After Hiroshima (Research) Interview

Interviewer: Ruth Dewa (RD)
Interviewee: Paul Schulte (PS) – Professor of War Studies at Kings University
Also present: Jasmine Atkinson
Date: 26th October 2015

(PS) …if you were thinking about…overall UK, or Western reactions, you're gonna get a skewed effect from the borough of Southwark, but that may not matter if your…production is about…Southwark, memories, of…uh… the emergence of nuclear weapons and the resonances of Hiroshima. But it's-- so it's-- I mean I'm just trying to get a sense of what it is you're trying-- trying to do.

[00:26]

(RD) Yes, um, it's-- it's kind of a bit of both, because, we had someone from, uh, the-- the CND, the, um…communications person, on our steering committee. So…

[00:37]

(PS) What a surprise. [RD laughs] I mean, I have to be a little sceptical, I mean I'm not-- I'm not-- paranoid or deeply upset, but there is this…nexus between…theatrical groups - *actors* - and…anti-nuclear activists, u--uh-- isn't there? Well, certainly… lovies go on TV talking about, uh, their feelings about all this, so. Um, [laughs] uh…you know [background noise], I-- I have to-- it's not my problem, and I'm not deeply worried about this, but…if it's-- if it's an exercise in anti-nuclear [inaudible] I can see that…that would be quite an easy way of doing it, talking-- remembering selectively, particularly people who live-- who live in Southwark, and how they felt. Uh…but that is gonna be far from the whole picture. But maybe that doesn't matter to you.

[01:30]

(RD) Oh it-- it matters very much. And that's why we got in contact with you, so we have, um, tried contacting pretty much everyone we can think of, and I don't know if you're surprised to learn, but, talking to our local councillors, and MPs, policy-makers, professors, academics, that we…have been put in touch with, no one has been willing to come out and say that they're committed to nuclear deterrence. Even people from the Keep Trident campaign, gave us a statement saying it's an emotive issue and we don't want t-- to talk about it, kind of thing.

[02:01]

(PS) Yeah. Well, but-- this is a different thing, though, I mean…if we're-- if we're debating…the ethics, or…avoidability of nuclear deterrents, that's not the same thing as understanding or recreating how people in Southwark…thought, circa 1945 to '63. I mean, there'll be some of those debates…that they would have had. I can remember - I-- I was born in '51 - and I can remember arguments around my dinner table be- between my father and his brother. And interestingly, they originated in Borough Road, so that the kind of-- there's-- there's a South London thing there. And they did disagree, and there were…certainly The News Chronicle versus the Express, an-- an-- and Telegraph. But a lot of the…wider, longer-

term philosophical arguments were not particularly well verbalised then, um…and not even now. So, ah…I mean-- I can-- I can talk about what I take to be the…sort of a permanent case, and the-- the problems, but, it's…not gonna necessarily coincide with your historical recreation project.

[03:14]

(RD) Yeah. Let's-- let's start with that, because…it's not necessarily a historical recreation project. They're just-- the people that we've interviewed about their experiences at the time in Southwark are just…because they're close to us [PS: Right…] and that's why we've gone to them. But we have been interviewing people, um, expertise interviews and/or history interviews, with people all over the country.

[03:36]

(PS) [overlaps with previous sentence] Yeah, I mean, just on that-- my… I part-- there's a-- my…assumption about this…based on what my parents…talked about, was that after Hiroshima, in 19-- 1945 there was a sort of… [voices chatting in background] long period of no very great moral debate, except amongst leading [inaudible] intelligentsia people. Have you heard of a man called Jeff Nuttall?

[04:03]

(RD) I don't think so.

(PS) Um, interesting guy, uh, counter-cultural…uh…poet and musician. And…you can get his-- his book… *Bomb Culture*, was…quite widely available. It was quite a hit thing in about 1970. And-- and I read it… and, he says, that, in 1945, the war ends, and it's-- it's all good. It's a new world, it's gonna be…better. No more concentration camps, no-- all revelations of the Nazis and the Japanese [mumbling] …there…. And then, he hears about Hiroshima, and he, oh, he has this kind of…bout of nausea, this is so disgusting-- we're suddenly in an awful, new-- new world, where this kind of thing can happen. And I think-- I think that that's quite interesting. Um, and I was interested, and I-- and I read that, and it kinda stuck with me. Um, because I haven't heard of anyone else [laughs] who felt that, erm, and indeed, there is-- there is an-- another, uh, view… well, I think, most British people were pretty brutalised…by that time. They'd been bombed, they'd discovered what the Nazis had been doing, they'd enthusiastically bombed… you know, quite happy to cremate…German civilians, by the, uh…bomber command raids… And, so the generation which had lived through…six years of total war, w-- were pretty unfussed about what happened at Hiroshima. With the [pen drops to the floor] additional twist that, um, some of them, who were young enough [rustling], and were still in the forces, were having to think about whether they would get-- whether they would be dragged into the invasion of Japan, that might otherwise have been necessary. Not as much as the Americans their age, there's a-- there's an American writer called Paul Fussell, who wrote about World War Two, who later became a professor of English. And his position, was "thank God for the bomb", you know, because otherwise they're gonna be getting invasion [inaudible] against fanatical Japanese, and they, [laugh], they got through the War that far, and they suddenly realised they may not get through the whole thing.

[06:13]

So…if you're trying to understand the emotions about all this, you have first of all to get in the-- at least in the early years, that… f-- A) most people thought that the Japanese had it coming, and B) they were pleased that they or their relatives were not now going to have to die to-- to end World War Two. And that I-- that's a really important…thing, I-- if you'd had a meeting on-- if you'd had a meeting on this, in 1945, to…the first few years, that-- those would probably have been the emotions you would have got - intensified, as more came out. About the way the Japanese had treated allied prisoners of war. It's-- it's very…diffi-- difficult now to remember the degree of bitterness…and racial hatred th-- that there was, you know, there's a whole literature about the war in the Pacific, which wasn't-- which wasn't like the war in Europe, because these-- particularly the Americans, but I think that the Brits too, just hated the Japanese, saw them as a kind of violent monkey and they would take-- cut off ears, they'd take skulls, an-- they'd expected the Japanese to do the same-- same to them. So that's…part of understanding the reaction to Hiroshima, that um, I think…it might not be pretty, but you-- you [laugh] probably ought to try and capture, because if you look at uh….what's…been…written, by sort of pop-- popular historians, that's-- that's part of it. Um, and it looks as though [papers ruffling], if you look at books like Hennessey's *Britain* in the '50s, the who-- the nuclear [moving in seat] issue doesn't begin [chair squeaking] to grow…quickly. Um, first-- first of all it's not clear that Britain has got the bomb-- is planning to get the bomb, the cabinet keeps it very secret, uh, um…Attlee keeps it secret even from his own cabinet-- full cabinet, he has this separate a…gr--group of selected ministers, so the p-- public as a whole doesn't know that the UK is--is gonna go for its own bomb, so, the question of what you do about this is not really…something that Brits think that British…governments can do very much about.

[08:21]

Um, there-- the…anxieties begin to grow as evidence comes out, of, um… [long pause] the actual…detailed effects of nuclear warfare, and then, above all, radioactive…fallout, wh-- which is a kind of, a growing concern in the 1950s. It's not much understood for some-- for some years. When the Ja-- when the Americans do a test, uh, in the early '50s, they…accidentally…leave-- end up-- end up with radiation hitting a Japanese, er, fishing boat - have you heard about the Lucky Dragon?

[08:57]

(RD) Yeah…

(PS) So that-- that feeds into, um, popular concern. But it's-- it's kind of slow growing. And then, as the '50s wear on, the…nuclear testing question, the…possibilities of some unknown, hundreds of thousands of people dying of cancer, who otherwise wouldn't have done, because of fallout…it becomes a matter of popular concern. But it's-- I think it's a kind of slow-burning…fuse. And that I think is-- is one of the-- there's an anxiety-- well, first of all I think there isn't a bit-- the fact-- the fact that only the Americans have got the bomb until 1949, is a factor, and the Americans are not gonna bomb-- bomb Britain-- the British, then it's a factor-- the Communist Party is quite important, at this stage. It's--it's had a large spread during World War Two. So they are concerned-- the first anti-nuclear people…are disproportionately communist. Not all of them, but there's this feeling that this will be used against the USSR, the worker's state, and that's--that's not acceptable, and so there's that…overlap between left-wing positions and anti-nuclear positions. Not identical, but there

is an overlap. And that-- that I think nee-- trade union-- trade union groups are, I think, unusually exercised early on, by-- by nuclear weapons.

[10:21]

But it's-- it only becomes really important…as a political campaigning issue, I think after '54 - the British test. So then…the UK is coming into nuclear power, how should it be used, should it stay a nuclear power? Um, and…that's-- that's a slow-burning fuse until '57, um, and again this is traced quite well in Hennessy's book…you've got, uh, um, th--the…uh, you have the Sands - Jonathon Sands - the defence minister at the time - well he-- well he comes up with a very nuclear…redefinition of British defence policies, uh, because it's just too expensive no--not to have nukes, not to rely on nukes. If you try and-- if you try and build up an equivalent conventional capacity, it's going to be more than the UK can afford.

