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Fig. 1 'It is at Warren Row, Wargrave, Berks'. Publicizing the secret Regional Centre of Government 6 on the last Aldermaston Peace March, in 1963 (shot taken in Piccadilly).

Danger! Official Secret: the Spies for Peace: Discretion and Disclosure in the Committee of 100

by *Sam Carroll*

On Wednesday 10 April 1963 a group calling itself the Spies for Peace mailed out 3,000 copies of a document entitled *Danger! Official Secret* from various locations across London. This covertly co-ordinated dissemination reached the national and southern regional press, politicians, church leaders and a multitude of anti-nuclear protesters, amongst others, and marked a pivotal episode in the relationship between the British public and the government.¹ *Danger! Official Secret* disclosed the purpose and whereabouts of Regional Seat of Government 6 (RSG6), which was exposed as being one of a network of secret underground bunkers from which the country would be run, by a select elite, in the event of a nuclear attack. The controversial document did not indicate the authors' identities, nor how they had obtained their information. The disclosure, however, at the height of the Cold War and in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis, roused a strong nationwide sense of misgiving. The revelations emerged during the evolving Profumo affair and in a postwar context increasingly characterized by a generational shift away from deferential politics. The impact of this act was to forge a new propensity for public mistrust in Britain's political leadership, generating parliamentary debate and, more conspicuously, a flurry of political satire.² In her retrospective account, 'How my father spied for peace', Natasha Walter describes the effects of the publication of these 'official' secrets:

... it came as a shock to ordinary people that their rulers were making detailed plans to fight a nuclear war and to ensure the survival only of the politicians and civil servants, without any democratic consent.³

The exposure was planned to coincide with the sixth Aldermaston March against nuclear arms, over the Easter weekend 12-14 April, and, despite extreme measures imposed by the authorities to prevent publicity, immediate and rapid circulation of the prohibited document occurred.⁴ Media coverage, delayed by an official D-Notice,⁵ soon reported the Spies' challenging declaration: should the bomb drop, the majority of the population were effectively to be written off.⁶ That possibility, up to this point, had barely permeated public consciousness. The government reacted both defensively

Photo: David Hicks. Efforts to contact him for permission have so far been unsuccessful.



Fig. 2 The siege of RSG6 in April 1963: a lone policeman surrounded by demonstrators outside RSG6 (Regional Centre of Government 6) at Warren Row, Berkshire. In the foreground to the right, facing camera, is photographer Hoppy (John Hopkins).

and dismissively, claiming that the Spies for Peace had perpetrated a perilous crime on state security, even though, in fact, they had revealed little more than was already available in the public domain. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan argued:

Although the existence of these headquarters [RSGs] had long been widely known, the exact location and details of their organization have not been publicized . . . Nevertheless, the deliberate breach of security is in itself both serious and strongly to be condemned.⁷

MI5 and the Special Branch immediately embarked upon a vigorous investigation in order to indict the Spies for Peace. This mainly focused on members of the 'Ban the Bomb' Committee of 100 (C100), many of whom had openly encouraged both the distribution of the controversial document and the rerouting of the planned Aldermaston march to include the small Berkshire village of Warren Row where RSG6 was located. Despite a political and media outcry, which included calls for charges of treason to be brought against the perpetrators, none of the Spies has ever been charged for their involvement and all but one of them (Nicolas Walter) have remained silent until now.

For my doctoral thesis at the University of Sussex I collected twenty-two oral history narratives of C100 members. This inquiry was to focus on the structure and ethos of C100, with particular attention to the role of the participants themselves.⁸ It is often the case when using a life-history method that narratives are shaped by the agenda of those telling the stories, who perhaps reveal entire new avenues of investigation which influence the developing exploration. My own research took such a turn as the result of an interview in which two C100 members (whom I will refer to as 'A' and 'B') disclosed their willingness to be identified (at least to me) as members of the original Spies for Peace, something which they claimed they had never admitted publicly. Without losing sight of my original objectives I soon realized that the material which had emerged from this encounter was essential for understanding the underlying tensions within C100 between the individual and the collective.

In August 2008, 'A', 'B' and one other C100 respondent were each sent an early draft of this article for comment. Within two weeks another two individuals ('C' and 'D') had made contact and agreed to be interviewed as Spies for Peace. Significantly, the article had been shown to a group of surviving Spies for Peace, and I was informed that these four are the only members who will ever be prepared to talk about their involvement. Equipped, then, with what may be the most complete attainable set of insider narratives, along with the wider collection of C100 narratives, I focus here on three emergent themes: levels of involvement, long-term secrecy, and eventual disclosure.

