

# Nuclear dead would have been dumped in pits

**RAYMOND DUNCAN**

A SCOTTISH Office study proposed that the bodies of those killed in a nuclear attack could be disposed of in pit shafts or buried in mass graves "by the unemployed", it has been revealed.

In a Scottish Office minute about "a study on public health and hygiene in war" which said the number of deaths would be so great that normal interment would not be a practical proposition, the possibility of bodies being disposed of in pit shafts or loaded on to "hulks" to be towed out to sea and sunk was considered.

The minute, which stated "dirty money" might be offered by the authorities to help recruit people for the "very disagreeable" task of collecting the dead or carrying out mortuary work and indicated the unemployed would be used to help with mass burials, was drawn up in 1964.

That was two years after the Cuba crisis which was provoked by Havana installing Soviet ballistic missiles and which brought Washington and Moscow close to nuclear war.

It was also produced at a time when the task of drawing up plans for dealing with the "unthinkable" - a nuclear conflict and its aftermath - were left to the individual local authorities.

The document indicated that to avoid danger to the health of the surviving community, bodies would have to be disposed of as quickly as possible with the minimum expenditure of manpower and resources.

No attempt would be made to recover incinerated corpses from the rubble-filled areas closest to the blast spot. The fatalities in areas of lighter damage would have to be cleared by tracked vehicles and special squads to

deaths would result from radiation sickness.

"It was suggested the medical officer of health, the sanitary inspector, or the water engineer might give advice about the selection of sites for mass burial. Pits in which refuse had been deposited would seem ideal for their purpose."

A second internal report from 1964 recalled a government policy circular from the early 1950s indicating "last war experience" would probably not be a reliable guide "for vulnerable and valuable areas such as the Clyde basin".

That circular had calculated a raid involving 1000 high explosives would kill more than 11,000 people in Glasgow if half the population were in general standard shelters and half in houses. It also advised "large burghs in the counties of Lanark including Glasgow, Dumbarton, and Renfrew" to plan for mortuary provision about of 50% beyond the scale suggested in the Second World War.

However the updated 1964 report detailed an "exercise" where the scenario was a heavy nuclear attack with ground burst bombs mainly, but not exclusively, hitting Scotland's central belt.

In the "west zone", including Glasgow, there was likely to be 522,000 direct casualties with 60,000 in the "east zone" and 63,000 in the "north zone". The vast majority, it suggested, would have been "incinerated".

In the "exercise", 2000 people a day were dying from radiation sickness in Midlothian at the peak period.

● A team of anxious psychiatrists at a Glasgow clinic treating men with violent and aggressive fantasies, including torture and murder, pleaded for a government review of the law on the detention of potentially dangerous criminals because of fears about their patients' behaviour.

However their call 30 years





listic missiles and which brought Washington and Moscow close to nuclear war.

It was also produced at a time when the task of drawing up plans for dealing with the "unthinkable" – a nuclear conflict and its aftermath – were left to the individual local authorities.

The document indicated that to avoid danger to the health of the surviving community, bodies would have to be disposed of as quickly as possible with the minimum expenditure of manpower and resources.

No attempt would be made to recover incinerated corpses from the rubble-filled areas closest to the blast spot. The fatalities in areas of lighter damage would have to be cleared by tracked vehicles and special squads to remove risk of disease.

"In most cases, identification would be impossible but arrangements might have been made for identity discs to be issued or for tattooing of identity marks."

One local authority in the West of Scotland, it appeared, had considered equipping itself with 10,000 labels to tag corpses.

The minute said it had been suggested that bodies should be disposed of in pit shafts or loaded on to hulks that would be towed out to sea and sunk.

"The disadvantage of both these methods was that they would involve a great deal of handling of bodies."

It said mass cremation had also been suggested but this would require the use of great quantities of fuel needed for other purposes.

"Probably the best method of disposal would be mass burial in pits dug by earth-moving equipment."

This, it said, might be undertaken by the rescue section of the Civil Defence Corps "with the help of the unemployed".

The document said that, in undamaged areas, the bulk of

the scenario was a heavy nuclear attack with ground burst bombs mainly, but not exclusively, hitting Scotland's central belt.

In the "west zone", including Glasgow, there was likely to be 522,000 direct casualties with 60,000 in the "east zone" and 63,000 in the "north zone". The vast majority, it suggested, would have been "incinerated".

In the "exercise", 2000 people a day were dying from radiation sickness in Midlothian at the peak period.

● A team of anxious psychiatrists at a Glasgow clinic treating men with violent and aggressive fantasies, including torture and murder, pleaded for a government review of the law on the detention of potentially dangerous criminals because of fears about their patients' behaviour.

However their call 30 years ago for high level talks with senior Scottish legal figures including the Lord Advocate over what they believed was a grave problem "of public importance" was rejected.

Scottish Office records reveal they were told to conduct more research after one civil servant, in an internal document, wrote: "Some time ago I wondered when we would begin to hear that this clinic had become fraught with anxiety and now here we are."

The concerns of the consultant forensic psychiatrists in the clinic run by Glasgow South-Western Hospitals were raised in a letter to the department.

The author said he and his colleagues had direct knowledge of some 12 to 20 men who they considered as possibly constituting a major risk to the community "and strongly suspect it is only a matter of time before one commits a very serious crime."

However they could not be compulsorily detained until they had offended.

According to a department memo, the letter was said to need "careful handling."



CHILLING: A Scottish Office study from 1964 calculated that 500,000 people in the West of Scotland alone would be a direct casualty of a nuclear attack