[11:13]

So…he comes up with uh…uh, this-- the Sands, uh… [sound of page turning] sort of [inaudible] Paper, which is-- which is saying-- in fact we-- we're gonna go over to almost wholly nuclear, backed--backed defence. And it's-- that's one of the things, which…begins to raise public…anxieties. And then in '57, you get uh…um, Er--Ernest Bevin, the-- the Labour Party conference, which is-- which you know…don't send a British…Foreign Secretary naked into the confer-- uh, conference show, you know, y--you know-- know all that, which is, a you know, *famous*, very theatrical epic in Labour Party history, where-- where the…rather-- rather like today, I guess, you have a large number of ordinary members, wh-- who, have-- are by this time quite strongly anti-nuclear, for moral…reasons. And you have a… leadership, which, wants to remain…a nuclear power, because that's about, m-- keeping Britain's influence in-- in the world. And, there's a--there's a very angry scene, between the, um, uh…the…ordinary members of the Labour conference in October '57, um, where…what you're-- where Bevin says - what you're saying is a British Foreign Secretary gets up at the UN, without consultation, bu--but this is a responsible attitude, question mark, without telling any members of the Commonwealth, without consulting with them, that the British Labour movement decides unilaterally, that this country contracts out of *all* of its commitments and obligations, entered into with other countries and members of the Commonwealth, without consultation at all, and you call that statesmanship? I call it an emotional *spasm*. And this-- this really-- this is-- this is sarcastic, this cuts…to the…the-- the moral feelings in most of the…large number of the conference. So there's this…struggle between the sort of, um…activist…base, and the-- and the leadership that wants to not be unilateral, wants to do all the kinda multilateral slow-- slow things. And that's-- that's-- that's a big drama, which-- which echoes and echoes and echoes, and it's-- and it's still going on.

[13:38]

And after that you get-- um, J. B. Priestley writing a-- a-- letter-- an article, which I think you can probably still get online, in the…um…New Statesman, and he attacks Bevin, and he, uh, w-- it's-- argues that we ought to give it all up. Although Britain's bargaining power is slight, the force of our example might be great. Well this comes into question, to-- and it's still around. Britain might wanna be a moral beacon, might wanna lead the world by being the first explicit nuclear power, which gives up nuclear weapons, but is that gonna make any difference? Um, is there going to-- is-- are we going to be a beacon unto other nations, are they-- are they going to follow?

[14:19]

Uh, so that gets-- that…dispute, about the-- the-- the moral implications of British decisions, which are affected by the-- on one view of moral obligation, are affected by consequences in the world i.e., you do not-- you shouldn't do things which would… go wrong, or have…the…perverse consequences, you know, li-- Obama's latest version of that is "don't do stu-- stupid shit". Um, or at least don't do futile shit. As opposed to the-- the-- you can call that the ethics of consequences…um, the other position is the ethics of authenticity. "We should do this just because morally we feel we *ought* to do it, to give up, because that would be right". And this-- this dispute, has been…going ever since, but it didn't really start, and it-- you know, it's the interesting question I think, that comes-- that comes-- in terms of mor-- moral argument, that comes out of Britain's…nuclear…choices.

[15:16]

But it doesn't really start rolling until 1957. So that's quite a long time [laughs] after 1945, and by that time it's not really about Hiroshima anymore, it's a-- it's about an indefinite nuclear future. Um, and that's kind of where I came in…[laughs] I mean, I was six…um to the extent that I can remember the passions of that time, and then-- then you get, uh, the Aldermaston March and the Committee of 100, and all those things that people-- people remember. It's-- it's only at that stage, and then mysteriously to me…um, and I don't know if you saw the-- the big, um…illustrated thing I did on Strangelove. Um…because I tried to look at this. You get this sort of upsurge of anti-nuclear feeling, which is somewhat assuaged by the partial Test Ban Treaty, so the agreement is, there aren't gonna be any big bangs in the air which will produce radio-activity, which will cause cancer. From now it's gonna be un-- underground, and that cuts down [background noise] public anxiety. And…then it-- there's a tremendous anxiety of the nuclear brinkmanship crisis of-- of the very early '60s, ov--ov-- particularly over Cuba. And then it-- a--above all Cuba, before then there's been the Berlin crisis. And then, strangely, weirdly…it recedes. And, and, how-- why that is, is a question [background noise] for social scientists and historians. I think because what you get is Vietnam…coming up, and that kinda taps in to the same…crusading anger and fervour. Um, but, this-- this-- at the point you're-- you're planning to…end your examination…it's-- it's a good point because at that point it seems as though, the C-- the effort behind the CND, which [background noise] the Hennessy book does concede, has been the largest pres-- most vigorous pressure group in British politics, after-- after 1945. It-- it then begins to shrivel [RD: Mmm] it-- it-- it just withers nu--numerically. The activists never-- never give up. There are still people who have…anti-nuclear…energies and emotions, but the passion goes out of it. And that's-- that's quite surprising, to me, I mean, that will be really interesting [pages turning] if you got any people who re-- who remember that.

[17:38]

(RD) Ye-- we have been speaking to people about this [background noise], and like you said, a lot of them said that they think that their attention's…drifted to Vietnam, and then to climate change.

[17:49]

(PS) And feminism as well [inaudible]

(RD) And, yeah, and so it's kinda dissipated, and I think they-- they do, um, attribute it as well to the Test Ban Treaty, and, for a lot of people who were behind the movement when they thought it could be directly affecting them, and their children, et cetera, once that was signed, it was kind of…that-- that was enough for them. Really.

[18:10]

(PS) Mm. [(RD) Mm] Well that may be just an explanation, in itself, I mean, for some people that would be the whole story [(RD) Mm]. [inaudible] …you know, what you get, and, again [background noise], I haven't entirely appreciated this, you have-- you have an overlap, of anti-nuclear culture, and general… [background noise] youth culture, and that's-- it's well caught up in-- in Nuttall's bo--book, *Bomb Culture*, um…so it's the CND marches, it's…singing, um, it's-- it's [laughs] um, sort of flirtations and sex and meeting to-- y--young people meeting together with a combination of moral theories [inaudible] and sort of, experimentation, and fascination. And that become-- that's a very heady cocktail. I can just about remember how hip that-- that would-- that would have seemed, and I was too-- too young for that, but-- and-- and you get…it turns out you get people who…[laughs] do-- go on the Aldermaston marches, 'cause that's what-- that's the mood of the time, and-- in the late '50s and early '60s. And then it kinda withers away in their personal lives, and some of them [glass being put down] turn out to become [laughs] deter--deterrent socialists on the issue of defence. And, uh--- the-- the police and the intelligence organisations, sort of decide, according to [pages turning] Hennessy, that-- that what people did in tho-- in that period doesn't really matter, you know, you can still get [banging noise] a security clearance, you can still get a-- a government job, even if you had been a CND person in the-- in the late '50s and '60s, because it was-- it was a sort of temporary…efflorescence that-- that wasn't going to…necessarily…[background voices] eliminate their reliability, uh, in the future w--w--f--f-- for jobs requiring the Official Secrets Act. And that's-- that's quite interesting. I hadn't realised that, but it kinda fits my-- my sense of the trajectory of this thing [glass knocked over].

[20:08]

(RD) Yeah.

(PS) And then it comes up again in the…outside your period, in the second Cold War, and the um, Euromissiles Crisis, and cruise missiles, et cetera. But…but it-- f--for that period then in the '60s, it's really about Vietnam, I think.

[20:23]

(RD) Mm. Yeah…so you used the word, um, the k-- the-- the passion of the morality of this issue before. Is there an equivalent for the nuclear disarmament argument?

[20:34]

(PS) What, today?

(RD) Yeah.

[20:38]

(PS) Um. [Long pause] Well, like I say, I think it's the same…underlying themes…but, in a different world. Um, the ideological antagonism has gone… [background voices] with the Soviet [inaudible], it's not there anymore. Um, we're still further away from Hiroshima, so, uh-- beyond the arguments this summer about the morality of Truman's decision there, I'm-- I'm not sure that *that* question is now seen as very relevant, and, the Hiroshima thing has developed a whole [laughs] his--historical discipline on its-- on its own. Um, w--what was Truman th--thinking, what would have happened if they hadn't dropped the bomb? But not-- not many people are interested in that, because it's-- because it's kind of a specialist academic thing. So the question now is about the future, um, and…Britain is an even smaller relative [banging noises] nuclear player - one to two percent of the world's nuclear weapons. So, the issues are what impact Britain giving up the bomb would have on the future of disarmament [background noises] have be-- it's less and less…possible to be grandiose about that, I think. Um…[background voices] but [long pause] how-- [phone rings] sorry, can I?

[21:58]

(RD) Yeah of course you…

(PS) [phone ringing] I didn't know--

(RD) [inaudible]

[22:04]

(PS) Hi Annette, sorry, I'm-- I'm doing an interview - can I get back to you afterwards? Right. Bye.

