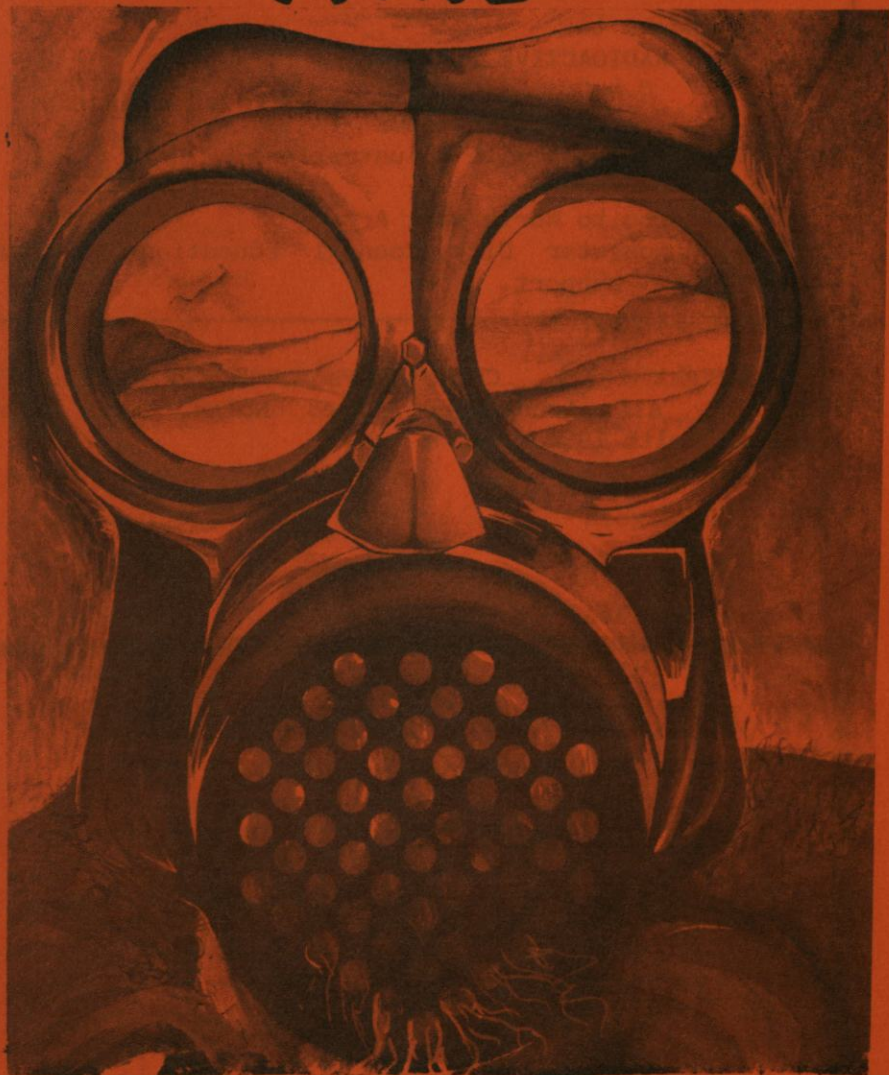


A MATTER OF TIME



**MANCHESTER POETS
FOR PEACE**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

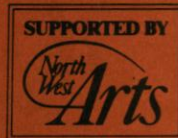
Many thanks to

RADIOACTIVE TIMES

C.N.D.

Harold Thompson

for help and advice with illustrations.



Thanks also to North West Arts
and to Manchester City Council Education Department
for financial support.

Copyright © Chris Carson, Kevin Doyle, Phil
Hatfield, Alf Ironmonger, Theo Nolan, Nick Ripley
and Paul Smith 1984.

