I'd become a Christian by then, and I dedicated the book to the glory of God. But there was nothing about God – that was the only reference to God in the... And everything I do, that's what's in the end, you know, is, is to His glory, um, and building His kingdom here on earth. You know, Jesus **[88:00]** doesn't say, you know, look at the pie in the sky, you know. He said two things: he said "The kingdom of heaven is within you" and also you know, that we're building a community here. Um, and of course the first Christians – not exactly the first Christians because of course the first Christians were the twelve disciples – but after Pentecost, which was last Sunday, they set up in Jerusalem a commune, where everything was held in common. You joined the commune, you gave all your... if you had any riches, you gave them the money; if you had any land or property you sold it and gave them the money for that. It was a communist society. Um, and it was interesting that um, er, Kautsky, Karl Kautsky wrote a book about the origins of Christianity, and he, he showed how this commune was doomed, because it could not survive in a hostile environment, **[89:00]** until the environment was no longer hostile, which of course could only come about if, if they... with the establishment of worldwide socialism. We have reached that yet. So you know, it's a journey – we're on a journey. Um, I remember when I was still at school, there was a communist bookshop in Tooting Broadway, and I was in there – it was run by a man called Arthur Mendleson, who's still alive, or at least he was a few years ago, when I gave a talk somewhere and he turned up. But er, er, there was somebody questioning him and er, so this person said to him – not in a note of hostility but also... but in a

critical voice – he said "So do you believe you're going to see a revolution?" And Arthur said: "No, but he will" – pointing at me. **[90:00]** But of course revolution is... revolution is a continuous project. This is... this is a revolutionary meeting, you know. In Nazi Germany the Gestapo would come knocking on the door... you know, and you know, um my bug-... phones and cars and houses – including this one – have been bugged for years, but there's never anything... they've never actually charged me with anything. But I went to the United States in... early eighties, and was questioned by the FBI. Well I wasn't questioned by the FBI. I was one of three people: one was a Lebanese businessman; one was a Scottish Communist who used to sing revolutionary songs when he got drunk in the bar of the Hilton hotel in New Orleans; and there was me. And **[91:00]** er, we were meeting in the Lebanese businessman's apart-...

GD: Room...

KD: Room but you know... Penthouse suite in the hotel, when the FBI came knocking on the door. And um, why they came is a long story so I won't bore you with that. But anyway, so my friend Bruce – the Communist – er, he didn't have his passport with him so they... he said "Well I'll go and get my passport", er and there were two of the FBI agents and one of them said "Well, I'll come with you if you don't mind". So he said "Yeah ok". So off they went, and of course the Lebanese guy, he produced his passport and so on. And so I said – and I didn't have my passport: it was in my room – and I said "Don't you want me to get my passport?" He said "No, we know all about you Mr Dallas". And for a moment I thought "I'm going to say **[92:00]** 'I don't know what you're talking about'" but I thought "But I do know what he's talking about" because in those days – they don't do it now so obviously – but every time there was a political meeting there'd be someone in a raincoat making notes, and he was from the Special Branch, of the police, and I've been questioned by the police – the British police – several times about my political activities. And so I assumed that he'd got information. And of course on my passport it said that – I wasn't then: I'd left the Communist Party by then – but you have... when you apply for a visa: 'Are you or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?' So I said yes. But you're supposed to say... you're supposed to explain, and I didn't, and when I applied for my visa – this was before the FBI incident – when I applied for my visa he questioned me **[93:00]**.
I said… he said… "You've said yes," I said "Yes- it's no secret, I'm well known," He said "But we want details," I said "well I'm sorry I'm not going to give you those details - you have to find out, find that out for yourself. You asked me the question and I've answered it truthfully and after that it's over to you." He said "Well we're going to give you it." But he said er… " I'll have to apply to Washington for info-…for guidance on your case, but I think you'll have no problem, getting a visa" and this was at the time of peace and love and a friend of mine who managed a group called 'The Incredible String Band', you ever heard of 'The Incredible String Band'? Well they were real hippy, this was real hippy stuff and er…he had great difficulty, he had more difficulty getting into the United States than me! I said to him, you're more dangerous than I am!
So anyway, umm err this FBI guy obviously knew all about me. Now I've been questioned by Mossad **[94:00]** in Israel in 1968. Err… I performed frequently in East Germany, so I've no doubt Stazi had a file me, although I'd, they had a file on everyone, I think, moved, they opened a file on it.…erm… I've gone to Moscow and Leningrad with Demis Roussos, of all people, reporting for the Mail on Sunday. As I phoned my copy to the Mail on Sunday in the UK, I could hear, 'cause the KGB equipment was very antiquated, I could actually hear them coming on the line, to listen to what I was saying, so I've no doubt the KGB or the FSB as it now is, umm… had a file on me. I was in Iraq with the Human Shields in 2003, and some of the Shields had issues, not me, with the Mukhabarat, that's Saddam Hussein's secret police, **[95:00]** so I've no doubt secret police had a file on me – so there is all these people got files on me, throughout the world! I'm a very dangerous man, and I'm just a singer you know?