[22:12]

Um… I mean I, this is-- this is rather specialist voca-- if you're going to talk about this, you end up, I think, at least *initially*, in rather specialist vocabulary, and maybe, later, one can translate it…back to simpler terms. Um, it's about-- so I think it's about managing the nuclear future, um, and…[sigh] the-- the realism of thinking that a global zero-- because that's…since Obama spoke in Prague…that's the way-- [background noise] his speech then - that's the way this question's been conceptualised - can it be that we will have an entirely non-nuclear…future? Um…and then, amongst specialists…e--even if we could, would that be a good thing? Um, [sound of people walking downstairs] and, I mean, s-- but I think, you can look at that in a-- in different chunks, of--of the enormous question. What are the possibilities…that…all the nuclear weapon states are going to, give up-- *reliably* give up their nuclear weapons, and not get into…rearmament races. Because…part of the argument is that you can perfec-- you can-- it is possible to imagine a world in which…there were no…nuclear weapons, maybe. But then, you've gotta go beyond that. Because if you have a world, in that case, but there were serious wars - I mean, not just… proxy wars, in the third world - wars calling into question the survival of states and regimes…how could you be sure, that there wouldn't be a race to go nuclear again?

[23:59]

Because we had a war, which started non-nuclear, and ended up as nuclear, and it was called [cough] World War Two. And it took…four years [background noise] to get from the initial research to the development of a droppable bomb…and a *fantastic* percentage of the American production part of it…it was something like twenty or thirty percent of American electricity was-- was used [laughing] in the-- in the Manhattan Project…fan-- fantastic…

(RD) I had no idea.

[24:27]

(PS) I know, it's-- I--I [inaudible] looked at this…um…but, uh…now…when the secrets of nuclear weapons are pretty well-established, certainly in every power that's had…nuclear…bombs of their own, how would you be sure, that a serious war would not go nuclear, and how would you know at what rate, your enemies…would be giving up on their non-nuclear promises, and covertly going for-- to-- for the re--reacquisition of nuclear weapons again. How-- I mean, how-- wha-- what mechanism exists that the human race has figured out, which could prevent that, and if you think that that's a real threat, bu-- and no-- and nobody has talked about how we abolish war. Um, and w--what we get is a discouraging…experiment, because…[background voices] we don't have…disputes between capitalism and communism for the soul of mankind anymore, well you might think perhaps for-- for *that* kind of issue, nuclear threats might be an a--appropriate scale. What we have are great power disputes, like in the nineteenth century - is Russia a great power? Wh--what is it [inaudible] in the world…how should a rising China manage, like a rising Germany was in the-- in the nineteenth century. W--what can it expect in the world, as it builds up it's-- it's industrial strength and military potency. All those kind of disputes which look at-- how are we ever going to escape from that kind of power politics? Th--There--there's no-- there's no suggestion, of any kind of fundamental reshaping of…uh, international relations - nobody knows how to do it.

[26:11]

And yet, if you don't expect those to be reshape--shaped, how do you expect any nuclear bargain…even if you get to it, and I'll…talk about that, how do you expect it to hold? And if it's not gonna hold, aren't you then heading for the most dangerous of all-- of all worlds, where the ability to deploy nuclear weapons has not disappeared, nobody knows how to dis-invent things, you know. Oscar Wilde had that great phrase you might want to use or not, um, "ignorance is a-- is a delicate and precious bloom - one touch…and it's gone forever". Once you know things, you can't un-know them. The design secrets and it's-- th--th--the equations…all that can't be permanently eradicated from the human…mind. Um…I mean, it's just-- it's interesting that there-- that the main-- one of the main reasons the Nazis didn't get nuclear weapons, was…partly they'd expelled all the Jewish scientists, but also they-- their *non*-Jewish scientists made a fundamental miscalculation…um, that they thought you need [laugh] something the size of a nuclear reactor to be a nuclear bomb. They got-- they got the figures out, by a factor of ten, or-- or a hundred. There's a-- there was an interesting play, called *Copenhagen* - you might want-- you might want to get hold of - by Michael Frayn, about whether…Heisenberg, who was in charge of the Nazi programme, did that delib-- deliberately because he wasn't fundamentally a Nazi, or whether it was just-- [laughs] most historians think, you know…a temporary, professional incompetence.

[27:47]

But whatever that was, it's never gonna happen again. Everybody is going to know…that nuclear weapons *can* be achieved, that it's not gonna require *fantastic* scales of effort to do now, because we have [hand slapping on leg] enrichment in our methods, and we have nuclear power, which is much more widely diffused, so you can-- you can-- you can get fissile material from nuclear power reactors. So in--in this worl-- in this kind of a world, we seem to be in-- inescapably, for the rest of human civilisation, we're going to have…great power disputes, and, we're gonna have the ability to go nuclear, rather than-- relatively rapidly.

[28:26]

So, the argument then is…isn't it *better* [long pause] not just because we don't know how to-- how to do anything else from this, but isn't it better to accept, that having nuclear weapons…means that…nobody is gonna try a really serious war, because they know it's gonna lead to their destruction, or-- or an escalatory process, which will lead in-- into--to disaster. Have you heard of Joe Nye Crystal Ball argument?

(RD) No.

[28:58]

(PS) [Clears throat] Um, well it's-- in one sense it doesn't matter, because pro-- no-- [laughing] nobody would-- would have-- this is one of these rather nice philosophical things, that was formulated…years later, so no-- in your period nobody would have formulated because it hadn't been thought of… There's a guy called Joe Nye at Harvard, who had this-- wh--who looked at this very in--ingeniously, and this is in my-- one of my-- in the-- in the Strangelove thing, which I could [inaudible] well I've got pictures of this [inaudible] - I wouldn't have to, um, stand up and explain all this, 'cause there'd be pictures. But he said…if we-- if you look at the-- the big disas-- human disaster, where things really, uh went seriously wrong, 1914, the beginning of the First World War…how could this have happened? This-- this-- this…this *suicide* of Europe, where…millions of men killed each other…and, he said it because the-- the regimes at the time, particularly the German and the Austrian regime, the Russians too, um…thought that by going to war, it would work-- it would work for them. [30:05] Y' know, there would be a swift victorious campaign and they'd get their national objectives at- at- at the end of it. If they'd realised in 1918 wh- what this was going to lead to, particularly in those countries where their regimes were destroyed and they- they- and Hazar was shot- awful that- they would never have started it. So, my point is that nuclear weapons are a kind of crystal ball. If you look in a crisis where there are nuclear weapons engaged, you can see where it will lead if this crisis leads- leads to war. And knowing that… The people who will be taking the decisions in the crises, looking into the same crystal ball because they- the effects of nuclear weapons are internationally known and accepted and nobody can think they have a special crystal ball that's gonna work out especially well from them. You might make a few different assumptions about early strikes and people and bunkers, but on the whole, y- you all **(31:00)** know what you're staring at. That is a major factor for stability. If you- if you take that away- if by some magic, you could take that away, it could still lead a few into that very dangerous situation. With the additional factor that you think, somebody's going to think, ah! We go to war, they- everybody- nobody's got nuclear weapons but we can get them again faster than anybody else. And therefore we will win. Therefore we will take the risk. Therefore we will- we'll- we'll put the envelope in- in the

crisis because we are less afraid of war than the other side are, because we think we- we- we can get a major advantage from it…

(RD) I mean just bringing up a couple of arguments that have come up in our interviews… Erm, one with ummm- an atomic scientist who said that he doesn't believe that the- the people who would make that decision, understand the consequences. So, you think that they wou- they do understand the consequences?

(PS) Yeah. I don't- I th- I- I'm sympathetic to the argument that th- the last people in policy positions **(32:00)** who have ever heard the raw nuclear detonation and sense the way the ground shakes and just get this kind of physical feeling of the awesome and horrible power they're dealing with- those people are gone. They're retired or dead now. I think that's true. But the… th- th- the general understanding of what a nuclear exchange would mean is… I think… Universally understood… I am prepared to say that there are some doubts about what the North Koreans think they can get away with. And the Indian-Pakistan dispute for me is, is um, err, a special case in what I call nuclear psycho geopolitics because I- I don't understand why those countries and the population of those countries are not more afraid of what would happen if they get into a nuclear war coming up the [unclear] **(33:00)**. I think that the- the generals and the senior officials an- talk to the politicians and in every nuclear country, I think- I'm sure there is a briefing about this- 'This, Minister, Prime Minister or president, is what nuclear weapons will do. And we have no way of stopping enemy nuclear weapons of doing this to us.' Americans *think* they may be able to stop Korean weapons reaching them but they couldn't- they certainly could not stop a full on Russian or Chinese counter city strike.

(RD) But having said that, am I right in thinking that- that here and in America as well, ermm… I think it's just America 'cause um, someone I spoke to in an interview said that to be part of that decision making team you had- you have to erm, have no q-, you have to kn- you could choose to make that decision if you needed to.