YOU ARE ENTERING A
NUCLEAR
FREE ZONE

CONTENTS

2	Foreward	
3	A Matter of Time	Kevin Doyle
4	Colours Lost	Chris Carson
6	The Survivor	Theo Nolan
8	Life is Short	Phil Hatfield
9	Go Nuclear	Paul Smith
10	Tears. Real, and Imaginary	Kevin Doyle
12	Grandma	Alf Ironmonger
14	The Brickies Fallout	Alf Ironmonger
16	Protest	Nick Ripley
17	First World War Exhibition	Nick Ripley
18	Imagine	Alf Ironmonger
19	A Conversation	Kevin Doyle
21	Black Binoculars	Theo Nolan
22	Grandchild	Alf Ironmonger
23	Soldiers Behind the Wire	Alf Ironmonger
25	Figure on the Mushroom	Kevin Doyle
26	To the U.S.A.	Theo Nolan
27	Dear Phil	Paul Smith
28	NO	Chris Carson

FOREWORD

COMMONWORD is a project committed to working class writing and the writing of minority groups; we are also a community publishers. As such we are part of the national Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers.

COMMONWORD is the base for a number of writers' workshops; the 'Monday Night Group', Womanswrite and Northern Gay Writers. The material in this collection of poetry devoted to the theme of nuclear war has come from the Monday Night Group.

Over the past few months a great deal of work that the group has written has consisted of anti-nuclear and anti-war material. Such was the strong feeling in the group towards this subject, that we have pooled our work into this anthology.

We hope that it will emphatically express our feelings on the subject, and play its part in the ever growing protest movement.

If any of our readers are interested in coming along to the group, we meet on Monday evenings in Commonword office, at the address on the back cover. We welcome working class writers of every description.

For information about the other writers' groups or COMMONWORD's many and varied publications, please write or phone us on any weekday.

A Matter of Time

Just as the shoreline awaits the sea
So we await the final day
So little time, now, to laugh about the accumulated scars
And tell the spring-aged ones of summer's triumphs

Soon, darkness, like water, will find its own level
To flood every nook and cranny of the universe
The echoing winds will play hide and seek
With the cold detritus of a billion spent stars
And the darkened debris of a defunct moon

Just as the day awaits the night
So we await the death of light
And the phoenix of an everlasting night
That will rise from the ashes of mankind's folly
We are on the beach
And just beyond the distant lip of the sea
The scavengers await their invitation to the banquet
Salivating, profusely, at the prospect of their finest feast
Since a smoking mound of contorted carrion
Blotted the rising sun from a torn sky in the east.

Kevin Doyle

Colours Lost

I saw birds flying through the trees, yesterday
Green leaves yesterday, pretty birds fly away.
Now there are no more birds in the world left
today

They blew them all away.

I saw flowers growing in my garden yesterday,
Gentle winds sway pretty colours yesterday.
Now there are no more flowers in the world left
today

They blew them all away.

I saw a rainbow painted cross the sky yesterday.
White clouds passing by deep blue sky yesterday.
Now there are no more rainbows in the world left
today.

They blew them all away.

I saw children singing in the street yesterday.
Boys and girls come out to play, laughing through
the summer's day.
Now there are no more children in the world left
today.

They burned the children away.

So now the streets are all silent and the dreams
die away

No one cares anyway what they did yesterday.
Yet the voice of a child echoes sadly today:
"Why did they paint my rainbow grey?"