GD: They haven't got any files on me that I know of.

KD: Oh of course they have…They've got… They have…they… We had this very strange experience, er…we came down one morning and all the furniture in the kitc- what was then our lounge, had been moved around er… the er… my shoulder bag, not this exact one but one like this, had gone and erm **[96:00]** the door was locked, but somebody or something had been in. Gloria said "Oh it's a dog got in through the cat flap" but er… but you'd have to be a big dog to move all these things round. And erm the farmer up the top of the road er came knocking on the door and he said "I think this is your bag," he said "we found it thrown into a hedge, er and we saw your name in it. So…" So I said "oh thank you very much". And then er…Gloria and I separated, technically, because erm… well I'm impossible to live with. Erm.. and so I have a flat elsewhere, although because she's got Parkinson's I'm her carer so I spend more time here, than I do at my flat, God works in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform – 'cause through her Parkinson's **[97:00]** we're closer then we're ever been. Although we're not…we've been… though technically we're separated…
Anyway, I have this flat in Manningham which is predominantly Muslim area, which is an interesting phenom- experience for me. Erm I've more Muslim friends then I have Chrsitian friends and erm. I came home from having been here, and I'd been burgled. And…somebody had come in through kitchen window. And there were all jars on the kitchen shelf, like there often …and the window was wide open, and the shelves, the things were all there and anyway - obviously I called the police. And the policeman said, he said "This is the most professional burglary I have ever seen". He said, "they came up the drainpipe…, they got in through that window

GD: Plastic… plastic drainpipe.

KD: **[98:00]** Yes, plastic drainpipe, umm, "without disturbing anything and umm they haven't taken anything!" I had my guitars there, computer, all sorts of things. So, you know, and they dusted it for fingerprints, no fingerprints. He said "This is the most professional burglary I've ever come across" He said "But what for? Have you lost anything?" I said "well, you know, there's lots of stuff, papers everywhere, I can't really say, but I can't - they didn't take my computer, they didn't take my guitars etcetera". Anyway I was talking to somebody in London in the peace movement about this, I said "It's very weird." They said "Karl, the question isn't why - what did they take, the question is what did they leave?" He said, this was, this was, you know I …cause I, this **[99:00]** policeman's comment "This was the most professional burglary". He said this was done by professionals; he said you want to be careful what you say in that flat.

GD: But surely what they leave, surely needs a battery, so it will only last for so long [laughs].

KD: Oh it could be connected to a phone, it could be connected to a light – socket battery, it could be solar powered, well that's no problem, I could, I could, I could do that. So erm. Umm Wherever I… but the thing is you see, my life is an open book. I always say er… You know, I've had a very complicated emotional life, which is one of the reasons Gloria and I don't live together anymore [laughs] theoretically. Umm…If somebody was to go to Gloria with a great revelation "do you know Karl was in love with so and so" she'd say "yeah I know" 'cause she knows everything about me. Umm..so…er you know…and **[100:00]** my political position is well known. I'd write letters to the local media. When I went to Iraq as a human shield, BBC television in Leeds did three programmes about me; they followed me right there and then when I came back they interviewed me. So it's well known who I am and what I am. I'd make the worst spy or terrorist or anything, you know, because I'm too open, you know. Your terrorist is going to be somebody who is like a local businessman, which is what you call a sleeper. What err John Le Carré called a 'mole' but he invented that term.