(PS) Well, yeah... **(34:00)** I'm- I'm not very happy with that decision. Because it's a lot of very different sub decisions. I- I- You- The decision you get now- The cold war may have been different but, because the weapons were relati- relatively primitive, the command control systems were- were primitive. But, today, you- you have the possibility of… a small scale of demonstrations drying or proportionate use if they- It's not necessarily the total spasm or [unclear] that they do this- everything on your cities, everything on their cities… Th- there are possible sequences, all of them fantastically dangerous. Nothing that any sane person would want to get into, but it's-… pressing the button, is- is a misunderstanding. It's- I- It seems to be more th- th- the real choices that want in- And I've tried to define this over what I- I've been studying the way the Russian- and this, this I think is gonna be the future of, um, nuclear diplomacy… If y- If you've been looking at Russian statements about the Ukraine, erm, and the sabre-rattling there, what they're saying there is, are you really prepared, to get into future crises, in areas that don't matter as much to you as they mean- as they do to us? (So the Baltic states or Ukraine) Where there is a chance of a sequence of nuclear escalation that cannot be avoided. Are you- are you really prepared to take that risk? 'Cause we are. A- Don't mess with us. Don't- Don't start initiating any kind- any kind of fighting- nuc- non-nuclear or nuclear, or even not fighting, even supporting the Ukrainian regime or the Baltic states. Because that's starting a risk which may become nuclear and we're up for that and because we've got a bloody great arsenal and you should be afraid of it. Y'know we had an arsenal too but it- it's about will power, as- as- willingness to approach a

nuclear (coughs) - willingness to approach a brink which could lead to conflict, which could in turn become nuclear. I think that's really the question as opposed to pressing this hypothetical big button which leads to the end of the world. But, you see, the problem with that, the new world we're in- which there- there are various books, Paul Bracken, um- um, The Second Nuclear Age, [another author but can't make out who] which is to say we- we're- we're in a new nuclear realm now. It's not like East-West nuclear [unclear] destruction. Cautious, responsible, pretty responsible players taking risks, yes, which they probably didn't fully understand **(37:00)** but- but really not prepared to blow up the world. We're now moving into an area where there are more nuclear weapons and there are, er, blackmailing, i- i- in reckless regimes like- like North Korea, demanding to get its people fed by the threat of- of nu- nu- nuclear crisis because they're un- c- capable of doing them any other way. So the question you- the issue you have to think about there is why- why does anyone think that regimes like North Korea will voluntarily give up nuclear weapons? Why does anyone think that a regime like Russia, which has got very little going- which insists it's a great power but has got very little going for it. Its population's dropping; its economy is about the level of one major European state. Erm, it has no cultural attractiveness or soft power but what it does have, is a bloody great nuclear arsenal and it wants to be **(38:00)** given… Respect in the world because of that. Why would you think with countries like that- and even putting on one side America, America is a special case it's the centre of- network of nuclear alliances but it- it could dominate the world by conventional power, if there were no nuclear weapons. But why would you think that if- if the alternative is American hegemony that states like Russia or North Korea would give up nuclear weapons? And if you don't think they would give up nuclear weapons, why would you think it would be safer to live in a world where there would be crises with those countries, where they have very little need to worry about the risks they would run from nuclear response. That- that threatening going closer to this brink in a crisis when a nuclear dimension is safer and safer for them. Wh- why would- y' know- How is that a better world? How- how **(39:00)** does that eliminate nuclear risks? If you just say, 'Oh, we'll give up ours.'

(RD) (To Jas) Do you understand that?
S- So a- are you saying that erm… For instance, if we gave up our nuclear weapons here, someone like Russia would consider us more vulnerable and then start throwing their weight around?

(PS) Yeah. Not necessarily by nuking London, but by- we have- I mean there's a real- there's a real situation in Eastern Europe… Proxy war in Ukraine, right? So, Russian Special Forces, little green men and the Russians are giving ultimatums, which they then d-deny, say 'we never said that', er, that if the West helps th- the legimate Ukrainian government, there is a danger of nuclear war. So don't do it. Now that's this year. Now what's going to- what would happen I- I mean it- hypothetically if Britain got out of the nuclear game, **(40:00)** it's… It's one- one- part of the alliance is reduced. It's- The nuclear capabilities of NATO go down, not disastrously- the Americans have still got hundreds of weapons- But it's something about Western willingness to live in a world and compete in a world where there are nuclear threats. We- it's- it's- i- it's a- us as a-.. still reasonably important country in Western Europe, just say well, 'oh no, we're not in this game anymore, we're out.' W- We don't have an answer to what happens next. We don't pretend that this is gonna stop erm, nuclear blackmail from nuclear armed states but we just think it's a nasty game and we don't want to play… And incidentally, we can't afford it. Y'know, that's the other thing, and who is gonna be impressed by the British saying, 'oh well…' of course they're gonna- they wanna **(41:00)** spend money on pensions and welfare and hospitals. And yet- and then they're- well they're

pretending that this is because they're hy- hypermoral people and- and they should be- they expect the rest of the world to follow their lead. Y' know, the community will just laugh.

(RD) Okay, so just bringing this back to very very simple terms for- for-

Paul: Oh, it's not simple! That's point. It isn't-

(RD) I know.

Paul: It isn't simple…

(RD) But are you-

Paul: I mean with time, I could talk round some of these things. They're- They're not rocket science. They're- They're not tremendously difficult to get but it's not instantly simple.

(RD) Mm.

Paul: And, y' know, if you're gonna put on a theatrical experience which pretends that it is, there's a problem there. What's the validity of a script which- which just ignored those complexities?

(RD) Mm.

Paul: Because they're complex… But the peo- I mean- How could you- How **(42:00)** could it be right that people who do take decisions on this shouldn't think about those complexities? W- Would that be a responsible government?

(RD) … No… My question is… If we were in the situation that we were talking about before, if erm, the UK gave up their nuclear arms and- and then if Russia threatened them and the UK said, 'fine, erm, we have no comeback to that,' what would happen?

Paul: Well, at the moment we're part of NATO which is a nuclear alliance and like a lot of countries and alliances in the world, NATO said we're gonna be a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist. So even if individual countries give up their nuclear weapons, NATO as a whole are gonna be nuclear, which would then mean the French and the Americans. And- So there's a question about whether NATO would remain cohesive **(43:00)**, y' know if the Brits had pulled out, would there be that much confidence. The Germans are, in interesting ways, becoming less pro-nuclear because they're safer from non-nuclear threats. Um, so, it might be that the alliance would begin to crumble. And it might- it might- maybe not completely, but the fear I would have is that, if we pull out of the nuclear game, it- it becomes a kind of unnatural state of affairs that the Americans... Who are, running on money (background noise), um… Begin to get really fed up at this kind of unnatural situation where they're defending rich or fat, dumb and happy er, Europeans who won't defend themselves. Er, because we don't do that. We- We- We prefer most of NATO spending less than 2 percent of GNP- the Americans paying four or five- five percent- so sh- why the American **(44:00)** political- politicians will [unclear] should we go on subsidising the Europeans. And in the- in the co- in the area of what's called moral burden sharing, how can this be right? The- the Eur- Europeans think they're also spiritually advanced. Ah- They don't want to do this distasteful game of threat and determination in their thermonuclear role. So, they want us

just to be their convenient nuclear executioner. Y' know, we're having a war we don't wanna deal with this, would you please find nuclear rockets for those people because we- we- we think it's nasty but not so nasty that we don't want *you* to do it for us. That seems to me, not a pretty state of affairs- it's not a morally, just [unclear] affairs but perhaps worse than wh- I don't think it's a reliable permanent state of affairs. How long before the Americans say, 'well screw you, we're- you're on your own.' And what kind- what kind of instability **(45:00)** does that create into the- into the- into the system. We had that problem… Before 1914, before 1939, where America was disengaged from Europe. This is the kind of action where Europeans just sort of slope shoulders and drop off the state of all moral buildings, which is likely to lead to a repeated American disengagement. And then we're on a continent with Russia which, okay it's not that economically impressive but it's sure got a lot of nukes and it's sure got a lot of determination to take risks- How is that a more stable and safer position?

(RD) W- Well in my mind, I didn't even consider that as an option to surrender them and then rely on another country…

Paul: Well how would y- how could you not unless you're proposing withdrawing from NATO.

*(RD) Well, yeah, I mean I was thinking that if- if Britain were to give up their nuclear weapons, I mean, bearing in mind I'm coming to this as quite early on in my- in my role in this project- that if people gave up their nuclear weapons here, then it would **(46:00)** be a case of essentially, called everyone else's bluff. And relying on that…*

Paul: And who did- Just who did you think would be impressed? I mean, c- c- concretely Britain gave up its 160 nuclear warheads on trident who then… W- Would give theirs up? Would the Chinese? Would the Russians, who have three or four thousand nuclear weapons and mainly concerned with America? Would the French, who are on our side? Would they give up theirs? (Laughs) I mean just who- who would decide that this- this was going to affect their- their own calculations.

(RD) … Mm.

Paul: Anyone? The Pakistanis who are aimed at the Indians? The Indians who are aimed at the Pakistanis and perhaps in the longer term, China? Wh- Who's gonna notice? I mean you might- You might make nice speeches by the British Ambassador in the- in the UN about **(47:00)**, (puts on a voice) 'Well, well, Britain's made a jolly good contribution to [unclear] nuclear weapons, we really think it's time for others to follow suit.' And you might be clapped by the non-nuclear weapons states but, nobody at all I ever met thinks that other states with nuclear capabilities would- would- would be affected by British choice. But I'm, y' know, if you can think of anyone who seems like it, we could talk about it… But- But I've never- i- i- I've spent years- d- decades debating this kind of stuff and I've never met any anti-nuclear person who's been able to say who exactly it would be, who'd be- who'd be impressed… Again, we're back to this choice.