THE COMMITTEE OF 100

C100 were a group of activists opposed to the nuclear bomb and committed to non-violent direct action; they were also inclined to an anti-hierarchical politics. The Committee was formed in late 1960 and campaigned with substantial support and a high media profile for three years, before a steady decline led to eventual dissolution in 1968.⁹ Devised by young American academic Ralph Schoenman and supported by Bertrand Russell, the elderly president of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, C100 attempted to combine the mass movement appeal of CND with the non-violent direct action tactics of the much smaller Direct Action Committee (DAC).¹⁰ Russell invited one hundred people to join C100, including members of the DAC, CND, and various ideologically supportive celebrities (actors, artists, writers). The idea was that having a hundred named committee members would deter the police from singling out individuals for arrest in the aftermath of mass campaigns of civil disobedience. This eventually turned out to be somewhat misconceived. As the impact and popularity of the C100 peaked,¹¹ the authorities became more coercive and arrests more heavy-handed, resulting in harsher sentences for both organizers and protesters.¹² Over time the named membership changed, as imprisonment or resignation made replacements necessary. Political theorist Frank Myers argued in 1971 that the substitution in C100 of the more experienced and responsible 'leadership' with a younger, less manageable presence in the working group proved in the long-run to be detrimental.¹³ It is not clear whether this change of membership did in fact contribute to the decline of C100. Certainly it is the case that from 1962 a more libertarian, anarchist political culture gained strength. Historian Richard Taylor explains:

... the ideological profile of the Committee of 1963 is thus that, compared to 1960-61, the parameters of ideological belief had shifted decisively to the left. Russell, and the 'big names' drawn in largely under his influence... had all withdrawn or lost their influence... the initiative remained predominantly on the libertarian socialist axis.¹⁴

It was in this climate that several members of the C100 working group, some of whom were also members of the libertarian socialist group Solidarity, began to assert their frustrations with what they considered to be outdated and ineffective methods, such as sit-down protests and commitment to a perceived accommodation with the authorities.¹⁵ At the national C100 'Way Ahead' conference in London (9-10 February 1963), which was designed to revitalize the campaign, they introduced their radical new ideas in their wonderfully titled paper, *Beyond Counting Arses*.¹⁶

BEYOND COUNTING ARSES AND THE SPIES FOR PEACE

Beyond Counting Arses, dated 6 February 1963, was signed by eight members of the London C100. In presenting it, the authors proposed

a new way forward in order to address the 'general malaise' and ineffectiveness which was becoming apparent in the anti-nuclear movement. It states:

Although the Committee of 100 has been extremely radical in its time, we now seem reduced to demonstrations consisting of a ritual pas-de-deux with the police... (All right son. You've made your point. Now walk along nicely into court.)¹⁷

The paper reflected the increasing disquiet which was becoming apparent in some factions of the C100, especially in the London Working Group. It represented a fresh, radical, artful approach, challenging the effectiveness of mass sit-down demonstrations and annual marches. It called for a more anarchist, anti-bureaucratic C100 and discouraged collaboration with CND. It confronted the paralysis of action caused by so-called 'meaningless compromises', where the 'determined minority' effectively prevented any decisions being made. The authors also indicated a desire to move beyond unilateralism, calling for links with other grass-root campaigns to oppose what they saw as the destructive nature of Britain's 'warfare state'.¹⁸

At the time of writing, the authors of *Beyond Counting Arses* were not aware of the precise whereabouts or even the purpose of the RSGs. They did however hope to reclaim the annual Aldermaston march for more radical purposes:

The annual pilgrimage from Aldermaston should surely be welcome to the Government, for it ensures that our energies are not diverted into more 'dangerous' paths. (Let us hope that Aldermaston 1963 will change this tradition.)¹⁹

A sub-section of the paper entitled 'Civil Disobedience in Print' explicitly advertised the authors' intention to take on the system of the state's official secrets:

The Committee of 100 should announce that it intends to unmask and publicize the most secret preparations of the Warfare State. We should publicly urge people to send us such information in confidence... We must give details about the secret hide-outs of 'civil' defence and the secretly kept lists of those who will be catered for in the event of nuclear war.²⁰

Diversion of the Aldermaston March was one of many ideas for direct action considered by the group.²¹ Others included the interruption of parliamentary debate (possibly by releasing a noxious substance), disruption of the Budget speech and having a 'sleep-out' on the streets of Reading.

All of these, however, were soon to be pushed aside following a fortuitous scouting trip.

RSG6 AND *DANGER! OFFICIAL SECRET*

To date, although there have been various articles offering general descriptions of the Spies for Peace episode, the only available insider accounts of the RSG6 raids and of the production of *Danger! Official Secret* are to be found in the *Guardian* of 9 April 1966 and various extended versions of that article that culminated in 'The Spies for Peace and After' account which appeared in the *Raven Anarchist Quarterly* in 1988. These were published anonymously, although it is widely understood that the author of each of these versions was the late Nicolas Walter, a well-known anarchist journalist, C100 member and to date the only publicly known Spy for Peace.²² Walter's recollections have informed much that has since been written on the subject, effectively becoming the definitive chronicle of events of the RSG6 revelations and of the publication of *Danger! Official Secret*. The reminiscences of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' thus provide not only additional detail, but new personal reflections and evaluations which, after forty years, bring further light to the story.