Now it's used in films as if it's generic. He invented the term. They were known as sleepers. Umm not somebody like me, you know. **[101:00]** Although of course there were people like Berger McLain who were well known left-wingers, why they got the job that they did in the foreign office I don't know. So you know, I'm 84 now. I think my friend Arthur Middleton is wrong. Although life is a continual revolution in my opinion. The one thing I agree with, trust me, is that there has to be a permanent revolution. Umm who knows, you know, I couldn't have predicted the Tory victory, because I was out campaigning. I do radio programmes for the local community radio station. But I had to come off the air because you're not allowed to do that if you're also campaigning politically. Ofcom's rules, no oftem, Ofcom whatever they don't allow that. So either I had to abstain from any political activity **[102:00]** during the election, which is unthinkable, or I came off the air, which I did, I did my first programme last week and I did another one yesterday and I've got another one coming, 'cus I do 4. I do a programme every week, a different programme, I do a Jazz programme, a film programme and a classical music programme. Oh and I also have done but I'm not doing at the moment a talk show.
I'm a lousy terrorist, I'm a lousy…umm a lazy spy all I do is, I bumped into a lady in the middle of the street in Bradford, no it was actually in Shipley, many years ago 'cus that lady has died now, and she said "'ello Karl you still making trouble?" and I said "'til the end of my days I'll still be making trouble" **[103:00]** I'm a trouble maker. But they – it's rather funny the way the church accommodates me, it's rather like, it's a bit like this is a very – I don't mean this – it comes over very eccentrically but – its like the way an oyster will surround a bit of dirt and turn it into a pearl. I don't think I'm a pearl but, you know, the church up the road which I don't go to anymore 'cus we quarrelled over homosexuality, the woman there she said "we used to think you were weird Karl, but now we realise you're Karl" which was her way of just accepting me as I am, you know. 'Cus I believe, I, I accept Jesus as my Lord and Saviour, you know, but you see I wrote a song called 'There's only one King in my life, and he lives in Heaven above' umm **[104:00]** I describe myself in the song as a red republican. Mind you I'd rather have Charles as our King than Tony Blair as our President, given the choice.

RD: And you said last night that you were teaching people songs and banner making for the event this evening. Was that the same for the Aldermaston marches, was there the same kind of pre-organisation that you did as a group? Other than the songs?

KD: Well, musically there was. That occupied all my thinking. But I've been in other things, like when I was in Palestine in Maublis, there was a 24/7 curfew, anyone on the streets could be shot on site, and **[105:00]** I was with the International Solidarity Movement there and so we had a, we decided to challenge the Israelis by organising a demonstration through the streets, where we weren't allowed to even go. And so we had a placard making workshop. And so last week we had an organising meeting for this event that's taking place today. I said "why don't we have a placard making workshop?" And so while they were making placards I was teaching them songs.

RD: That was a really lovely way of doing it, I think.

KD: Yeah. Oh and the placards were wonderful weren't they Gloria?

GD: They were fantastic. Very professional.

KD: Yeah. But also very different. You know, people who'd never done any such thing before. And there's a young lady, Anne-Marie, she's very severely disabled. I mean Gloria is disabled but this woman can't move out of her – **[106:00]** well obviously I suppose her boyfriend takes her out of the wheelchair to go to bed – but she composed a song which we were working on last night, yesterday

afternoon, just tightening it up. It was quite interesting because I had used it – she gave me her text, which was 3 pages long – I said it can't be, you know, at a demonstration it has to have like a verse and a chorus at most. Verse, chorus and then you go back chorus then verse then chorus, you know you go backwards and forwards. So um I had changed one of her lines to uh "the weak and disabled" I said, and she said… no sick, not weak. **[107:00]** And she said "we're not *disabled* we are *disabled people… people* not *disabled."* I found that very interesting because for me that was a learning process, she was telling me words that she found acceptable to be in her song. She kept on saying "Is that alright?", I said "It's your song!" You know, I just did a few things to make it a bit more singeable, I think. And actually her line is not as singable as my line but it was very important … disabled *people. "*I'm a person, don't call me disabled." You know, and she's obviously a very militant disabled person. So she was teaching me. And there was a song which I have been singing for literally 50 years: "We shall not, we shall not be moved" And she, she came across "We shall not, we shall not" … what's it? **[108:00]**… We shall…I've got the words in my guitar I must remember it because we're gonna sing it this afternoon. But she'd made a change … umm … and I said "I'm gonna steal that, I'm gonna use that again." And how can I use it again I've forgotten it already! We shall not give in. Was it we shall not give in? Anyway, as soon as we've finished I'm gonna get that out cus I've gotta get it clear in my head. She's gonna be singing it, she has a sweet little voice and we've got no PA we've only got a loud halo, which I hate those things, so her boyfriend Martin is going to hold it in front of her. Now I think, knowing people, they will 'shhh'… Sometimes the louder you are, you know, often I'll go to an event to sing and **[109:00]** there'll be people using a microphone to make speeches, to sing pop songs, and whatever and the background voice level goes up as soon as the microphone is in the hand. And I've found that in those circumstances, if you disregard the microphone and just speak quietly. 'Cus one of the things I learnt as a choir boy, is how to project your voice without shouting. And so I say, "Hello everyone my name's Karl and I'm singing you two or three songs and I hope you'll be able to join in". And because I'm talking in a sort of conversational tone, they quieten down. So I'm hoping that when we're in Centenary Square in Bradford today and this loud hailer is in front of her little voice, when she sings "We shall…" that they will actually pay attention … and I think they will. **[110:00]**