(RD) Yeah…

Paul: An ethics of consequences, or an ethics of authenticity…

(RD) Yeah…

Paul: Because they might- the- the best move and I think the- the standard move is to say well, we don't care.

(RD) Yeah… I was gonna say it just doesn't need to impress anyone.

Paul: But I just feel we ought to do this more-

(RD) Yeah.

Paul: So that's the point. You- D- D- Do you wanna make a point, a moral point, or do you wanna make a **(48:00)** difference? Er, a set of consequences in the world… And I completely understand the moral argument and there's no- there's no argument about that. Erm, if you want to take purely an ethics of authenticity then I understand that… I don't think it's a- I don't think it's a responsible moral position but I understand where it's coming from and it overlaps with the passivist tradition which is strong and self-containment in its own assumptions. But it's not very effective in persuading people who don't come fr- only from that position.

(RD) Mhm. And, do you mind telling me a bit about um… How human error and accident, that kind of falls into this- like you said the kind of proliferation of us only having one or two percent around the world and there's all these ones around the world, just the kind of production and transportation and erm, etc, and how **(49:00)** th- the kind of potential accidents that could happen through human error…

Paul: Well, there are- I mean there- there are lots of them and there's a book- another book you might want to get hold of by Eric Schlosser called Command and Control…

(RD) Yeah, I've got that…

Paul: And there's a- there's a [unclear] Chatham House thing you can Google for on nuclear accidents with um, by Heather Williams and um, Patricia Lewis.

(RD) Mhm.

Paul: And erm, Benoit Pop- Pelopidas. Erm, er, that would be shorter and that will- that will- th- there are ways in which things can go wrong… Er, at the productions stage um in- we had a fire in Sutherfield in the fifties, which had nuclear c- in- in the production plant- and it had nuclear fallout consequences. Chernobyl of course was a- a nuclear accident and there's some evidence that the reactor design there was optimised- although it wasn't **(50:00)** a nuclear military plant it was used for production of nuclear warheads so at that stage, you- you can have industrial accidents with nuclear technology and… That's… Th- I- Fewer people have died from mining accidents but still, it's uneliminable and Fukushima is a- is a- is a- is another one. Moving around, yeah, you can dr- you can drop them. Er… They have- There have been plane crashes which nearly involved a thermonuclear explosion in- in North Carolina in 1962 that some of the- one of the cases that Schlosser looks at is a when um, a man drops a wrench in a badly designed and badly maintained missile silo and could've set off a rocket blast which wouldn't of fired the missile over to Russia but would have led to a missile going up in the air and f- falling down. Erm… More importantly- or potentially worse **(51:00)**, I think, are risks in crises and misunderstanding and- and lack of control. Erm, so…

In the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Ameri- the Russians mises- mis-underestimate the American willingness to do anything, so they get into a crisis they thought they could avoid because they're seen doing things quicker than they thought they could get away with. And then the Americans nearly make a huge mistake of attacking the Island with conventional forces but they don't know that the Russians have got tactical nuclear weapons as well which are ready to go, as well as the medium range weapons which aren't. And there's this fascinating drama which if- if one ran the [unclear] I could talk about as a kind of underwater equivalent to what's happening in the air… There is a Russian submarine which I- well the Americans are blockading the Island. They've got destroyers round it turning roun- away at Russian ships. The Russians have sent out submarines **(52:00)** and the Americans depth charge them, they don't even intend to sink them, they just want to say, go away. But what they don't know is that one of the Russian submarines has got a nuclear torpedo. And… The captain loses it after hours of being depth charged and wants to fire the torpedo and has to be persuaded by one of his senior officers saying, 'No, comrade, think of the Motherland, think of-' So, and by great fortune he- there's a man who- who avoided World War three. Um… Y' know, nice to hear he became an admiral later because he- he really deserved that… Erm, and then you have false alarms er b- where flocks of geese are misinterpreted as incoming missile strikes or the- or a test tape is- for an exercise- is put in accidentally… I- It appears to be another attack. Sounding rockets sent up are misinterpreted as an incoming strike. Those- Those did happen. Um… **(53:00)** they happened in the er, in the sort of- what now looking like the middle of the first nuclear age, um, you can't ever be sure that they can be eliminated as risks but, there has been a lot of learning on- on this. Erm, billions of dollars have been spent in making sure that things fail safe. So that you might have an accident but it- there might be an error, but it won't lead to nuclear release. But, McNamara, y' know the American er, Defence Secretary who was one of the- the big thinkers in this and was one of the- the managers of the Cuban Missile Crisis, is on record of saying, yup, if you have um, a combination of nuclear armed states and the elapse of time, over time, eventually, there will be some kind of er, nuclear use of- or a nuclear event. And I think, yes if you- if you build it. **(54:00)**

Hundreds of years, that's certainly true, thousands of years, it's clearly true, but... that doesn't mean it would be a catastrophic nuclear event; it doesn't mean there would be a nuclear exchange which would be truly catastrophic. That's the point – you can't fully, in any complicated technical system, eliminate the possibility of an error. But you can minimise what that error would lead to. And particularly you can try and avoid the interactive errors with the way your mistake might activate someone else's mistake... It intensifies itself. And I think that says... that's it summed up – there isn't any safe exit from this because, like I said, if you took the other way of saying nuclear weapons are so horrible and so nasty we must get everyone to get rid of them and we must, you know, get rid of ours first, that doesn't eliminate the problem. It doesn't eliminate the war that you can't plan for because you don't know what the world will look like in ten or twenty or thirty years, which starts off conventional and becomes nuclear, and is more likely to happen, because the aggressor – the revisionist power, the reckless power – thinks, ah, we have a chance now, because we're not facing early or certain nuclear responses. So there is just no escape route from this. It's... it wasn't just Hiroshima. It was when the Trinity Test was done in New Mexico in July 1945 – at that point, we were locked into this nuclear... um.... predicament in which simple trumpeting of disarmament doesn't get you out of it. Actually we were in it earlier than that because Russian... Soviet spies were aware of the American, British, and Canadian programme from about 1942 or so – even at the height of the Battle of Stalingrad, Stalin was beginning the Russian Nuclear Programme. So even before any of these weapons effectively dropped, had even been proved to work, there was already a nuclear rivalry beginning, just because it was becoming technically apparent that these things could be built. And you could

get from that period, if anyone had been clever enough or knowledgeable enough, many of the calculations of the difficulties of the future. In fact the nuclear world isn't as bad as it could be – they thought, back in the '60s, that this would probably be at the time, in fact almost exactly at the time that your play ends... Kennedy's administration had a man called Kilpatrick who'd set up a commission to look at the nuclear age. They thought there could be as many as thirty nuclear states by 1980/'85. It has been possible by coming up with a Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, and by a lot of diplomatic effort and occasional war – I mean the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi reactor in Osirak was one way of stopping the spread of nuclear weapons. But it... with all those things happening, we've only got about nine nuclear states now, and it could have been thirty or forty. So things can be done, the risks can be kept smaller, and bounded, but not completely annihilated.

[57.43]

(RD): Yep.

(PS): But mostly your audience won't know that.

(RD): Yeah, on this issue – how much responsibility do you think the British public should take upon themselves to learn about this?

(PS): Well there's so much to learn about, isn't there? There's world poverty and there's climate change and there's human rights... people... you can't say you have a total, ethical responsibility to understand everything in a more and more complicated world. I mean I don't understand much of the climate change argument... but it seems to me if you are going to get passionate about something, if you're going to make it your main political crusade, to be a morally serious person you ought to understand the main outlines, you ought to be prepared to listen to counter arguments and not just say I don't want to hear that, that's not nice, it doesn't fit. That special plea from the military industrial complex, whether it's inherently right wing or... in international relations terms – realist – you have an obligation to listen to the other side. In my years I've been involved in this, hanging out with anti-nuclear people who are my friends, I'm willing to listen to what they have to say, but... um... I think you ought to give yourself a hard time, beat yourself up, in whatever you do if it has wider ethical consequences, and not just take an easy, comforting jump into the void of cognitive dissonance. You should live in a world where things clash in your head because most of the arguments do clash. So that's the obligation. But like I say, it's not a realistic thought – people have lives, they have families to raise, jobs – only I know a lot about this because it was my job, but I was before that fascinated – when I was about twelve or thirteen I saw the Strangelove movie and it was the Royal Lalibdion – people were talking about it all the time, who were on the argument, like I say my entire family... demonstrations were seen on TV. If you're not living in that world, and most people aren't now because it's receded as an issue so much, it's very difficult of me to say you really ought to learn this dilemma – I recommend to anyone Freedman's book on the evolution of nuclear strategy explaining how long it took for people to get their heads round this. It took ten or fifteen years to figure out, well, what does this bomb mean? And... you get great conversations – people saying in the past, you know, the main task was about winning wars, now the main task is to avoid them, because this changes everything. It's fascinating stuff but it's unrealistic to say everybody should follow debates and read this because they won't! There are other things.