Following a tip-off, on the afternoon of 16 February 1963, four of the signatories of *Beyond Counting Arses* drove from London to Reading to meet a contact who claimed to know the whereabouts of a nearby secret underground bunker.²³ Immediately following this encounter, the four men ('A', 'B', 'D' and one other) went out to search the area, a stretch of countryside not far from the A4 which also happened to be the route of the Aldermaston march. After some scouting around, they parked their car and headed towards the small village of Warren Row. Knowing little of what to expect, they walked through frosty, muddy fields and before long came across a short track of tarmac with what appeared to be a ramp heading downwards. This turned out to be the entrance to RSG6. They could see ventilators, steel shutters and a small wooden door which was easy to break into, giving access to a boiler-house. Inside they noticed that the boiler was active and found a schedule indicating a maintenance visit was soon due. Another door was found to be unlocked. Part of the bunker was well lit, revealing stairs down to what looked like offices. 'B' described the strangeness of this experience:

We were in the middle of a field, with mud on our boots up to here [indicates just below the knees], in this boiler room and there was this office block . . . We were, terrified is not the word for it, I mean it was like walking into a Stanley Kubrick movie right? We were totally disoriented.²⁴

To the trespassing activists, it appeared as if the official occupants had just gone out for a tea-break leaving their papers in disarray. Fear of imminent

detection caused the men to move fast. They took photographs, copied and collected information, and then retreated rapidly back to London.

A group meeting was organized for 20 February to discuss the next course of action. A full list of those who attended is unlikely ever to be known, but as Walter intimates, the 'group' of eight who had produced *Beyond Counting Arses* was by now 'reinforced by some new members'.²⁵ 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' were all present. After much discussion it was agreed that the information contained in RSG6 was of significant public importance, and a further – more strategically planned – raid was therefore necessary. At this point two members of the group decided that they could no longer be involved. One of them was 'B', who was still reeling from the first raid. He recalled thinking:

I've just got to withdraw from this, I can't take it any more, I'm gonna have a nervous breakdown, I'm gonna be a danger to everybody else.²⁶

According to Walter it was at this point that the group chose to let go of its more 'prominent and vulnerable' participants.²⁷ Following the meeting, and until after the publication of *Danger! Official Secret*, a total of eight members remained: six men and two women.²⁸

Within two weeks, another party of four men set out to RSG6, only this time Walter replaced 'B' in the car. When they first arrived, workmen were on the premises so they drove to a pub and waited. It was late and dark when they returned to what now seemed to be an empty bunker. Wearing gloves they cautiously picked the locks and entered. This second raid was well planned, as 'D' recalls:

We knew we were entering what was almost certainly an empty place, and although there was obviously a risk, by that time we'd calculated it more, we'd thought about it. We knew what we were gonna do. We'd come prepared as it were, I think. We had more film with us and I had drawing materials and things.²⁹

Without leaving any obvious trace of their entry, the raiders worked quickly and methodically. Each had a designated role and within a few hours the subterranean building had been searched thoroughly. They took photographs, traced maps, transcribed documents and appropriated some duplicated documents before they eventually emerged. Relief for the four other group members, waiting for news, came in the early hours with the communication that all was well. A suitcase full of material was ready for analysis and collation.

'A' assembled the first draft of *Danger! Official Secret*. There was much to analyse. For example, a telephone list revealed contact numbers for all other RSGs and RSG6 occupants, so RSG-designated civil servants and their roles could be identified by consulting the British Imperial Calendar.

The information was carefully collated, written up with help from two members with journalistic experience, and then presented to the group, who worked collaboratively to finalize the document. Once completed it required printing, duplication and distribution, all of which took time and money. The Spies for Peace met regularly in each other's homes and never took notes in meetings. They were each allocated a particular role about which they divulged as little as possible to the others. 'C' recalls:

Well if we got arrested, the less we knew about what people were doing the better. So, I presume, I bought stamps from somewhere, or envelopes or something like that. Well I didn't tell . . . one of the main things I did was to get money from well known people. And I'm not going to tell you who they were.³⁰

They always worked with gloves and destroyed or secreted any evidence connecting them to the document and to the RSG6 raids. The typewriter they used was thrown into a river outside London.

Finally 3,000 copies of *Danger! Official Secret* were mailed out from different locations around London. Each of the Spies for Peace, along with the numerous others, received a copy in the post, so that if and when the Special Branch searched their homes they could not be distinguished from any other of the recipients. Once the cover-up was completed, all that remained was for them to stay anonymous and avoid prosecution: an undertaking which, despite some suspicions (some of them had been signatories of *Beyond Counting Arses*, after all), they have accomplished to this day.

SECURITY

In collecting the personal stories of this episode I was struck by the sense of unity, particularly over protecting each other's identities, which made entering the group difficult. The subject of the RSG6 break-in often emerged in C100 narratives without any prompting of mine, and yet an overriding sense of loyalty was always evident.