Kevin Doyle
Chris Carson



The Survivor

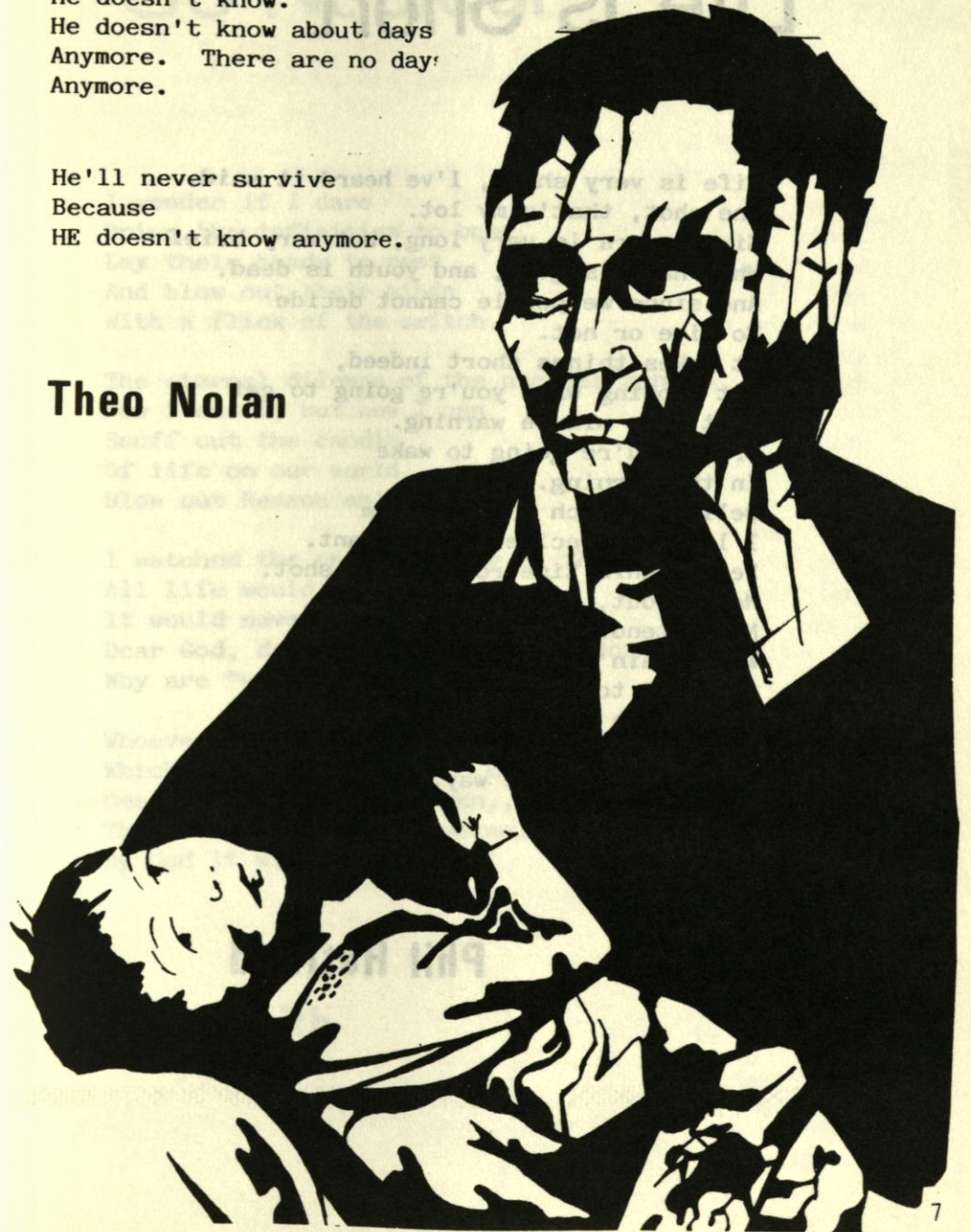
He's never hated the Russians
Never thought of hating the Russians,
But now
He hates
Not the Russians
But the
Asbestos suits
That don't shine
Brilliant white
Like
But seem dark, dull, lifeless.
He himself seems that way
But never seeing himself
Cannot say.
He's always looking out
To see if they're about.
He thinks there's men inside
But from which side
He doesn't know.
All he knows
Is they're out to get him.
Whether they're out to
Get anybody else
He doesn't know
He hasn't seen anybody else
Except.....
And these white asbestos suits
That always carry guns
And never run
But walk so silently
Past the debris.



One day they will get him
But which day
He doesn't know.
He doesn't know about days
Anymore. There are no days
Anymore.

He'll never survive
Because
HE doesn't know anymore.

Theo Nolan



Life Is Short

Life is very short, I've heard it said.
One shot, that's my lot.
Sixty years is very long, but very brief
When half is gone, and youth is dead.
And since we people cannot decide
To live or not.
It makes things short indeed,
Not knowing when you're going to get
That four minute warning.
Or if you're going to wake
In the morning.
Delivered such an ultimatum
I long ago decided what I want.
Peace, this time round, this shot.
No cop-out, the real thing.
No pretending I've got it
When I ain't
One shot to get free
Amidst the briefness
Of this particular journey.
See you along the way.