RD: And when you talk about music and protest being so interlinked, and this idea of getting people to join in with you, what do you feel that gives to the demonstration? Is it a sense of kind of unity?

KD: Yes. You see, umm, there's a dialectic here … because I am a performer …but Bob Dylan said don't follow leaders. What I'm doing is wrong … because my job is to get other people to do things. You see when this young woman said she'd got a song she'd written, I wanted to throw my arms around her and give her a hug, except her boyfriend was there, but you know because that's what it's all about, you know. There are no stars. **[111:00]** But I've, over 60 years or more of doing this, what I'm going to be doing this afternoon, there are certain techniques that I've learnt, the technique of being quiet rather than trying to shout people down … you know they come naturally to me. We had a party once and there was a folk singer called Heddy West, whose father was Don West, who was one of the people associated with the people who composed 'We Shall Overcome'. And there was a guy there beside me who was a fashion, he was a couturier, 'cus I mixed up all these people and they all came to my party, you see. And Heddy came into the room and he said "Who is that woman?", and I said "Oh that's Heddy West" and he said "Who is she? **[112:00]** And why is she important?". And I said "Why do you say that?" he said "She came here, she came into the room with authority, as if she knew that she was important, and caught my attention and I've never seen her before … I've forgotten her name already…". And there's a dialectic, or dichotomy if you prefer. A person with that role if you're trying to involve, to get other people to do things. I was once at a meeting where they were electing a chair and nobody was coming forward, so I thought, well I know how to run meetings I'd better do it. So I volunteered, I became the chair. And it didn't work out. So I said,

[113:00] "We're going to have to have somebody else in the Chair, 'cus I'm having problems here". So they said "Oh good because we've got 3 other people who wanted to be chair when you volunteered and we let you do it because you've done it so often". And I was so pleased, but there's that danger you see, when you've got that authority, which you don't necessarily want, you know, this is the problem in the Labour movement . You've heard of George Gallaway, well you know, well he's a man with great charisma. He lost at the last election, but he still got 8000 votes, which is really you know … it's not chicken feed. His opponent got 11000 votes whereas he swept in at the previous by-election. **[114:00]** But he's surrounded by people who absolutely adore him. That's a very dangerous position for him because he's only human. There's only one person that's never got anything wrong and that was Jesus, and all the rest of it, but, you know, as I say 'cus I don't mince my language, but I do according to where I am, you know, I said, you know, I said but… .People say well I'm, I try, I'm a good person, I don't need to go to Church. And I say what do you do when you fuck up? 'Cus what I do is I go to God and I say "I've done it again, sorry", you know, and I'm sure after you've gone he'll say to me "Karl you didn't half go on today" you know, "those poor ladies came to find out stuff and you just went into this rambling **[115:00]** account of your life". And I'll say "Ok Lord I'll try and do it better next time, please forgive me"

RS: Not at all it's been very interesting. Thank you for seeing us it's been great.

GD: You already know a lot about folk music don't you.

RS: Not a great deal, we've learnt a lot today from –

GD: But you know about it?

KD: About what?

GD: Folk music

KD: Yeah, the basics I suppose. There's always more to learn as well isn't there.

RD: It's really interesting what you were saying about the kind of pre-CND thing. Because apart from the Committee of 100 no one else has really brought anything up about that period. Because there's that big period between the bomb dropping and the CND really forming, and there had been a real gap in our knowledge.

GD: Well ,the thing is there are things are going on all over our country, now, and we don't know about them. The thing that's happening [116:00] in Bradford, must be happening something similar in Newcastle?

KD: Well there's something going on in Leeds.

GD: In Leeds, yes, and then … so it seems as if there is a great sudden eruption. But it's not a sudden eruption. It's coming from below. That demonstration in London with 2 or 3 thousand people … umm … People have been organising, not organising, just getting together. There was a demonstration in Bradford of how many people three thousand?

