

Through he would have a team of advisers, staff officers and clerical people — some 90 in all — the Controller will have supreme decision-making powers over every aspect of life in the Region.

Only in one area are his powers limited. The police forces and armed forces will be answerable ultimately to Zone and Central Control. In the event of the Region being completely isolated, however, it seems likely the Chief Constable would take direct orders from the Controller.

But visions of an autocratic Controller and a handful of privileged people riding out the disaster, safe in a deep bunker are way off the mark.

There is no secret list of people with keys to the executive bunker. Neither are there blast-proof bunkers for Regional administrators.

There is a list of jobs — in transport, health and communications — which will lead certain people being asked to man the Regional HQ (or the standby HQ). An emergency management team will be formed with Controller, Deputy, Heads of Services, Chief Constable and Regional Scientific Adviser.

These are the men with key positions who will have to say goodbye to their families and join the HQ team not knowing if they will ever see them again.

The man planning for Armageddon

ANDREW HENDERSON spends his working life thinking about the unthinkable.

When you think of the unthinkable, you think of the truly bizarre way he spends his time. Even his job title — emergency planning officer — has a binding quality which never lets him relax.

For Mr. Henderson is one of a select group who are paid to imagine and plan for the worst things that could happen in the worst of all possible worlds.

Paid mainly by central government, he is Gramplan's doomwatcher, the man who plans for disaster on behalf of 700,000 people. The men who have nightmares on their behalf.

And those nightmares can be more than just a Trident of crabs on a Northford on take-off from Dyo, through a tanker load of poisonous chemicals crashing in Union Street, to all-out thermonuclear war.

"But I thought I was lonely," Henderson says. "I am not. I am surrounded by people and I wonder why I am here. In fact, my work is to ensure every family gets 14 days food in the event of a nuclear war." And he does more than

be advisory rather than executive.

name is secret

Most are local government officials. Few elected members are included except designated members of the emergency committee.

And their "bunker" is designed not to survive a direct blast but to keep its occupants alive through a sustained period of heavy fallout. In essence it is a large suite of basement rooms with independent air, water and electricity supplies.

From there the Controller and his team will co-ordinate feeding survivors, caring for injured, burying the dead, and most important of all perhaps, monitoring fallout levels.

Using radio stations at unspecified sites in the Region, the Regional Control will be able to broadcast fallout warnings to the whole population.

With a Region sub-divided into District and Sector areas, very specific instructions could be given to people about how long they might go outside during fallout periods.

A broadcast might be along these lines: "ATTENTION ABERDEEN DISTRICT. ATTENTION ABERDEEN DISTRICT. ALL OF ABERDEEN DISTRICT IS WITHIN THE FALLOUT BAND. YOU MAY SPEND NOT MORE THAN ONE HOUR PER DAY IN THE OPEN."

Home Office guidance suggests that even in the worst affected areas as many as 60% of the population would survive blast and fire. So the fallout warning will be critical in helping the Region through the post-attack phase with minimum loss of life.

Most central government doomwatchers believe that nuclear war is the biggest reason to prepare such Home Defence plans. Chemical weapons and maybe biological weapons, might be used against vital civil and military targets but as a general weapon, they are unlikely to be used.

So fallout remains the biggest single danger facing Gramplan's population in the aftermath of a nuclear war. The other three horsemen of this apocalypse are, of course, famine caused by poisoned crops, epidemics and rioting.

That's clearly not Mr. Henderson's view. And when he explains the wartime experience, you can understand why.

Though he tells people he spent the war doing civil engineering work for the government, building bridges and roads, Mr. Henderson is in fact a POW for the duration of the notorious Charing railway. He knew the Bridge on the River Kell and the tunnels of three years on 12 courses of rice sweepings and spoil of mison every day.

Which helped to give him a slightly different perspective on the atomic bomb, he was at Bangkok railway station, a POW in transit, when the first bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

"We were very grateful when the bomb was dropped because we were convinced that if Mountbatten invaded, we would all have been shot out of hand," he says.