Phil Hatfield

Go Nuclear

I wonder if I dare
Bring the infinities to bear
Lay their heads to rest
And blow out their minds
With a flick of the switch.

The eternal dilemma of the nuclear man
Now I can't, but now I can
Snuff out the candle
Of life on our world,
Blow out Reason and Hope.

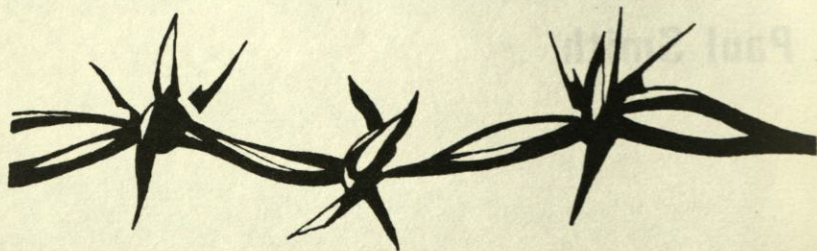
I watched the paper burning in the flame.
All life would go.
It would never be the same. Never.
Dear God, dear God, what have we done?
Why are "we" to blame?

Whoever burns the world to hell,
Whichever woman, child or man
Destroys the life, the men,, the vegetation,
The trees, the bushes, animals and birds,
By God it will be not me.

Paul Smith

Tears Real, And Imaginary?

I was told about the lord
Of his limitless mercy and the greatness of his glory
I knew that the church bells tolled
Every time that one of us was gouged, gored
Or rent asunder in the molasses-mud fields of France
And I knew that the people back home
Were denied a mirror image of war's hideous visage
We could no more see the light of day
Than a stumbling calf reared as veal for the plate
It was always dark
The gun flashes forced us to close our eyes
When we opened them, one of our friends
Was leaking blood from wounds as inexorable as night
And somewhere beyond the sable veil
A Horse was crying, crying out for Man's pity
And though my tears cut acidic channels
Deep into the smoke-grained flesh of my face
I never really knew why I was crying
There was so much that clamoured for my tears
Young boys who had never known
The satin touch of a female's flesh
Veterans who could no longer recall the sensation
Officers, there were, who led their men into darkness
Padres who preached that the lord
Would lead all men out of darkness
We never advanced, we never retreated
The lord took many and gave the rest nothing



On one leg, I struggled down the gangway
On a frost-dressed morning in November
Autumn's acoustics favoured the church bells
Flags and banners dripped watery Sunlight
That merged with the misty aura of reunion

Since then, generations have sworn to remember
The Cenotaph has witnessed many tears
During the silence of many misted mornings in November
And every year
There is so much more that craves humanity's pity

Now, as death beckons to me,
Troubled sleep brings this recurring nightmare
In which a charred olive branch
Lies on the ash-laden surface of a volcanic sea
And somewhere in the tunnels of my mind
A child is sobbing
I ask her why she cries so
She tells me that she does not know
Maybe because her Mother is hidden
Beneath a blanket of dust, radio-active snow,

There is so much that craves her tears, she says,
Maybe she weeps for the soul of the man
Whose finger depressed a button
Unleashed a torrent of glowing rain
And an umbrella, that no more shields humanity
Than a child's tears will revive a politician's sanity
Allowing the dove luminous passage over Sun-bejewelled
waters.

Kevin Doyle

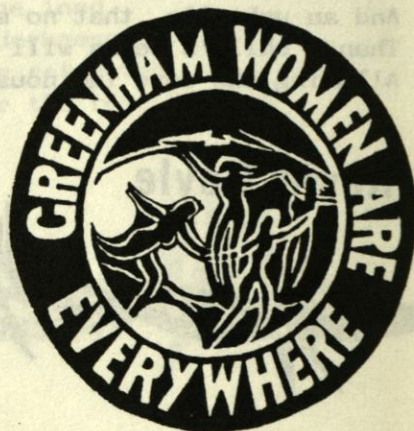


Grandma

Tell me that story grandma
Of how you stopped the bomb
When with those other women
At Greenham you were one.
Tell me of the struggles
You had with the law,
How you pulled the fences down
And the bravery you saw.
Tell how you were arrested
When you lay upon the ground

To stop the army lorries
And the comradeship you found.
You're part of our history grandma
So I want to hear it all.
Please tell the story once again
Before your jailers come to call.

