

very short version of the Canadian side of that contretemps, but no description of what transpired in the British camp. I was present in London in early 1993 when a special British Cabinet order, prompted by much resented recent criticism from the Australian Prime Minister about what had happened at Singapore in 1942, released sensitive documents about Singapore and Hong Kong. This action caused a furor, especially in Australia, as the British documents, including the Maltby report, painted a very unflattering portrait of Australian and Canadian troops, blaming them by implication for the loss of those two imperial outposts. (Maltby's original account had been available for years before 1993 at the Library and Archives of Canada.) Lastly, Cook's statement that the history of Canada's home front remains poorly explored is no longer true, thanks to Jeff Keshen's wonderful account of the home front in the Second World War. Still, I heartily recommend Cook's satisfying book.

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DEGROOT, Gerard J. — *The Bomb: A Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005. Pp. 397.

The American publication of the ninth book of Gerard DeGroot, of St. Andrews University in Glasgow, coincided with the sixtieth birthday, in August 2005, of the atomic bomb, but the subject has lost none of its urgency, as witnessed in the crises over Iran's nuclear ambitions and North Korea's testing of its own nuclear bomb.

DeGroot's aim is to provide a definitive biography of "the entire life of the Bomb" by fusing the long view with a broad approach that combines cultural and social history with the political and diplomatic. The well-spun narrative constantly negotiates among the perspectives and respective roles of political and military leaders, government and military doctrine and policy, international relations, intelligence, the scientific community, and, mostly as comic relief, anti-nuclear activists.

This balancing act pays dividends in the book's last chapters, "Testing Times", "How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb", and "Fallout", where the author provides an entertaining social and cultural history of the bomb. He depicts the utter disregard of governments for the damage to people, animals, or the environment caused by radiation. While in earlier instances of testing the long-term effects of radiation were not yet fully understood, by the 1950s the pattern of deception, lies, and denial had become common to all Western governments in possession of nuclear weapons. They were only slightly surpassed, mostly in the scale of devastation, by the Soviet Union. DeGroot is having obvious fun with the American obsession with the atom and the many ways in which the bomb had become the iconic cultural influence of the Cold War era. Hollywood films and American civil defence manuals are just some of

his sources from the 1950s, providing fertile ground for social and cultural history, painted with a broad, satirical brush.

This narrative on a grand scale is not always convincing: DeGroot's thesis about the Cuban missile crisis as the turning point after which no real decisions were left to be taken and the world embraced the Bomb does not explain sufficiently the events of the 1980s described in the chapter "Mid-Life Crisis". His depiction of the palpable sense of a world edging dangerously close to Armageddon, a suddenly re-energized European anti-nuclear movement able to mobilize hundreds of thousands, and, finally, Reagan's turn from warmonger to peacemaker is much too lively to be taken as evidence that all this was not especially important. It also highlights DeGroot's lack of sympathy for anti-nuclear activists of all stripes; they are portrayed throughout the book as naïve and stubborn in their refusal to accept the fact that it is impossible to "un-invent" the Bomb, and their claim for ending the Cold War calls to mind "the lunatic who thinks the sun rises because he wakes up in the morning".

DeGroot cannot resist the benefit of hindsight: Stalin is admonished for not realizing the refugee physicists' potential contribution to the future nuclear arms race, an insight that would have required truly prophetic powers in 1933. American nuclear physicists' assumption that Nazi Germany had been engaged in the building of a Bomb is dismissed as self-justification for their own role in the development of the weapon.

The central story of the book concerns the Bomb itself, from its conception during physics' heroic age in 1930s to its birth during WWII. It had been told many times before, in memoirs as well as excellent recent scholarly and popular accounts. DeGroot's narrative, while always fluid, is based on a few, not-too-recent secondary sources and introduces no new archival research. He has a knack for stringing first-hand accounts together, but, while the anecdotes and his conclusions follow the sources down to the minutest detail and turn of phrase, the stories often lose their context and nuance in the process.

DeGroot has been criticized before for his preference for secondary sources; here, the questions of methodology seem to be closely connected to his ambition to provide a synthesis in a highly accessible form, even at the risk of upsetting the rules. His use of the internet is a case in point. DeGroot is careful enough to issue a warning that the reference for most of the primary sources used in the book will indicate, simply, "internet", and his advice to the reader is to use a search engine to locate them. There are several problems with this practice, the most important of which is rendering our good old scholarly system of references obsolete. There is no quick way to find a document or context of a quotation as time-consuming searches often lead to and end on intricate websites, resulting in more, often futile searches. Documents and articles cited from the "internet" are often available in printed editions or scholarly journals, complete with year, month, volume, number, and page numbers; in these cases the practice seems especially impractical.

While DeGroot does list in the bibliography Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen*, his omission to acknowledge the play's success, the continuing controversies around Oppenheimer and Teller, and the recent crop of biographies of these and other

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