[1.01.04]

(RD): But even on a much lesser level, like I've been talking about Southwark and the working class Southwark of the period we're looking at... there are people that I've interviewed from going along to church lunches and things... even the word nuclear doesn't mean anything to them – I interviewed two sisters who were born on that street, they've lived on that street ever since, they're in their kind of 80s now... they were vaguely aware that a bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima, not Nagasaki, you know there's the complete disconnect that my life is, you know, from here to the 200 yards up the road. When considering it's part of our country's policy to have nuclear weapons – and we're a democratic country – those things for me I find quite difficult to reconcile the little that people...

(PS): Ok. But where does it stop? I mean it's important to know, I think... I think understanding world history is quite important – it interests me! But what level of detail do you go into? It's important to know I think, we both think, the bomb was dropped in Hiroshima but is it important to know what I think you, or I think you probably ought to know, that the American fire bombing of Tokyo in March that year with conventional bombs and incendiaries actually killed more people. That it lead to such a conflagration that the Americans deliberately planned, and the kind of thing we did as well in Germany, that the canals boiled and when Japanese women and children jumped into the canals to avoid the heat of the burning fires, they were boiled alive. Now that seems to me to have some kind of a bearing on how especially awful Hiroshima was. But should it therefore be obligatory that people know that? Where does it stop? I don't think you can understand the argument about Hiroshima unless you know the Americans were running out of cities that they were burning down with conventional methods. That there was a Japanese plan to kill all the prisoners of war that they took before the surrendered. That the Japanese, had they defended the home islands, perhaps they would have lost probably half a million or a million people and killed 200,000 Americans. And that's on top of the famine that was beginning to happen in Japan. Those are all factors that bear on the difficulties of the rather simple question of the bomb, of Hiroshima, what do we think about it. To understand what you think about Hiroshima does, I think, require some knowledge of those wider considerations. I have time to go to conferences on this and read books but most people don't... So I don't want to get preachy about saying you really should understand this because as I'm saying there's other things that everybody should understand but, you know, life is not like that. This is an issue that gets kicked around and decided by minorities, whether passionately anti-nuclear minorities who have their own set of memorable facts or governments and experts who have a different say. But how could it be otherwise?

1.04.50

[PS's phone rings – he answers]

(PS): So it seems to me that's an interesting question for the sort of artistic responsibility of putting on a topic like this, because what selection of facts are you going to recall that people knew, what are you going to imply – implicitly or explicitly – that they should have known, or should now know after seeing what they've come to see.

[1.05.40]
(*RD): Yep. I mean we are finding this project – (PS): I'm sorry it's cool we've just had our central heating has only just been replenished – yeah we're finding this really, really difficult.*

The reason why we came about doing this project is that we did a kind of grandchildren of the Blitz oral history project that was very popular with... in terms of funding... and then the project coordinator who ran that project lived in Hiroshima for a while and she thought, you know, can we do this in Hiroshima and understand the perspective from that, and then we were trying to bring that back to the UK and back to our local area and explore some of the things we've learnt there and how it was received here. But yeah, it's really really difficult to, you know, my problem is I've come on as project coordinator and I've said a year is not enough time for me to get my head around it, even if I am doing it constantly. There's just so many different aspects.

(PS): Yeah. I mean, it is... If you've come with no pre-existing body of knowledge about it, it is hard. I've... there are some short cuts you might want to take in terms of media – you've seen The War Game? – (RD): Mm hmm – You haven't seen Strangelove? – (RD): No – And there's a Japanese film called Grave of the Fireflies about what's happening in Japan before the bomb, which, you know, is about children dying and slow starvation and the cost of air attacks. I've got that upstairs if you'd like to borrow that. And I... I mean there are... So I think you can jump start your way to some knowledge of the subject through art. And [laughs] maybe not complete books on nuclear strategy, but there are short versions... I'm sorry, I tried to help by sending those lectures... that doesn't seem to work, that seems to complicate, but I have actually... it has worked. I've done this before when my son was at school, I've done this talk after seeing Strangelove, and you can get to a teenage audience that way. They can understand it, and you can compress a lot of information if you base it on a film... pictures, information. And in some strange way, what we're dealing with here is the twentieth century, and we're dealing with the very worst things the twentieth century left us with... we're having to process what a struggle, you know, what it all meant! That you have fascism, communism coming up against each other, and Japanese intelligence, to what that led to in the discovery of really extreme ways of killing people and a willingness to use them – what we learnt about ourselves as a species in the middle of the last century which we still haven't worked through yet. All the deaths of that period, and all the deaths that came after, which... you have to look at nuclear holocausts in terms of the tens of millions of people who would have been killed anyway, by starvation, let alone deliberate shooting. And that is a very difficult thing to get your head around, I mean it's... that's probably something that the inhabitants of Southwark reasonably enough never had a chance to do. I think... attitudes to this are so emotional, oral history is pretty unreliable anyway, when we think by someone saying I was there I remember that that tells you how it was, well actually it doesn't because there's more and more evidence that historians can prove... you can't rely on what people remember, certainly over a period of twenty years. I would suspect in Southwark you'll have entirely people who lost family fighting the Japanese, or had survivors who remember the prisoner of war camps who would have a completely different view of the justification of nuclear attack on Japanese civilians than those who haven't. And that is interesting – it's got no moral standing – it might be interesting going in as a theme in the drama, but it's not... we'd all agree that it's not something that should determine how the rest of us feel about Hiroshima.

[1.10.55]

(RD): And this issue of... the more I... almost verses of science... and people don't understand the science either, and what it would actually mean, and you were talking about a kind... a sequence – everything I've learnt about it so far, in my mind it's never been a sequence, if you see what I mean. And I don't mean a sequence of war to nuclear war, but I mean a sequence of a nuclear event to a worse nuclear event or –

(PS): Spender's escalation train? People who think about this internationally think about escalation, either unintended or as part of a way of managing a crisis, threat, and escalation as a way of... stopping a crisis. Of course it goes wrong if you end up escalating the other guy's counter escape, then you get that upwards spiral. That's whole field nuclear signalling, you don't get... you don't necessarily launch a strike but you fly in bombers to an airfield nearby which are capable of carrying nuclear weapons, knowing the other side has seen that you've done that, so you're giving discouraging signals to take this further presumably. We're showing that we're ready to meet your challenge and escalate if we have to.

[1.12.21]

(RD): So this is something that I could look further into... the theory behind escalation and how...

(PS): Well on that theme, what do nuclear weapons do in the world? This is a big theme of mine, that people think – and it was true in the Scots' election – that nuclear weapons cost £100 billion, that they can never be used. Well actually, other people think, nuclear weapons are used every single day, that they cement alliances, they create forcefields of inhibition and reassurance, they define spaces – geopolitical entities – under the same nuclear umbrella, they signal we're very unhappy, don't make us mad; they do all these things that most people don't notice, don't want to notice – nuclear states don't want to admit that they're doing this except when they choose to, sabre rattle quite openly and let the Russians have it. The anti-nuclear people don't want to concede that it makes any difference at all because they want to say nuclear weapons don't do anything. So, you know, I think this is, for me, intensely interesting – I'm still trying to think through it – and get... it over more accessibly for people who aren't specialists [laughs]. It's a big subject and it's quite a long way to... people of Southwark... I mean, one thing that's important – it's probably necessary to understand – that you know after the war there's the blockade of Berlin, the Russians say we're not going to let West Berlin continue, and they prevent... they close the roads, they prevent fuel going in, so the RAF and the Americans do this Berlin airlift to keep the city running without having to go to war and fight their way through the roads. Well, in this time, the Americans... this is the first time there's a nuclear signal, 1948 to '9 I think. They fly B36 Bombers to East Anglia, which are nuclear capable, at the invitation of the British Government, perhaps because they were asked by us to ask them. So this is thought to be the first kind of nuclear signal that was given. So a few years after Hiroshima is a way that nuclear weapons are being brought into the management of security difficulties in the wider world, in a non-obvious way. So that's important – nobody in Southwark would have known that. I don't know how you give that its proper weight in the event you want to be produced. If you just ignore the way that this becomes part of the way that the world divides itself up, that NATO is created, how much depends on American nuclear guarantees in Europe, the way that Europe's post war recovery – by the way – Western Europe's so much faster than Eastern Europe because they rely on American tactical nuclear weapons rather than building a thousand tanks and having hundreds of thousands of men conscripted as the East Europeans did, so Volkswagen and Lambretta and all the washing machine manufacturers in the '50s and '60s are able to take off because nuclear weapons reduce the burden. A lot of our prosperity is because the West was so nuclear reliant really, but again that's not... that's true but it's part of the texture of the world that everybody takes for granted. But it had loads of risks, you know, risks that CND were aware of – risks that any, had there been even a limited ground war around Berlin or somewhere else in Europe in the '60s, the West would have gone nuclear because it would

have had to – it would have lost very quickly otherwise. So that was a... there was a kind of risk... big factor in that. They do exercises on this that get leaked – the German public becomes aware that most of Germany would have been devastated even if there had never been a superpower nuclear exchange. That effected German attitudes – the way we still see today – but it wasn't really experienced over here. So it's not for me to advise, but I think somehow you're going to have to reflect very carefully and debate openly what sort of result you want to leave on the minds of those who're going to see this or those involved in producing it – how do you want the cast and the audience to feel about the question of Hiroshima and nuclear weapons? Is it even worth focussing on Hiroshima as such, because, as I say, it's not such a big deal early on, and it gets overshadowed by other things later on. Or is it about the whole question of nuclear predicament in those years, or is it about the nuclear predicament now?