Alf Ironmonger



Brickie's Fallout

"If jobs weren't so scarce, I'd pack this bloody lot in," said the fair-haired young bricklayer to the older bricklayer, busy on the opposite side of the scaffolding.

The older man looked up. "What's wrong with you? It strikes me you should be glad you're in work at all. Think of all those poor buggers on the dole."

The young man put down his trowel and crossed over the planks until he was facing the older man. "That's just it, though, here we are building a bloody fall-out shelter for VIP's, which may or may not be used, when we should be building houses."

"Ah," said the elderly bricklayer. "I see it all now, that wife of yours has been at it again, hasn't she?"

The young man kicked a small piece of brick from the scaffolding. "She has a point, you know. You should see that dump we're living in. The plumbing's all to cock, and it's infested with mice and bloody big black beetles."

The elderly man shook his head sadly as if to say, I sympathise with you, but he said, "Don't you read your papers or watch TV? There isn't any money, it's the recession." Then with a smile he continued. "Once things get back to normal, they'll start building houses again."

This brought on a stream of angry swearwords from the young man. "They soon found the bloody money to build this useless monstrosity, and what about all the sodding millions they're spending on missiles? It strikes me it's you who doesn't read your papers, not me".

The elderly man, finding himself at a loss for an answer, said, "You'd best get back to work. The gaffer's been looking up at us". He pointed down at the man below in a yellow hard hat with his thumb. The young man walked across the scaffold and picked up his trowel.

"You know what?" he shouted.

"The old man said, "Not unless he works here".

The young man said, "Funny, it just struck me, can you imagine what would happen if before we finished building this we had a warning that a bomb was on its way? All those tinpot VIP's would be teararsing around in bloody circles". He burst into laughter as he slapped a trowel of mortar onto the brick he had picked up.

Alf Ironmonger



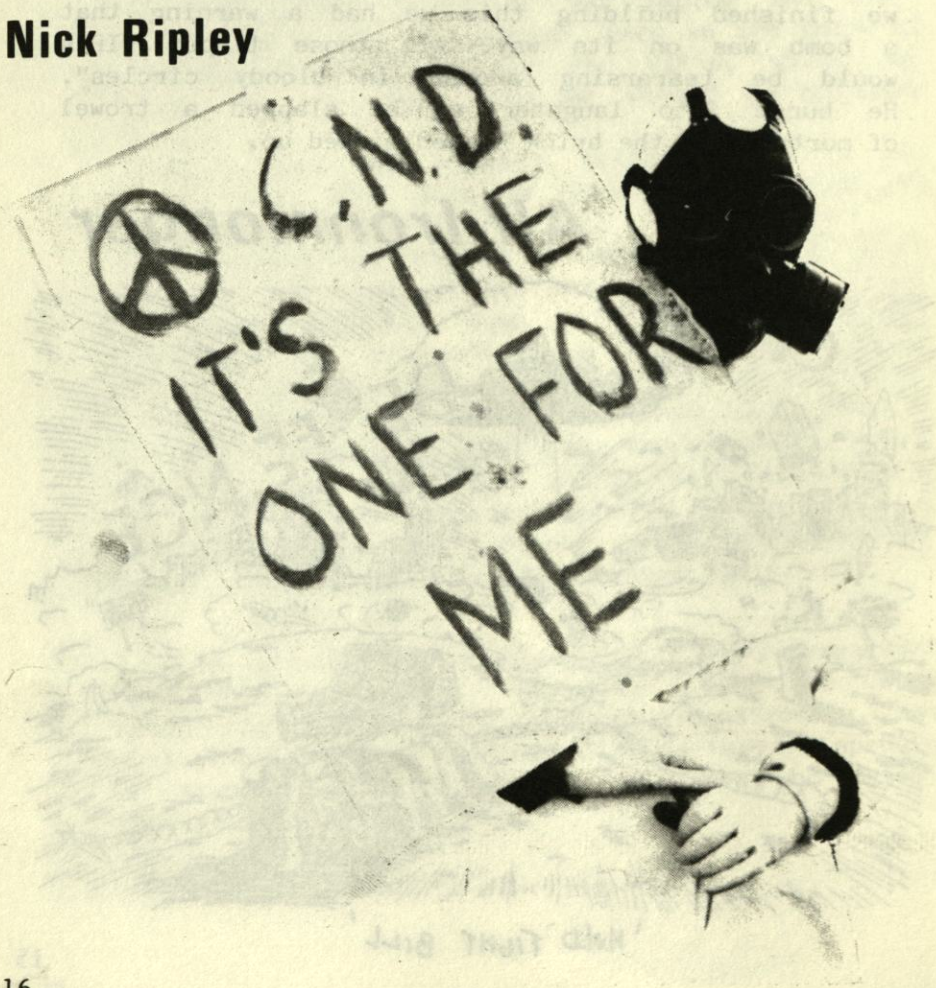
'HOLD TIGHT BILL'