KD: Five thousand

GD: Five thousand people in Bradford before that demonstration.

KD: But you see, the Stockholm Appeal was organised by the World Peace Council, and I think probably, **[117:00]** although we argued, we denied it at the time, it was described as a Communist front. And it was. But you know, Communists like Picasso designed the Peace Dove for that movement … umm … and err … but it umm it wasn't pacifist. You see I've never been a Pacifist, just like I've never been an Agnostic. So … and in fact the Chinese peace movement issued a statement about all the weapons that they had financed and collected for the war in Korea. The Chinese troops in Korea. **[118:00]** Umm…and that was, you know, listed as, you know, this and the expression was sometimes used 'fighting for peace' and I said "how can you fight for peace?" So we tried to say 'struggle for peace' rather than 'fight for peace'. And of course when I went to sing in East Germany, the GDR, umm … that was always organised by the Deutsches Friedenstrat, the German Peace Council, which was an affiliate of the World Peace Council, which organised the Stockholm Appeal. And when - 'cause this was before the Wall went up and err I could but I could - travel between East and West Berlin was fairly easy … and then the Wall went up **[119:00]** and of course East Berliners couldn't go to West, go to the West but I could of course because I had a British passport. And so, at the time of the uprising of the student movement in West Berlin, err, I went across, err, to a meeting with the SDS, the Students Democratic Society, and urged them to keep in touch with their comrades in East Germany. Well they didn't wanna know… They didn't want anything to do, anything to do with the East. Umm … but err I did what I could. And when I was there I ran out, I needed some guitar strings so I went into the West and I couldn't find a music shop and I saw the American Embassy, so I went into the American Embassy [laughs] and I said "Can you tell me where there's a music shop I need to buy some guitar strings" **[120:00]** so they gave me directions, and err, so umm… The GDR was very interesting, I saw it decline. We, we saw the authorities get … Well I saw the authorities get more and more out of touch with the ordinary people. But uh, a lot of the people I dealt with had been anti-Nazis during, during the war.

RD: This idea that you mentioned; the kind of terminology of 'fighting for peace' and 'struggling for peace. In your mind for the anti-nuclear movement, did you make a distinction between, kind of, the protestors that would sit down and direct action protestors?

KD: Well I was in favour of direct action, that's why I supported, I was never a member, but I supported the Committee of 100, and uh, **[121:00]** I sat down in umm Grosvenor Square in 1968 protesting against the Vietnam War and got picked up by my long hair by a policeman. So I went the next day and got my hair cut – I had a crew cut after that – I thought they're not gonna do that again! But the following year in 1969 umm the police rioted and attacked the demonstrators and err I got my nose broken by a police truncheon and that was quite a horrifying experience. But you see the people … the people fought back. I didn't because I, although I've, I've, I've got quite a hot temper, I'm basically quite peaceable. Umm … and if the police are gonna come attack me I'm gonna run away, **[122:00]** it's what I would do, preferably. But there were metal railings all-round the Grosvenor Square and people pulled them up and were using them as spears against the police. And of course that's what the press made much of this. But they didn't realise that the people were fighting in self-defence. Umm … and people have that right. I'm in favour of non-violence, mainly on pragmatic lines. Because if you're violent towards people who've got submachine guns then they're gonna kill you. And it's, you know, far better, far better to sit down. But on the other hand sometimes it's hard to do. When I was in Palestine we confronted a group of Israeli soldiers who had taken over the top floor of a small block of flats, a three story block of flats, and put everybody in one room with no toilet, water **[123:00]** or anything, in the middle of summer, you know, it was very hot. And so we confronted them. There was a balcony outside that room that was connected to the next block of flats. So we went up through the next block of flats over the wall to that balcony and started talking to the soldiers in the room, or attempting to, they wouldn't communicate with us. But we were only, there were 5 of us on this balcony, and there were 5 more on the ground, and the

Israelis brought up a tank. And the people downstairs sat down in front of the tank, and that takes more bravery than I've got. You know, I could sit down in Trafalgar Square, because our police here are fairly, you know, as I say I've had my nose broken by a police truncheon, but at least I wasn't, you know, I wasn't killed … like **[124:00]** has happened to people in South Africa or indeed happened to people in Palestine. Umm, and eventually we winkled these soldiers out and got the people, their flats, back. But uh, when I saw those people … And of course they fired, they fired umm tear gas shells at us, and then when we'd all agreed and the soldiers were leaving, they fired a stun grenade, which exploded at my feet and destroyed my hearing.

