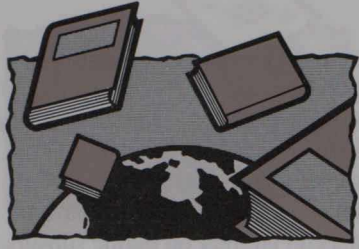


REVIEWS



Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs H. Basil Robinson

Toronto: University of Toronto Press,
1989, 352 pp., \$29.95 cloth

■ This absorbing book broadly tours the foreign policy horizons – 1957 through 1963 – largely from the vantage point of the Prime Minister's Office, where the author, then a rising foreign service officer, served as John Diefenbaker's liaison to the Department of External Affairs. Robinson wisely emphasizes at the outset that his account concentrates on the issues he was personally involved in and therefore "does not pretend to be an all-embracing history of Diefenbaker's decisions and activities in the foreign policy field."

So while this is not the definitive work on Canadian foreign policy in the Diefenbaker years and perhaps will not be the last word on Diefenbaker as foreign policy-maker, it accomplishes exactly what its author sets out to do. Drawing upon his own first-hand experiences backed up with some archival work, Robinson vividly, often compellingly, and sometimes colorfully portrays John G. Diefenbaker in power, reacting to a world in which the Americans want Canadian forces equipped with nuclear arms and the US president confronts the Soviets over the Cuban missiles; Britain wants into the European Economic Community and out of the encumbrances of its imperial past; and the presence of racist South Africa becomes intolerable in the increasingly multiracial Commonwealth.

Ever-loyal Diefenbaker partisans will either dislike the book or take it as confirmation of what they have long believed about

what Diefenbaker himself used to call the "Pearsonalities" who worked for the Department of External Affairs. For while Robinson carefully underlines the complexities of the international situations in which Diefenbaker found himself, and scrupulously identifies the prime minister's virtues and foreign policy successes, the portrait that emerges is far from flattering. Diefenbaker, he says – and demonstrates – was "a difficult, egocentric man," who suffered from "a collision of impulses." Inconsistent, quick to take insult, ever distrustful of advisers, lacking a coherent approach to foreign policy, and with his eyes always on short-term political gain and immediate tactics, Diefenbaker in the end "simply defeated himself."

That final defeat on the floor of the House of Commons and in the general election of 1963 was precipitated by the nuclear weapons issue, to which a substantial portion of the book is devoted. Robinson's account of the deliberations within the East Block and of the discussions between the Canadian and US governments (including the famous Kennedy-Diefenbaker discussions of May 1961 in which Robinson was a participant) rounds out what has been known from other sources, and in many respects can be taken as authoritative. Diefenbaker obfuscated to the end about the Canadian commitment to acquire the weapons. Robinson shows "that in its first two years the Diefenbaker government was consciously heading in the direction of acquiring nuclear weapons for its own forces, both in Canada and Europe."

Still, because the nuclear weapons stories and the Kennedy-Diefenbaker tales have been told so often by others, the details themselves can no longer surprise. In addition to the portrayal of Diefenbaker himself, the real gems in this book lie elsewhere.

Because of his role as liaison between the PMO and External Affairs, Robinson is able to masterfully outline the relationship between Diefenbaker and his second secretary of state for external affairs, Howard Green. The relationship between Diefenbaker and British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, at a time when Anglo-Canadian relations were still not quite clearly "foreign" also stands out.

Finally, buried deep within the book, almost as an aside, Robinson suggests a useful term which deserves broader consideration and can especially be applied to Canadian defence policy. Diefenbaker's approach toward the US, he says, was characterized by "a kind of push-resistant nationalism, aimed at whatever the source might be." In this, was Diefenbaker not typically Canadian?

– Joseph T. Jockel

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Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years McGeorge Bundy

New York: Random House, 1988,
735 pp., US \$24.95 cloth,
US \$12.95 paper

■ No serious student of international affairs can afford to pass up McGeorge Bundy's highly important book. A former professor of foreign policy who was also Dean of Arts and Sciences at Harvard, McGeorge Bundy was one of the Charles River "whiz kids" conscripted by John Kennedy to work in the White House. He served as special assistant for national security affairs and like so many stayed on to work for Lyndon Johnson after Kennedy's assassination. He later headed the Ford Foundation and is now professor of history at New York University.

Bundy examines the critical choices and decisive turning points in the history of nuclear

weapons: the decision to build the bomb and the early history of the Manhattan Project; the decision to drop the bomb on Japan; the failure of the Baruch plan to place atomic weapons under international control; the decision to build the H-bomb; and major crises in the nuclear age such as those over Berlin and Cuba. His new book is a tour de force which will surely stand as the definitive account of the political history of nuclear weapons.

This is no ordinary account of the nuclear age, intent on reciting what is now a familiar tale. Instead Bundy has delved deep into the archives to challenge much of the prevailing conventional wisdom about the development of nuclear weapons and their role in US foreign policy while also raising some of the deeper moral and ethical dilemmas which were occasionally confronted – or as often as not, ignored – by top American scientists or their political masters. For instance he argues that Truman's decision to proceed with research on the H-bomb was a failed opportunity to halt the arms race. Had the United States pledged not to proceed in the development and construction of the H-bomb (as some of the President's advisers had suggested) it might well have exacted a similar pledge from the Russians. Instead Truman gave the go-ahead for research and development and the nuclear arms race took another major upward turn.

Bundy argues convincingly that it was not Kennedy or his Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara who shaped America's current strategic force posture as is commonly argued, but former President, Dwight D. Eisenhower. Eisenhower's legacy, Bundy suggests, was profound but also marked by extraordinary excess:

The decisions he made and allowed others to make were so broad and so deep that even in the middle of the 1980s the underlying structure of the