In my first interview with Jay Ginn, the Spies for Peace episode emerged as an important action in the history of C100. She touched on the subject of the perpetrators' identities briefly, saying:

Police were hunting everywhere for them but it was a well kept secret who they were and I'm not going to reveal it now, um, a small group of people that I know.³¹

In following interviews, a similar level of secrecy became apparent. Respondents claimed not to know who the Spies for Peace were, and yet it was commonly reported that the group amounted to about eight

individuals who were both highly regarded and supported. This reference to the Spies by Ernest Rodker, a prominent member of London C100, was typical:

I think the whole RSG thing was fantastic, and I didn't know anything about it. I mean it was done by this small group of people, um and the first thing I knew about it was that I got a package, on the morning of the Aldermaston march.³²

It was not always clear whether the individuals I interviewed did know the identities of the Spies for Peace. John Brailey, for example, also from London C100, shifted position on this subject, claiming: 'You never knew who they were [short pause] I do know who they were, but I'm not saying'.³³ This fits with the idea introduced by 'A' that, although there was never any explicit proof, many people knew who the Spies for Peace were.³⁴

Peter Cadogan proved from the start to be more at ease with questions. Yet his concern to protect the group was evident:

I was offered a bribe of a thousand pounds to put a photograph of the back of the heads of the Spies for Peace, from the *Daily Mail*! But, of course, it didn't happen. When I was being interviewed by the press the Spies for Peace were all around me standing in the circle, you see! They were under investigation by this journalist, or several journalists and I was answering questions and they were completely anonymous and the police and the press couldn't touch them! Ha! Hilarious!³⁵

Although the Spies for Peace episode had no official C100 endorsement, these collected narratives indicate that it had support, at least in retrospect. All those interviewed did to some degree endorse the illegal action. This later acceptance, and even celebration, of the RSG6 break-in is further evidence of the move from candid to covert action, reflecting the shifts in the politics and ethos of C100.

As 'B' proudly stated: 'It was the most successful piece of direct action of the second half of the twentieth century, because we never got caught'.³⁶ Had they been arrested, the courts would almost certainly have made examples of them. It is possible, however, that the authorities deliberately refrained from apprehending those involved for fear of the potential effects of a long and public trial. Alternatively, it could be that the high levels of secrecy maintained by C100 members were effective in preventing prosecutions. Either way, the Spies for Peace remained at liberty. Although it is not completely out of the question, the likelihood of any of the activists being charged over forty years on for their crimes is negligible. In the current anti-war climate, with increasing public mistrust in government policy overseas, this older generation of anti-nuclear activists could well be considered heroic by the public.

DISCLOSURE

Why have the Spies for Peace stories been told now? Back in 2002, at the very beginning of my research into C100, it was almost impossible to make any constructive contacts with C100 members. I was rebuffed on a number of occasions. After a rocky start, a positive response for an interview came from Jay Ginn, a sympathetic academic who subsequently provided invaluable assistance. It transpired that a faction of ex-C100 members, including Jay Ginn herself, were in the process of archiving C100 material. She was also a custodian of a confidential list of names and contact details of all past members willing to contribute to the archive and to have their names included. Through Jay, initial interviews with six women formed the basis of my MA thesis and its publication,³⁷ and the success of this led to further help with engaging additional participants for my doctoral research.³⁸ The more interviews were completed, the greater the weight and recognition of my research and consequently the greater the response to my request for respondents.

By the time I arranged to meet 'A' and 'B' in 2006, they had already discussed both my work and their own decision to talk to me, and had decided to be interviewed together. Unaware of this, my intention was to interview the two separately. It came as a surprise when 'B' collected me at the station and took me straight to 'A's house. I was not aware at the time that these two men had a shared agenda or were considering any dramatic disclosure.

Both were keen to discuss the relevance of their involvement in Solidarity and in the group which produced *Beyond Counting Arses*. They also discussed the links between these two groups and the Spies for Peace. Just over half an hour into his story, 'B' chose to reveal his direct involvement in the original RSG6 raid. The interview transcript shows a change from third to first person denoting his decision:

Two things happened. One was the cracking and the other was the analysis. I mean the one thing that happened was the penetration operation, the raid, two raids. Those raids gathered disparate information because the [he tuts]. Oh sod it. We were trudging across this bloody ploughed field and we came to this dell and there was about four feet of motorway in the middle of this dell and these huge great steel shutters.³⁹

No adverse reaction to this disclosure came from 'A'. Until this point I had attempted to guide the interview to focus on C100 involvement. I hadn't expected to hear first-hand accounts of the first raid. 'B' went on to explain:

You're gonna have to be very subtle and think very carefully about how you go about this. Because if you play it right, you're gonna have. Well you'll get your doctorate I'll tell you that [laughs] because you've cracked

open a major story, because we've never ever talked. ['A'] and I discussed it, and decided that this was the kind of opportunity.⁴⁰