Protest

August arrives and the marches begin;
ten thousand wait to be fed
but Mark Anthony doesn't take the rostrum,
less than half will know fish from loaf.

She disperses with the silent, stopping
at a shop in Progress Terrace, built in the
thirties, to buy a packet of mints that
people like, whilst thinking of his address

Nick Ripley



1st W.W. Exhibition

Taped, Britten's War Requiem imposes
the background; a veteran is present,
medals cased, Sentinel reporter tagging
with practised enthusiasm "That's
a nice picture isn't it...?"
corpse is paint stiff. Wanderings of school
girls pass, "Look at that one..."
the blue and white uniform indicates,
"it's good isn't it?"
Battle-dressed oils relieve the dawn.
Painting; framed, spotlit, fern slotted
beneath, reposed - except for a chilly air,
(too few gas heaters)
like the sharpness of early morning.

Nick Ripley

Imagine

Imagine yourself a survivor
In a nuclear war.
There would be no houses to live in,
No food you could eat for sure.
No medical facilities to heal you,
No hospitals or doctors around,
And those who emerge from shelters
Far below the ground
Would shun you or shoot you,
Afraid you may contaminate
Their friends or relatives
Though for all it would be too late.
No labour, only anarchy
Where human animals roam,
Digging in the debris
To make yourself a home.
With the stench of death around you
How long do you think you'd live?
You'd cry to others for pity,
But no pity would they give.
The answer, my friend, is simple,
Get out and demonstrate,
Stop the arms build-up
Before our world they devastate.
Join the many millions
Who want to stay alive.
Then not only will you live,
We'll all of us survive.

Alf Ironmonger

A Conversation

When comes that sad and mournful day
No birds on high will swoop or sing
The celestial orb shall cast no ray
No children will play, no church bells ring

"What day can this be?" I hear you ask
"It must be a funeral," I hear you say
"Quite right," I reply, "So on with your deathmask;
And hurry please, lets have no delay."

"Give over, don't be daft," I hear you saying
"Here I stand and the birds are singing,
The bells are ringing and the children playing
Why is despair your only offering?"

It is, you say, a most wonderful day
And I have so much to see and do
Hence, another minute I cannot stay,
"Therefore I bid a fond farewell to you."

