

key figures of his story seems to be more tendentious than accidental. These works are all indicative of the continuing scholarly and popular fascination with exactly the kind of ethical dilemmas for which DeGroot has no patience. He is highly suspicious of the scientists' motives to raise ethical concerns and sceptical of their postwar guilt and attempts to make public the debate on the use of nuclear weapons. "The life of the Bomb", he concludes, "reveals one consistent trend: a few scientists write agonized letters to the *New Statesman* or the *Nation* while thousands of others take the government's money and make its weapons" (p. 125). Those who do not fit this mould, including Bohr, Szilard, and Rotblat, are treated as walking stereotypes of the naïve scientist, unable to grasp the rules of the new world order. Soviet scientists fare no better and (give or take a few hundred thousand victims of the Gulag whose sacrifice they had failed even to note) are presented as the mirror image of their Western colleagues.

The book closes with a quote by Victor Weisskopf, seemingly admitting the failure of science to answer the basic moral questions facing humanity. But Weisskopf, an Austrian refugee and member of the Los Alamos team, was also one of the most vocal critics of the nuclear arms race, whose wonderful autobiography is conspicuously missing from DeGroot's bibliography. It is regrettable that Weisskopf's clear-eyed insights into the interplay of political and military power, expanding scientific knowledge and its moral implications for scientists, are not given serious consideration in this book.

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DURFLINGER, Serge Marc — *Fighting from Home: The Second World War in Verdun, Quebec*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006. Pp. 279.

Serge Marc Durflinger's book, *Fighting from Home*, is a welcome addition to the literature of social life during World War II. In this well-researched and clearly articulated examination of one Quebec city (and suburb), Verdun, the author explores the dynamics of community development and social identity during the tumultuous war years. Eschewing the issues and sources typical of most war histories, Durflinger probes the everyday life of ordinary people on the Canadian home front. He gives a detailed and fascinating picture of the political, social, and economic dynamics of this small and, what he considers, extremely patriotic Quebec city. He argues that Verdunites built an "exceptional sense of community identification and civic pride" (p. 4) in the midst of wartime trials and tribulations. In his opinion, the rigours of the domestic war front brought people together despite the divisions of language, class, and gender. Community transcended difference.

The book is well organized. After setting the scene with a discussion of Verdun's history and community structure before World War II, Durflinger

turns to several aspects of the city's domestic wartime experience. Chapter 2 outlines the reasons why Verdun residents enlisted in such numbers and sketches out the social composition of those going off to war. The next chapter examines the city's organization of the local war effort. Using several ways to demonstrate local community-building — from municipal elections to the Mayor's Cigarette Fund — he argues that “a community with a strong sense of local identity and community spirit” (p. 66) was forged during the war. Chapters 4 and 5 analyse the history of the various organizations and institutions created to facilitate the war effort. The purpose here is to show that local institutions (from schools and churches to the Verdun Salvage Committee, the YMCA, and the Red Cross) reflected the high rates of participation by people of all social backgrounds in the making of the home front. Through an examination of housing conditions, family life, social relations, and elections, the next two chapters illustrate the downside of the war; despite increasing real wages and strong intra-community relations, the war had serious social, economic, and political repercussions. Nevertheless, Durflinger argues that the city's class, gender, and linguistic divides and tensions did not undermine the cohesiveness of community. He ends the book with a consideration of the immediate postwar scene (Chapter 7) and a reiteration of his main arguments in a somewhat short concluding chapter.

Throughout the book, Durflinger raises important questions about the construction and reproduction of intra-community dynamics in Verdun. The stories that he tells of local identity formation, organization participation, and patriotic expression are compelling. There can be little doubt that the scale of Verdun's involvement in the various aspects of the war — from the high rates of enlistment to the successful fund-raising campaigns — signalled a strong degree of commitment on the part of the Verdun population. But does this mean that Verdun was a community and that people were committed to cooperation, not competition? Does it mean that community interests took precedence over those of individuals? Does it mean that other forms of identification were muted in the face of community? Although community is notoriously difficult to define, Durflinger finds it everywhere. Take Verdun's high rate of enlistment, for example. In his fascinating account of who signed up to go to war, he argues that a central reason for the high rate was community spirit. However, little evidence is given for this. Instead, a much more convincing argument is made that it was family tradition: you enlisted because your father, uncles, brothers, and grandfather had. You also signed up if you spoke English and were poor. The French and the well-to-do were much less likely to enlist. Community at the scale of the city had very little to do with it.

Moreover, in his attempt to show that community identity transcended individual (or family, ethnic, gender, or class) interests, Durflinger frequently resorts to conflating symbolic actions with material ones. It is one thing to say that an event or institution had strong symbolic value to a community; it is another to argue that these were the product of “a strong sense of local identity and community spirit”. Did Verdunites support the Mayor's Cigarette Fund

because of community identity and spirit? Or was it simply that they wanted to help the troops, many of whom were their sons, brothers, and daughters? Of course, the line between individual and community interests is difficult to gauge, but it is not clear to me that the interests of the city's business and political elites and the city's different social groups were as closely meshed as the author contends. Even the discussion about the fractured character of family, social, and political life in chapters 6 and 7 does not really question the inherent community spirit of Verdunites. As Durflinger argues, "despite the great potential for wartime division along class and linguistic lines, Verdun society remained generally cohesive" (p. 168). Perhaps, but was it a community?

Despite my quarrel with Durflinger's use of community, *Fighting from Home* raises critical questions about place and people and deploys a rich set of evidence (archival material, newspapers, and oral histories) to make some compelling arguments about the response of one city to the onslaught of war. Scholars interested in the social history of place, identity, and community will find much here that is illuminating.

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GAGNON, Serge — *Quand le Québec manquait de prêtres. La charge pastorale au Bas-Canada*, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006, 414 p.

Serge Gagnon ouvre un nouveau volet de l'histoire intime du Bas-Canada dans la première moitié du XIX^e siècle. Prenant distance des études classiques portant sur l'organisation de la vie diocésaine et sur les politiques d'organisation et de gestion du diocèse, il rend compte cette fois-ci du vécu concret, au quotidien, de ces hommes de terrain ayant une mission bien particulière, venue d'ailleurs, inscrite dans la vie de tous les jours et destinée à conduire la multitude vers le bonheur éternel. Dans cet ouvrage, écrit pour intéresser un large public, « l'acteur par excellence, c'est le curé, assisté quelque fois d'un vicaire » (p. 3). La « Note sur la documentation » (p. 401–405) indique les sources manuscrites et imprimées dont s'est servi l'historien pour produire son œuvre.

Au fil des lettres et des sermons auxquels il redonne vie, l'historien recherche ce qui se rapproche le plus du terreau humain à l'intérieur duquel se façonne, se construit, se recherche et, parfois aussi, se disloque la personnalité profonde d'une personne. Ces récits relatent les préoccupations, les aspirations, les interrogations et les difficultés autant matérielles que spirituelles de plusieurs curés et vicaires du début du XIX^e siècle.

L'introduction évoque le contexte précaire de l'Église catholique du Bas-Canada (1791–1840). Suivent trois premiers chapitres qui exposent, à partir des responsabilités concrètes confiées aux pasteurs, l'ampleur de la tâche et l'intelligence des mœurs et de la foi qui présidaient aux actions posées. Les trois