[1.17.50]

(RD): Yeah, I think it's the nuclear predicament then – hopefully, to have any relevance, it will resonate with now as well.

(PS): Yeah. Umm... One thing you might want to think about though is that... one thing that's changed – and this is a kind of anti-nuclear argument – that in the Cold War there was this fear that the Soviets had got this secret of how Sovietisation they could... if they got their hands on a country they could change it irreversibly and they would brainwash people. They would turn it into a sort of loyal Soviet republic. And now we know they were never able to do that – the Poles remained Poles, they never ever accepted it. Every country had a resistance to that. And so history wasn't permanent. So whereas you might have thought it was worth taking the risks with going to nuclear war to avoid that kind of irreversible mind change, force-able Sovietisation, there's nothing equivalent to that now. If the Russians or others took over the poor things again it would be awful for the Poles but they would come out of it, we know that now. And if you move to the position of say the Vatican – a long way back and a long way insulated from history – you can say from that perspective now that there's no longer a big Malochian capitalism/communism argument, nothing is worth nuclear war, because any invasion or rearrangement of borders and things would be temporary. We know that things change every few decades, and if we are making this big experimental claim that we're pinning down these borders forever... I was at a NATO nuclear symposium in a city called Rotslab which is quite interesting because it was a German city called Breslav and it was a Hungarian city and it was an Austrian city before that, and so this is a city – oh right, so this is going to be forever permanent we'll blow up the world rather than let the city change – it's quite an interesting reflection on the risks you take if you preface something potentially eternal, eternally catastrophic if you have nuclear war to preserve borders which historically have changed. But again, [laughs] did anyone in Southwark think that?

[1.20.41]

(RD): I guess not, yeah. And... a bit about science -

(PS): Science... I have very little physics [rustling]... do carry on.

(RD): Em... so in your words, what are... the repercussions of... it's difficult for me to explain what I mean actually. So this evolution of... this escalation train you were speaking of, and maybe the first step is kind of flying in showing you have the potential to -

(PS): The ultimatum speeches and things.

(RD): Yeah. At what point, and what would happen, if something were... if a nuclear weapon were to be used, but... a small one?

(PS): I don't know. I can't know, really, because it's like how long is a piece of string? It is possible to imagine you could fire a nuclear weapon at a ship at sea and that would be like hitting it with a bloody great conventional weapon – some people would die but it wouldn't have a widespread effect. It's possible to imagine you could fire a nuclear weapon into a mountain, to say look we're getting serious. You could fire it at I think original... I've got a whole book chapter on this about trying to trace NATO thinking on this. You could fire it, like I say a piece of forest or rough terrain. So there's... a Soviet invasion rolling into Eastern Europe how do you say stop this guys? They thought about this a lot, and decided, well, it wouldn't be much good to fire a nuclear weapon without... you'd have to, to make it meaningful, a message that meant something, a message which has some chance of terminating the unbearable sequence you're responding to, has to have some military consequences. So what they get into is a sort of signalling... NATO... these are political weapons, they're not there to do military damage, they're there to give political signals, don't do this thing. But you can't give a political signal without some kind of military effect otherwise it just seems inadequate, it seems unimpressive, so you need to hit something that would matter, so you might hit, under those... nobody knows what nuclear war would be fought over at the moment but if you go back to the declassified NATO thinking from the Cold War, it was stopping a conventional attack, and you would do that by hitting something like a largely military target, a hidden quarters of an army core or something or a choke point where there are lots and lots of trains or tanks or things coming through and that would be coupled in with lot of different diplomatic messaging – we really need to stop you guys and this is an example of what we're doing. We stop the war now after this, just don't do this any more. So that's how it could go. Or it could be a sense that you needed... if the other side was preparing a strike against your military asset you might want to stop them first. But this is why I like submarines, because submarines can't be found so when you've got what are called SSBNs, domestic missile submarines under the water, they can't be knocked out, you don't have to worry about the other side firing at them and destroying them, so you have to fire first. You've got things which can't be found that are there to do a retaliation if you want to. You can design more stable fores-postures rather than less stable fores-postures. The danger of the Cold War was that it was really pretty unstable, and once you've got domestic missile submarines and deep silos where you can have things buried that couldn't be found or the Russian solution was to have remote mobile missiles which couldn't be tracked, then it all became much more stable.

[1.25.44]

(RD): When you were talking about the incendiary bombing of Tokyo and the terrible effects and disaster that happened there, now that you're talking about these – you know it potentially could be a bomb it could be a mountain – when we have weapons that aren't nuclear weapons that would be just as effective at eliminating a boat for instance, and if the other side knew that you had nuclear weapons and that you were choosing not to use them this time because another weapon would be as effective, I don't understand why they would need to be used?

(PS): Because... maybe you decide they didn't, but if you had the ability to stop a conventional attack with conventional weapons you might be happy to do that. But the point of using a nuclear weapon would be that it was a nuclear weapon. It would be to say here is something which we know is very serious indeed and we are being forced to use this because of the extremity of the position which you've put us in, which you don't seem to appreciate. You don't seem to get how dangerous this war is becoming, the way this can spiral, so we're going to... we're being forced to do this to give you a signal of our determination and the way that we are interpreting what this amounts to. So stop! Don't go beyond this. I mean it is possible, in a case like that you might have to accept proportionate response, so you knock out an enemy's ship or possibly an enemy military port, and they do the same. And after that, you might then be able to say OK, let's stop. So it wouldn't necessarily mean that all fighting stops or there will be no nuclear response. But the argument would be in that kind of escalation, that this would be a way, if you did it as part of a total signalling and communication effort, that you could hope to keep the war at a low level and lead to a ceasefire.

[1.27.58]

(RD): That's interesting because I didn't even know that was a...

(PS): Most people don't. Most people have no idea about nuclear strategy because they find it so distasteful. I used to go to a group of psychotherapists concerned with nuclear conflict, which struck me as a bit like in sex against the sex society, but I would go along and since I was at that time practising as a psychotherapist I'd go along and I'd talk to them and I'd say look, I'd sit in and I'd give talks and I'd give responses to other people's things, and I'd try and talk about the difference between first use and a strike, and I realised after a while that there was no point in that because... the emotions which were brought up, that all of this was distasteful, were preventing the kind of intellectual appreciation of the way that nuclear strategy works or might work. I mean nobody's going to say this will work but they just did not want to understand the relative sophistication of the way of thinking they thought was disgusting... And that's fine, except in my world, from my moral perspective, they needed to understand better than they were prepared to understand that there were other people in other military cultures and systems – most notably at that time from the Soviet Union – who were thinking about these things very seriously, and were not going to hold back from deciding what would be necessary because one group of people in the West thought it was disgusting. And I'm not saying – again to be clear – I'm not saying the Soviet Union wanted to go to war, or was happy with the idea of a massive nuclear exchange, but they thought, and the Russians are still thinking and the North Koreans are thinking, very seriously indeed about how they could get some military advantage – and political advantage – in the use or in the threatened use – that's important – the threatened use of their own nuclear weapons. And that's the world we're in! And it's exactly in terms of the British case, so it's we give up our nuclear weapons... we'd still be part of a nuclear alliance, unless we withdrew, which there's another argument – I think would be a bad thing – and so they'd still be able to say well we're going to fire our warning shot at a British port or a British target because you're part of a nuclear alliance. Just because you haven't got any weapons doesn't mean we're not entitled to target you as necessary. Although there'd be no advantage in hitting nuclear bases because the submarines are at sea. It would still be a possible target.

[1.31.06]

(RD): Ok. I'm going to start picking your brain about these arguments. So... this kind of hypothetical exchange of one side bombing another and accepting that that might mean retaliation...

(PS): Yeah, but hopefully that would be the point, that it would be proportionate and roughly similar... and that the rest of the war stopped.

(RD): Mm hmm. So that's what I'm asking - I mean this idea of the rest of the war stopping... how much of it is actually contained within those two bombings, because...

(PS): Who knows?

(RD): But I mean in terms of the actual... umm... results of it in terms of the fall out etc etc in that kind of seeping, in my mind it's kind of got its threading... image in my mind...

(PS): Well it depends on the yield of the weapon they're using, and where it... if you do an air burst it's going to have lower fallout than if it's a ground burst because that throws up earth contaminated with nuclear weapons and that's generally regarded as a rather dirty way of making a nuclear strike. So there's a lot of variables which maybe... which way the wind's blowing, whether it rains, there's not much you can say in the abstract about that except that I think every nuclear force has low yield weapons for – still probably bigger than Hiroshima, but Hiroshima was a special case because Japanese... it killed a lot of people because it hit right on a city and it was particularly... the conditions were right that day, and the Japanese buildings were made of paper, so it vapourised a lot of people who in brick buildings might have survived. But it's not obvious that you go for cities... you could do an initial strike or a couple of strikes perhaps... you know, how long is a piece of string again, without... there's this distinction in nuclear strategy between counter force – hitting the other guy's nuclear weapons – and counter value – you hit the other guy's cities or things they hold dear. And you wouldn't necessarily have to or want to go to a counter value strategy. But again you see this is a fundamental and important distinction that's almost completely lacking from the public debate, and it wouldn't have been in the public debate in the '50s and '60s, partly because the weapons were not controllable enough to be very good at differentiating between counter force and counter value.