"Well, goodbye, I say, "if you must depart,
But wrap up well, the sky looks bleak
Oh yes, I add, some news I must impart:

Sad tidings, I'm afraid, Windscale has sprung a leak"

Kevin Doyle



Black Binoculars

concrete towers
sober sentries
silently searching
black binoculars
ever weary
of the other side
watching over the wire
playing war

each watching
each other watching
thinking thoughtfully
what the other
is watching
watching not people
watching figures
that .
watch from the other side
through black binoculars
playing war

they turn the keys
press the buttons
check the gods
the soldiers are
like high priests
worshipping a stone idol
they worship their metal idol
whom they fear
careful not to upset
their gods
who will avenge
them if they do
and the vengeance
of the gods
will fall down on them
and everyone else
damn them

Theo Nolan

Grandchild

I look at my grandchild
With her pretty blonde hair
And think of the future
That she might have to share.
I look at the women
Struggling with the law
Outside Greenham,
Trying to stop a war.
I look at myself.
What can I do
To ensure a future
For children like you?
I could sign a petition,
I could march with the crowd,
I could shout "Ban the bomb"
In a voice that is loud.
But who would listen,
And who will take care
For my little granddaughter
With her pretty blonde hair?

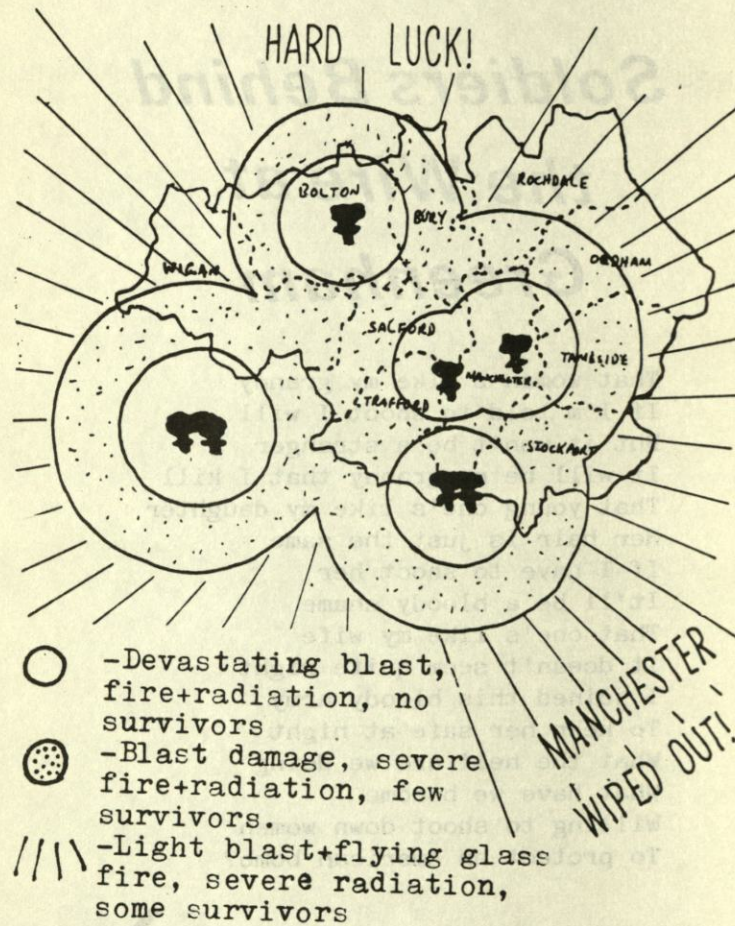
Alf Ironmonger

Soldiers Behind the Wire at Greenham

That woman's like my granny
If I'm told to shoot I will
But it won't be a stranger
It will be my granny that I kill
That young one's like my daughter
Her hair is just the same
If I have to shoot her
It'll be a bloody shame
That one's like my wife
It doesn't seem quite right
I joined this bloody army
To keep her safe at night
What the hell are we doing
What have we become
Willing to shoot down women
To protect an American bomb?