'A' and 'B' agreed that although many inside C100 might have guessed the identities of the Spies for Peace there has never been any corroboration. The Special Branch were unable to find sufficient evidence to charge the perpetrators, despite having suspicions of who was responsible.⁴¹

Yet it was clear that 'A' and 'B' wanted to tell their stories and were keen that this disclosure should be made within an academic rather than a journalistic setting. 'B' explains:

But the important thing as far as we were concerned, what decided us, was that rather than us coming out in a newspaper article or coming out in a sensational book or something, it was gonna come out in a learned thesis. And that seems to us to be the right way for it to appear.⁴²

Contributing to their decision, 'A' and 'B' suggested, was the trial at the Old Bailey in 1991 of two other C100 members, Michael Randle and Pat Pottle, on a charge going back twenty-five years. The case against them followed publication in 1988 of their *The Blake Escape: How we Freed George Blake and Why*, which recounted their role in the escape from Wormwood Scrubs prison of George Blake, convicted Soviet spy serving a record-breaking sentence of forty-two years.⁴³ They each faced a total of nine years in prison with a charging order put on their homes based on an ordinance designed to retrieve the royalties or profits resulting from a crime,⁴⁴ but in the end the jury acquitted them. 'A' and 'B' decided that by telling their stories without prospect of financial benefit they would minimize the risk of prosecution. Although they knew that their names would not be revealed in this article, they realized that talking to me would increase the possibility of their identities being discovered. 'A' questions the likelihood of his being charged, however, saying: 'I mean no one is going to get prosecuted for god's sake... a load of doddering old pensioners'.⁴⁵ Having completed the interview with me, both men signed a recording consent form and 'B' stipulated 'not for profit'.

A second factor which might explain why they were prepared to talk to me is more personal: toward the end of their lives they wished to take stock of what they had done. Both are aware of the risk in telling their stories. 'A' for example is himself, amongst other things, a historian, and clearly alert to the ways in which hidden identities can surface posthumously. Arguably both 'A' and 'B' want to have some influence over the disclosure during their lifetimes, to set the record straight. 'B' chose not to read the interview transcript. He stated that he was keen to see the written analysis, and asked when I would be completing my thesis. When I told him he responded: 'But I'll be dead by then!'⁴⁶ Although it is likely that he will still be around in 2010, this article is my response to his desire to see something written.

Early drafts of this article were sent for comment to 'A' and 'B' (who requested very minor edits), and to another C100 member 'C', who up to that point had been referred to by name in the article and presented as a passive insider and not necessarily an active member of the Spies for Peace group. Upon reading the article, 'C' promptly requested a meeting to correct what she took to be some significant errors and assumptions, and consequently identified herself as having been a fully participating Spy for Peace and one of the two female members referred to by Nicolas Walter in his *Raven* article.⁴⁷ Around the same time, I was also informed that 'A' and 'B' had circulated the draft amongst the other Spies for Peace they were still in contact with. Before long, 'D' got in touch, wanting to add his own personal perspective. It was he who informed me that his would be the final contribution. All other surviving members, he claimed, had refused to participate in this or in any future research.

'C' and 'D' decided for similar reasons to come forward at this point as Spies for Peace. Both were impelled by reading an early draft of this article and by discovering that 'A' and 'B' had each broken their long commitment to silence. They expressed a desire to add their own perspectives, some of which differed from those of 'A' and 'B'. 'C', reflecting on why she thought the others had decided to speak, suggested:

I think it's interesting that ['A' and 'B'] want to come out more. And I think it's to do with age, and also the other, ['D']. Because they haven't got jobs. You know they're retired. Children are grown up and I kind of think rightly that no-one is going to bother us now. But I still feel, why? You know, why come out?⁴⁸

This desire to be included in a new collaboration of first-hand accounts was also evident in 'D's' narrative. He explains:

I mean I felt that it was worth, having found out that ['B' and 'A'] had given you a good deal of detailed information, and that ['C'] was also involved to some extent, in doing so it seemed to me as the only other living person who was on the raids, I should probably give you some more detail about it.⁴⁹

It turns out that several years earlier there had been some discussion amongst a few of the group concerning whether at any point they might reveal their stories. According to both 'C' and 'D' tentative ideas were communicated between Nicolas Walter's daughter, Natasha (a journalist), and at least two of the Spies. As 'D' informed me, 'I'd hoped that we could make a movie, a documentary about this at some point and admittedly I wasn't prepared to do it until I was retired'.⁵⁰ 'D' was waiting for retirement, others were unsure of the suggested method of disclosure, while others still were determined to remain silent.

LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT AND RISK OF REPRISALS

The individuals who risked most in the Spies for Peace episode were undoubtedly the small group whose actions resulted in the production and publication of *Danger! Official Secret*. Numerous others, however, readily and repeatedly risked arrest by undertaking supporting roles, mostly after the original copies were sent out in time for the Aldermaston March. The extent of this essential assistance included widespread duplication and distribution of the banned document, and might account for what 'A' meant when he said: 'I wish I had a few quid for everyone who claimed to have been in the Spies For Peace'.⁵¹ As he sees it, a number of people have since identified themselves as having been members of the group when they played a relatively minor role. The essential question here then is: Who were the Spies for Peace? And what level of involvement in this particular episode warranted such a title?

Nicolas Walter's account limits the Spies for Peace to eight individuals: those who remained active after the meeting on 20 February following the initial RSG6 raid.⁵² Whilst this includes those who took part in the second RSG6 break-in and the publication of *Danger! Official Secret*, it excludes any group members involved up to this point but no further. Notably 'B', who was on the first RSG6 raid. 'C', whose account conforms to that of Walter, argued that it was sometime after the 20 February meeting that the group eventually agreed upon the name 'Spies for Peace' (a play on Stalinist propaganda signatures such as 'Farmers for Peace' or 'Scientists for Peace'). She recalls:

Oh god I just remember endless bloody discussions about it ... It might not have been a single person cos there was all this stuff about Spies and the Cold War and things like that, so it might have been you know, a brainstorming session.⁵³

Those who agreed upon the name, and continued to be actively involved when it was decided upon, may feel greater ownership. 'B', however, as one of the five individuals who actually entered RSG6, clearly identifies himself as a Spy for Peace. According to Walter's definition, despite his active involvement and a life since affected by a lingering fear of judicial reprisal, 'B' would not count as one of the Spies. Fortunately for him, and for the others, MI5 pursued the idea hinted at in *Danger! Official Secret* that it was a civil servant who had leaked the information.⁵⁴ Although he broadly agrees with Walter's account, 'D' also regards his definition as problematic. He argues:

Well in my view, the best way to sort of describe who is a Spy for Peace is it was somebody who in a sense could have been charged with procuring the information and publishing the information about RSG6. That if you were, you know chargeable with that offence then

you were probably a Spy for Peace, which on my count means, well, you could actually on that basis include quite a few other people [...] I would argue there's at least one more, so that would be ten in all if you include ['B'].⁵⁵

Clearly there is some disagreement as to where the boundaries of the group should fall. 'A' includes 'B' and describes the number involved as being 'about eight'; 'C' firmly includes only the eight who remained active after the first raid; 'B' mostly focuses on the RSG6 raiders. From these reminiscences it would seem that the number of those actively involved was between eight and ten, with perhaps a couple more who were party to the secret. What is certain is that it was a finite group of people who, to a greater or lesser degree, were instrumental in getting the original *Danger! Official Secret* into the public arena, and these individuals, if caught would undoubtedly have been labelled 'The Spies for Peace'.

What then about the others who also risked arrest? Interviews with nineteen other members of C100 reveal varying degrees of participation, and three examples can provide an indication of the levels of engagement and risks taken. The stories of Peter Cadogan, Dennis Gould, and Hugh Court indicate how others were party to secrets concerning the RSG6 raids or engaged in duplication and distribution of the banned document without knowledge of its source.

Peter Cadogan, an industrious C100 member, was the self-appointed public voice for the Spies for Peace – claiming that this was possible because he wasn't one of them.⁵⁶ His main duty was to lead the March Must Decide Committee which sought to persuade the 1963 Aldermaston protestors to break away from the main march and head for RSG6.

My picture was on the front of the *Daily Mirror*, full length. I was the enemy of the people! So it was like the, you know, *Punch* cartoon. I was a devil figure, you see. I was recognized for two or three days after that.⁵⁷

'C' applauded Peter's presence in the media limelight, believing it diverted attention away from the core perpetrators. Another activist, Dennis Gould, described his response to Walter's request for quantities of paper so that the document could be produced:

I, suppose stupidly, got the paper from Housmans, the Peace News bookshop... but the thing is, because it was naive on reflection, but nobody ever asked about the paper, that's the funny thing... The reams of paper took up the whole back of the taxi, you know and I went straight to Nicolas's house with it!⁵⁸

Dennis, who lays no claim to being a Spy for Peace, may well have been aware of the reasons behind Walter's request for paper. His reported role

however, was questioned by both 'C' and 'D' in that it did not fit with the precautions taken by the rest. 'D' for example recalls travelling throughout London to buy paper from many different outlets. It is also possible, however, that such an arrangement did occur between Dennis and Walter, and his actions were not communicated internally. Hugh Court, a member of Sussex C100, received *Danger! Official Secret* without having any prior knowledge of its origins.⁵⁹ He recalls immediately setting about making copies:

We did it all in a barn in a farm near Hailsham, so we acted in secret and we did all our dispersal at night and we were a team of about four of us of doing the reproduction, so we kept the numbers down small. The distribution we called more people in to do, and we did distribute to every area in Sussex. It was quite a big job.⁶⁰