After the war, a spell in Malaysia during the Emergency, and then more than ten years as a Civil Administration Officer in the Sudan, Mr. Henderson was discharged at the end of the Cold War in 1968. His shrewd belief in emergency planning stems from those days with the CD. "I Aberdeen was tied up to 500 people training regularly each week. They were gentle people, not warmongers."

and Polar regions, the commonwealth, the Region's target value.

So countdown to disaster might go like this:

Day One. The MOD, Cabinet and Chiefs of Staff in London make strategic decision to go to red alert. Coded messages tell Gramplan Region to begin implementing its Home Defence Plan. All leave for police and armed forces is cancelled. Staff are reminded of their obligations under the Official Secrets Act.

Day Two. Stockpiles of the Government's warning booklet are moved to stores in the North-east, ready for distribution. Key representatives of vital industry are warned their services may be needed in the Regional Control in London. Civil servants draft emergency legislation ready for approval by the Home Secretary.

Day Three. Food supplies, water, batteries and fuel oil are moved into the two Regional Control centres and also to the protected accommodation in District centres.

Day Four. Five. Six. Preparations continue and precise sessions of fallout monitoring are carried out. The local Press is advised of an embargo on any stories about preparations.

Day Seven. Cabinet, advised by Chiefs of Staff decides that overt preparations can be made. Intelligence estimates suggest probability of attack within 10 days. Gramplan postmen deliver one copy of "Protect and Survive" booklet to every household.

Day Eight. Caravan dwellers are advised to move in with relatives in solid houses. All food warehouses, oil depots, and other useful resources are commandeered. Police now guarding key installations and Special Branch making daily arrests of political activists and "suspect" persons.

Day Nine. Long queues form at approved food centres where families are issued with supplies for 14 days. All luxuries — tobacco, spirits, etc. — are commandeered to provide barter currency in post attack phase.

Day Ten. Non-urgent hospital cases removed to their homes. In Union Street, police hospital charge a crowd which reduces in dispersed, schools in the region are closed to provide feeding centres.

Day Eleven. Only essential workers continue to clock in. Factories, offices, tower blocks have been earth-bagged and windows whitewashed to reflect light blast and reduce fire risks. The Controller's emergency management team now broadcasting constant stream of hours, BBC radio and TV avoiding fallout, protecting homes, etc.

Day Twelve. At 1.15 p.m., BBC advises anyone within 10 minutes walk of their home to return home. Office and other workers move into basements or central sandbagged areas of their homes. At 4.45 p.m. a sustained brilliant flash lights up a dull day in Aberdeen. The city, the towers of St. Nicholas House, and the Salvation Army Citadel, but doing little other damage.

In the Control Room, teams of rescue workers are co-ordinated to help survivors from rubble. Initial intelligence reports suggest a 16-megaton bomb has been exploded in the vicinity of Peterhead and Cribmond Hill.

A second blast, targeted on Edzell, has been mitigated by the Gramplan footballs and done little more than blind a few Royal Observer Corps personnel at Stonehaven. All radio and telephone links with Peterhead have been cut, but continuing rainfalls suggest St. Fergus terminal is still detonating.

A light wind gives rescuers in Aberdeen some one-and-a-half hours work in the open before fallout warning maroons are sounded.



But all the emergency planning works on a basic premise: that a disaster is unlikely, but a disaster will happen, but it is simply don't know when.

And that is an argument he applies too to the most somber part of the job, keeping an updated plan for responding to a nuclear war. This is known as the "Plan". The Plan, some 1000 pages

In all, covers every single aspect of a nuclear war. It is as much as it might affect the air above the population, the air above all, is to ensure as far as possible the survival of the Gramplan Region and its inhabitants in a war emergency.

A series of appendices, running from A to Z, identify the functions of each department of local government in the event of war. Their role in the war effort is spelled out in the detail. Each appendix is constantly updated to take account of changes in equipment,

staffing, etc. Its thoroughness is very impressive. If at times windy murder, for example, every single first aid kit in the main shops is checked down to pencil sharpeners and coloured chalk.

And all the parts of the plan are "revisited", a feature which explains perhaps why the public have so little idea how intricately the Region could respond to war.

And of course most folk to regard the subject as taboo, you can't blame someone else to worry about.