Alf Ironmonger





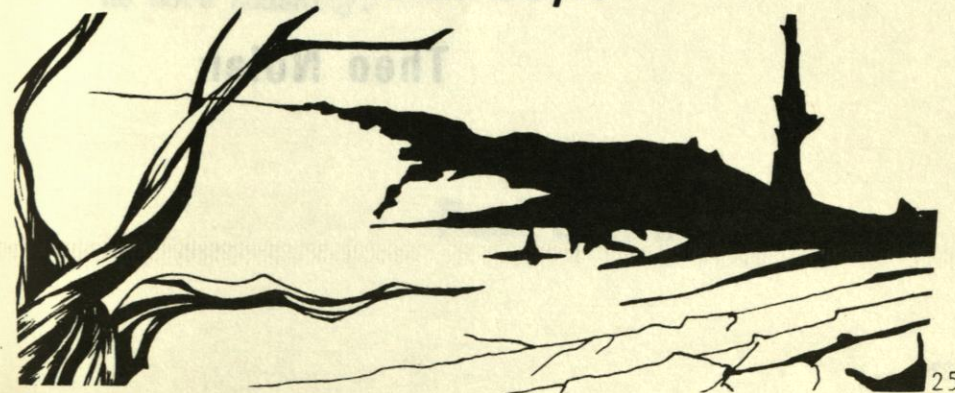
THIS DIAGRAM shows the effect of a nuclear attack on Greater Manchester, following the calculations of CND in their 'Hard Luck' simulation; this was a response to the Government's 'Hard Rock' exercise, which made rather optimistic estimates of the likely effects of a nuclear attack on this country. It should of course be added that the diagram does not take into account of deaths among 'survivors' due to radiation sickness and damage both in the weeks following an attack and in the ensuing years (due to cancers and genetic damage). It should be added that predictions of a 'nuclear winter' and widespread famine and epidemics following a nuclear war, are not considered in the diagram either.

Figure On A Mushroom

See the desolate landscape stretching to the horizon
 In the foreground, see the flesh mangled and bleeding
 Hear the cries, never diminishing, never receding
 All around, the dance of death goes on and on
 See the animals licked by tongues of fire
 Mother nature, once full of spring, will bloom no
 more
 Once caressing tides now ravage the cringing shore
 Whilst the reaper, towards safety, climbs higher and
 higher
 On high, the moon cries bitter, like a motherless
 child

The stars can no longer afford their guiding light
 Where once they lived, now dwells the blackest night
 Whilst down below, all is ravaged and savagely
 defiled
 And death takes another partner for the waltz of doom
 The gods look down and unshamedly they weep
 As nearer and nearer to the abyss their former home
 does creep
 What of the reaper? He's safe, high upon the mushroom

Kevin Doyle



To The U.S.A

To the u.s.a.
your
enforced advertisin
your
encouraged clean-livin
your
stereotypin
socialisin
standardisin
needs destroyin
so
drop the big one
send the missiles over
kill the world
11 times over
because what
you've created
needs destroyin

Theo Nolan

dear phil

(in the style of John Cooper Clarke)
100,000,000 soon to be
Blown away to eternity
They're showing the pictures on TV
All the way from America.
Nuclear holocaust soon to come
When those chappies drop the bomb
No more Dad and nor more Mum
No more world to come.

Seen the pictures on TV?
Lightening flash, and no more sea,
No more you and no more me,
No more humanity.

Paul Smith

NO!!

No blade of grass
No stone unturned
No life unharmed
No flesh unburned
No bullet's whine
No bayonets turned
No battle cry
No heroes returned
No past remembered
No medals earned
No survivors
No lessons learned.

Chris Carson

THE AUTHORS

CHRIS CARSON

Lives near Preston, where apart from writing poetry she looks after her young son.

KEVIN DOYLE

Lives in Stockport and is unemployed. Kevin has also been known to write short stories and plays.

PHIL HATFIELD

Is unemployed and writing poetry in Crumpsall.

ALF IRONMONGER

Lives in Stretford. He has had numerous poems and short stories published, notably AN AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL, an account of his adventures in Australia, which is also published by Commonword.

THEO NOLAN

Lives in Manchester. Theo is unemployed. He enjoys performing his work in front of a live audience.

NICK RIPLEY

Nick is a student of drama in Liverpool.

PAUL SMITH

Is unemployed and hails from Bolton.

50 p. THROUGH CND
60 p. BOOKSHOPS

**PRINTED AND
PUBLISHED BY**

ISBN Number 0 946745 10 2

**COMMONWORD,
61 BLOOM ST.
MANCHESTER M13 1LY**

TEL. (061) 236-2773