In the wake of the heavy sentences delivered under the Official Secrets Act for the C100 Wethersfield demonstration in February 1961, Hugh recalls having little illusion about the possible consequences:

I hid the original documents that I received in the post . . . behind pictures in my house and it wasn't as though it was a huge fear but you know, because it was an official secret we might be landed with a charge on the Official Secrets Act and, consequently, we might be spending more time away from our families than we wanted.⁶¹

These stories give an indication of the experiences of those who were active in supportive roles, all of whom could have been arrested. Indeed, the authorities were so intent on preventing the document's circulation that an individual on the Aldermaston March was reportedly arrested for singing its secret content.⁶² Hundreds protested for the day at RSG6 and innumerable others duplicated and distributed *Danger! Official Secret*.

For the core group the risks were more substantial. 'B' describes where, at one point, in hiding, he believed a criminal conviction might have led:

Labour MPs were calling for, you know, that they should be hung. [Laughter] If you imagine, if you look at the headlines that were around the time, it was absolutely gut-churning.⁶³

His use of laughter here reflects a state of apprehension that he has had to endure over the years, as indeed does his return to the third person. 'A', being eight years older than 'B', took on what resembled an older brother or even fatherly role in their close relationship. Both men spoke of the support 'A' had given 'B', who was only nineteen at the time of the raid. The effect of his involvement has taken its toll on 'B'. He has spent much of his life anticipating the 'knock on the door'.

'A' agrees with 'B' that the whole episode was disturbing, and yet he delivers a more calm, calculated view of the event:

It was quite terrifying actually . . . one of the things that emerged for me was the different types of courage. I mean I can, I'm all right if I can work out the odds, but I get a bit nervous when you're sort of walking into something you don't know what the consequences are.⁶⁴

'A' describes how these levels of stress were often managed with elements of humour:

We destroyed every possible, you know the stencils, the typewriter, everything was cleared out. I remember a lot of the rubbish was left outside the *Daily Worker* building just as a joke.⁶⁵

'D', like 'A', participated in both RSG6 raids and in the production of the prohibited document. He was the only member of the *Beyond Counting Arses* group with a car and in addition to driving on both RSG6 visits he was also the photographer and responsible for reproducing maps. He recalls the intensity of work in collating *Danger! Official Secret* right up to the point of posting:

I'll tell you my main memory of that last period was . . . oh, basically endless duplicating . . . We didn't have a very long window to do it all if we wanted to hit the Aldermaston deadline and partly because we hadn't wanted to produce it until the very last minute.⁶⁶

'C' did not go on either raid but, motivated by a strong dedication to freedom of speech, was active in creating the document, making use of her many links with 'big names' in C100 by procuring the money required for production. She too recalled the stress of the latter part of the operation:

We had to collate and pack into envelopes all these documents. Had to wear gloves all night. In my memory it's very hot. It's also very bright, kind of electric light and we all had to be just working all night.⁶⁷

CONCLUSION

The Spies for Peace precipitated a crisis of confidence in the political authority of postwar Britain, prompting parliamentary debate and a change in public attitudes towards the government, and anticipated many later forms of political protest which characterized the radicalism of the 1960s. The revelation that the political class sought to save itself, in the event of a nuclear attack, at the expense of the nation's citizens, represented a significant shift in the relations between governors and governed – even if it is one which is difficult to substantiate empirically.

In conducting these interviews, and in preparing these findings for publication, I have been constrained by an ethical duty to the respondents. Even more than is usually the case, these are their stories, and they still need to be safeguarded from state scrutiny. Those interviewed have commented on drafts and this collaborative approach has created a fuller understanding of their experiences as activists. This is particularly significant when working with such a necessarily protective group as C100, and even more so with the Spies for Peace. When life history narratives are being collected in a respectful manner, doors can gradually open. When it is possible to meet with individuals who have played significant roles in historic events, much can surface – sometimes unexpectedly – which might otherwise remain hidden forever.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 See *Resistance Shall Grow: the story of the Spies for Peace, and why they are important for your future*, Express Printers, London, 1963, p. 4. (Published jointly by the Committee of 100, the Independent Labour Party, the London Federation of Anarchists, Solidarity and the Syndicalist Workers' Federation.)

2 'That Was the Week That Was', a new satirical television programme (1962–3), focused on current events such as the Profumo affair and the RSG revelations. See also *Private Eye*, 19 April 1963.

3 Natasha Walter, 'How my Father Spied for Peace', *New Statesman*, 20 May 2002.

4 *Resistance Shall Grow*, p. 8.

5 A 'D notice' was an official request (not legally binding) issued by the government to all media to refrain from publishing specific material for the benefit of national security.

6 On 19 April *The Daily Telegraph* published most of the content, evading the D-Notice by quoting what had been broadcast on Prague Radio.

7 *Resistance Shall Grow*, p. 2.