RD: Oh gosh.

KD: Which was already not very good because of Rock 'n' Roll. In the sixties when I went to cover a concert for Melly Maker, the promoters always sat us in front of the speakers 'cus they were the seats they couldn't sell. And so uhh … Gloria didn't come to every concert, [125:00] that's why her hearing is a bit better than mine [laughs].

GD: And also I fell asleep!

KD: Yes when we go to a noisy film … [snores] … she's fast asleep! And if it's on television, you know.

GD: It's too much, I escape from it.

KD: So umm…

RD: Did you ever, in the UK, meet any police officers who were sympathetic to the anti-nuclear cause?

KD: Oh yes! When they brought cruise missiles to Britain, we had a sit down in Trafalgar Square and as the policeman picked me up he said "I hope this does some good, Sir"… Yes … I mean they're workers just like the rest of us. But of course they just, they are also responsible for what they are doing. You can't just say "Oh well I was only obeying orders". But what happened in Grosvenor Square in 1969, **[126:00]** '68 picked up by my hair well that, you know, that's OK. But '69 there was this guy lying on the ground and six or seven policemen round him kicking him. And without thinking I bent down to pick him to his feet. And one of them just went 'boomph' just like that. And all the blood flew into my eyes … I was blinded! And I was taken aback and I said to somebody "Am I alright?" and I … he said … he wiped my eyes he said "Yeah, your nose is a bit out of shape". So this was Grosvenor Square in the West End … I went into a local pub with blood all over my face, I said "Can I use your phone?". So I rang Gloria and I said "I want to tell you **[127:00]** I look terrible, but I'm alright. So don't panic when I come to the door, 'cus I've been hit in the face with a truncheon." So we got our… and …and our little son, who's now in his fifties … no sixties isn't he now?

GD: Fifties.

KD: He said "I'll get that policeman!" [laughs] … You know the way kids are … lovely. But uh, I got a bit wary. And now I've got a pacemaker because of heart trouble. And I have to be careful. If I got a blow on my chest it could do serious damage. And so I tend to avoid those kind of confrontations. Umm the last time I had anything like that was at Menwith Hill, I was standing on a low **[128:00]** er… wall playing my guitar, and this policeman, one of the defence, Ministry of

Defence police from Menwith Hill, that's an American base … they're supposed to be British but they're all Americans now. But the police, the defence police are British. He pushed me and of course I went flying. So I put in an official complaint. I knew it would do no good and I wasn't seriously hurt … but I thought you can't let these bastards get away with that. So, you know, there had to be a hearing, he had to come and give evidence. And I thought, you know, they will say to him, you know, 'cool it a bit' you know … because err the whole point about, I mean I don't know how much you know about Marxist theory, but the Italian Gramsci, err he wrote about Capitalist, (I'm never sure whether to pronounce it hegemony or hegemony **[129:00]** – I think its hegemony because g-e) umm, but people, including in the Fascist society - 'cus he was writing in prison in Italy - he said the working class, the Fascists govern by permission of the working class because they have been won for, you know, what the black shirts say they're gonna give them … full employment, you know trains running on time … etcetera etcetera. He said if you think of the people who vote fascist as the enemy, you're missing the way that society runs. So, you know, as far as I'm concerned, the police are workers just like us. But on the other hand, one of the terrible experiences, which I haven't had personally, but I have, you know, one's heard the stories, of people, you know, soldiers **[130:00]** in the Ger- the Wehrmacht, you know, the German army, who are basically good guys but as they got into Poland and the USSR where the Einsatzgruppe group were killing people wholesale, and they have the opp - choice of going along with that or being themselves victims. And of course what do most people do? They're not gonna, they're not gonna… I mean they might help somebody if they could, you know, but broadly speaking, you know, they go along with what is being done because people don't like to expose themselves. But in the end they are responsible, they've gotta take responsibility. And there's the old saying 'Silence means consent'. And so it's very important to speak up. One of my sons will be singing, we may be singing **[131:00]**, it's there it's on my shortlist, it's down the list, it says "speak out, speak out, speak out on behalf of the sick and disabled". But my friend would say "no, sick and disabled *people!*" [laughs] … So I've got to think about that. I just have to get myself sorted out to go to this demo…

RD: Of course! Yeah, well thank you so much we are going to stop here now.