[1.34.08]

(RD): And if it was down to you, what would our – Britain's – nuclear policy be going forward?

(PS): Well, I've... I've been... I was an official of the British Government which was committed to saying we will keep nuclear weapons until we know... we haven't quite said as the Indians have said we'll keep them forever as long as anybody on the planet's got them, but we should keep them until there is some greater certainty that we're not going to be left in a world were we'll be on our own, or that the subtraction of our weapons or our political will from an alliance creates instability. So at the moment, and it's all profoundly depressing, but after the way... following the Cold War honeymoon that the underlying struggle between Russia and the West reasserted itself, that seems to be an indication that it's going to be very hard to know when it would be a good idea not to have nuclear weapons when we've seen the way the Russian state can change its attitudes so profoundly in a few years without having ever been attacked itself. With every effort to try and make it a partner, and yet it decides it

doesn't want to be a partner it wants to be a separate geo-political pole, and to be a successful geo-political pole you have to have the most important weapons. That's their phrasing, it's not mine. So in a world where you are dealing with people who feel like that and have demonstrated that their going to go on feeling like that almost irrespective of what you do and how you make nice to them, what is a sensible response, to say oh my God this is so nasty? Even though there doesn't seem to be any demonstrable way out by historical practise or theorisation of this nuclear predicament, we're still going to just tear our hair and give ours up. Because the other thing you lose is leverage, you lose any... but in a future crisis without British nuclear weapons, there'd be almost no British say except as one of twenty nine members of NATO about what might happen and what should be done, how should signals be conducted, how tough should we sound, what should be our red light? We'd matter about as much as any of the other countries. At least now we're one of the only three with nuclear weapons and here's a point which [laughs] we've not been over because it's only after the fall of communism – I've got a map in the Strangelove presentation – every year the Warsaw Pact would have an exercise, well if we fight NATO we want to advance – you only win if you keep advancing – so they have to assume that NATO would drop nuclear weapons on them so each year they think, this is a bit difficult so we'll estimate we'll use more nuclear weapons. So they had this map of where nuclear strikes would be all over Europe and they would still say we're going to be at the River Rhine in 19 days and motor across and smash through Germany, onto Paris – it's called nuclear romanticism in a way that they thought they could do that. But the interesting thing from that – which was revealed in the Polish archives – was that in the two countries in which there were no signs of tactical or intermediate nuclear weapon blasts, were – guess what – Britain and France! And why? This appears to have been because in this exercise thought experiment the Warsaw Pact planners – dominated by Russia – decided that in order to preserve the Soviet Union from nuclear attack it would be necessary to sanctuarise the UK and France. We can afford to hit Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and other places because that won't necessarily lead to a full on nuclear exchange which will hit Moscow and major Russian cities, but if we start hitting countries even of the same alliance, which have their own strategic nuclear systems that would be too dangerous – we won't do that. No this has not been much talked about – it does exist, it was talked about in newspapers – but the implications are fairly profound.

[1.39.17]

(RD): And is Trident an effective nuclear weapon system?

(PS): Yeah. Unless you imagine some kind of immensely more sophisticated missile defence which... there's no sign the Russians will use our deploy. It will get through.

(RD): And am I right in thinking that you were or are on a kind of non-nuclear proliferation committee?

(PS): Non-nuclear proliferation... Well I'm interested in non-nuclear proliferation. I think I'm not in favour of more nuclear weapons but certainly more nuclear weapon states and more potentially risky reckless or incompetent countries getting nuclear weapons. So I'm prepared to go to conferences and talk up all that. And I'm very interested in transparency, you know, let's talk! Let's talk about what we've got and then maybe we can... Britain... and I've had the professional experience of being in a country which has reduced its nuclear weapons percentage-wise more than anybody else has, been more transparent about what we've got than anybody else, we've eliminated every nuclear weapon type except one – the Trident –

quietly, discretely, non-provocatively under the water. And I think that's good, I'd like if other countries, as far as possible, given their own judgements and their own predicaments did the same. I think there are improvements – you can see there's an idea of responsible nuclear sovereignty were you don't behave provocatively and you don't sell on equipment to others and you don't... define, create yourself as a danger and a threat, a threat to others. And I think there's a lot to be done on that. But the problem with the CND position, and incidentally the Vatican position, is that if you just concentrate on possession – that any possession is bad, morally wrong – then any nuclear player is just as bad as any other nuclear player because they've all got nukes, right? But that prevents due attention being paid to nuclear style, you know, how are states managing their weapons? Are they safe and secure? Are they spending enough on preventing nuclear leakages? Do they have properly defensible bases so that terrorists can't get hold of them? Are they sensitive to the environmental effects? And, above all, are they refraining from the threat of nuclear war? In any but the most exceptional circumstances or of defence of allies.

[1.42.20]

(RD): Yeah I understand that. Ok.

(PS): So it's about energy – where do you put your energy? Do you put your energy into understanding one set of things or another?

(RD): Ok, brilliant.

(PS): One other thought about this. That if you pick up people from Southwark – I mean I don't know... I don't know anything special about the employment pattern of Southwark – but it might be that compared say to Portsmouth or... Inverness whether... airports and things, relatively few people from Southwark are involved themselves in thinking about professional problems of nuclear weapons, unlike naval people from Portsmouth or RAF families, whose job was thinking through some of these things. So there's a kind of level of professional engagement in these questions which might not be as high in Southwark as other places. And you know with army families in Aldershot particularly when the army was preparing to fight active nuclear weapons in Germany during the Cold War.

[1.43.49]

(RD): Mm hmm. Yup. I see that. Ok brilliant. I'm going to stop the recording for now.

[Recording 2]

(PS): Left/right overtone, partly because it is to do with confidence in national security elites... are the people who would be in charge of nuclear decisions – just the one button which I assume doesn't exist – would make the range of nuclear decisions, are they competent? Do they... are they mad? Do they have sufficient concern from human life rather than national interest? And that still rumbles on, but it's connected with a lot of other things, attitudes towards the economy and class and inequality and who you trust, attitudes to America as well is one of the big deciding factors. So it's still grittily there, and you kind of sense it, you hear when the rhetorical nuclear war drum starts off on either side. And that's, you know, it's very unsatisfactory. We're stuck in this position now, not just because its a human predicament for the rest of human history, but its also something about the British

predicament where we're not sure of how important we are. One of the accusations – both sides – is grandiosity. With Britain, who thinks its a nuclear power, who used to be a great power, it's not a great power – why should we have nuclear weapons, why do we need them, it's not what we do in the world any more. The other one is, well, who do you think is going to take a moral lead from Britain? So both sides attack each other's sense of grandiosity. So it's a sort of unsatisfactory, continuing debate that seems to me nobody thinks is going to be resolved any time soon, and it doesn't go with a great deal of generosity about the attitudes of the other side in the debate. There's a sort of... There's a palpable dislike of people on both sides for each other. Not everybody, not all the time, but you can kind of feel the animosities come off on this and yet, here were are, fifty years after the 1960s ending, it's still in this. So I don't know how you get a feel good factor out of that. At the end of the performance that really got to this issue, how it all fits in and the ecology of other national anxieties and debate, how people would leave the theatre feeling happier or ennobled or better ready to face the future. But, you know I'm not a playwright so [laughs]... I have helped playwrights – the... I send you... did I send you? The Tricycle round the corner here did a ten play cycle on the spread of nuclear weapons and I talked to a couple of playwrights and advised...

(RD): Oh, The Tricycle's just here is it? Oh, ok.

(PS): So, you know, I'm interested in what playwrights come up with but it's... and it's often quite surprising! But I just wonder how big or satisfactory the event, or participation in the event, is going to seem if you come up with an even vaguely, to me, realistic rendering of where this issue sits squatting on our brains.

(RD): Yeah. And for me...

[Recording 3]

(PS): I can't remember where Borough Road is, whether it's in Southwark or not, but I think it is... or Lambert? So my father was born there, and he was the son of a Dutch immigrant, and economic migrant, and he and his family were there during the war. He became a Navy... just about made it into being an Officer, the office class. He was an apprentice before the war, was at sea, and came back in quite a kind of right wing class – he of course believed in nuclear weapons and he believed above all in the technology. He was an engineer and he thought this thing could be managed. His brother, younger, tougher kid, didn't go... he was evacuated during the war and then ended up just too young to fight – he was a paratroop engineer, so he was very bright and determined, but he had a much more left wing view of things, and he was less anti-Russian – his story was his unit at Hamburg were told after the war they might have to stop the Red Army so we'll shoot our officers and run, we're not going to fight them. So these two people from the same origins, because they were different positions within the sibling hierarchy, you know, older children tend to be more pro-authority, and they had different career trajectories – that they were both bright and questioning – take quite different attitudes to the British nuclear issue because it represents so many other issues – the point about elites that I mentioned, and the ability to trust technical decisions can be safe. And that might be – I don't know – quite... I just threw that in as a genuinely true oral history theme that you might be able to bring in, which could point to the way people move along the spectrum on this issue because of all the other symbolic compulsions.

(RD): Yeah, I agree. I agree.