8 See Sam Carroll, "'I was Arrested at Greenham in 1962'": Investigating the Oral Narratives of Women in the Anti-Nuclear Committee of 100', *Oral History* 32:1, 2004.

9 Ross Bradshaw, Dennis Gould and Chris Jones, *From Protest to Resistance: the Direct Action Movement against Nuclear Weapons*, Peace News Pamphlet 2, Mushroom, Nottingham, 1981.

10 Richard Taylor, *Against the Bomb: the British Peace Movement, 1958–1965*, Oxford, 1988, p. 191.

11 The largest demonstration was 17 September 1961, when some 12,000 people sat down in Trafalgar Square and there were 1,314 arrests.

12 The Wethersfield six, for example, each received between twelve and eighteen months for planning an airbase invasion.

13 Frank E. Myers, 'Civil Disobedience and Organizational Change: the British Committee of 100', *Political Science Quarterly* 86: 1, 1971.

14 Taylor, *Against the Bomb*, p. 198.

15 'Spies for Peace and After', *Raven Anarchist Quarterly* 5, 1988 (Freedom Press), p. 64.

- 16 *Beyond Counting Arses*, 1963, Hannan Committee of 100 Papers, Box 1, L/100/63/23, Commonweal Archives, J. B. Priestley Library, University of Bradford.
- 17 *Beyond Counting Arses*, p. 5.
- 18 *Beyond Counting Arses*, p. 6.
- 19 *Beyond Counting Arses*, p. 4.
- 20 *Beyond Counting Arses*, p. 6.
- 21 'Spies for Peace and After', p. 66.
- 22 Both 'C' and 'D' referred to these two articles as accounts written by Nicolas Walter.
- 23 Interview with 'D', 11 Sept. 2008. The contact had information from a GPO engineer who had for a short time worked in the bunker.
- 24 Interview with 'B', 9 March 2006.
- 25 'Spies for Peace and After', p. 67.
- 26 Interview with 'B', 9 March 2006.
- 27 'Spies for Peace and After', p. 68.
- 28 The Spies for Peace continued with later campaigns involving more members.
- 29 Interview with 'D', 11 Sept. 2008.
- 30 Interview with 'C', 27 Aug. 2008.
- 31 Jay Ginn (b.1939, Harrogate), interviewed by author, 23 Aug. 2002.
- 32 Ernest Rodker (b.1937, Odessa), interviewed by author, 28 March 2006.
- 33 John Brailey (b.1934, Stoke Newington), interviewed by author, 27 April 2006.
- 34 Interview with 'A', 9 March 2006.
- 35 Peter Cadogan (b.1921, Northumberland), interviewed by author, 15 March 2006. Peter is referring here to an incident on the Aldermaston March in 1963. It is important to note that not all Spies went to Warren Row on this occasion. Some had gone into hiding, two of them in Paris.
- 36 Interview with 'B', 9 March 2006.
- 37 See Carroll, "'I was Arrested at Greenham in 1962'".
- 38 Jay Ginn sent out fifty letters for me, requesting interviews, to the members on the list who lived closest. I never saw the list or who they were sent to.
- 39 Interview with 'B', 9 March 2006.
- 40 Interview with 'B', 9 March 2006.
- 41 After all, some had signed *Beyond Counting Arses*.
- 42 Interview with 'B', 9 March 2006.
- 43 See Michael Randle and Pat Pottle, *The Blake Escape: How we Freed George Blake and Why*, London, 1988.
- 44 Email exchange between Michael Randle and author, 9 April 2009.
- 45 Interview with 'A', 9 March 2006.
- 46 Telephone conversation with 'B' in early January 2007.
- 47 'Spies for Peace and After', p. 68.
- 48 Interview with 'C', 27 Aug. 2008.
- 49 Interview with 'D', 11 Sept. 2008.
- 50 Interview with 'D', 11 Sept. 2008.
- 51 Interview with 'A', 9 March 2006.
- 52 'Spies for Peace and After', p. 68.
- 53 Interview with 'C', 27 Aug. 2008.
- 54 Interview with 'A' and 'B', 9 March 2006.
- 55 Interview with 'D', 11 Sept. 2008.
- 56 Article by Peter Cadogan; <http://www.kingsleyhall.freeuk.com/cadogan.htm>.
- 57 Interview with Cadogan, 15 March 2006.
- 58 Dennis Gould (b. 1937, Burton-on-Trent), interviewed by author, 3 April, 2006.
- 59 In early 1962 regional C100 groups were set up nationwide.
- 60 Hugh Court (b. 1933, Barking, Essex), interviewed by author, 30 March 2006.
- 61 Interview with Court, 30 March 2006.
- 62 *Resistance Shall Grow*, p. 7.
- 63 Interview with 'B', 9 March 2006.
- 64 Interview with 'A', 9 March 2006.
- 65 Interview with 'A', 9 March 2006.
- 66 Interview with 'D', 11 Sept. 2008.
- 67 Interview with 'C', 27 Aug. 2008.