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was not to defeat an already defeated Japan but to enable the United States to practice “atomic diplomacy” toward the Soviet Union.

Scholars of the subject have long known that the “early surrender” thesis is pure fiction.

Those who have perpetrated this myth most often point to the MAGIC intercepts as corroboration. After using the word “surrender” over and over in their own prose, they then cite one or another Japanese message that contains the word “peace” as though the two terms were synonymous. Kort’s presentation at length of the MAGIC intercepts from the summer of 1945 shows the absurdity of such a contention. What the decryptations actually reveal is that Japanese civilian leaders, under the suspicious eye of the military, were trying to arrange a peace that would permit Japan to keep not only its emperor but its prewar empire and imperial system intact. Indeed, when the Japanese ambassador to the Soviet Union suggested that Japan should surrender if the emperor could be retained, which is what revisionists claim was the sole stumbling block, the foreign minister in Tokyo replied that “we are unable to consent to it under any circumstances whatsoever” (p. 284).

The *Columbia Guide* contains a number of aids to the reader, such as a glossary of military terms and abbreviations, a glossary of names, and an excellent bibliography. Kort and everyone else connected with this enterprise should be commended. The book is a model of its kind.



Jon Hunner, *Inventing Los Alamos: The Growth of an Atomic Community*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004. xi + 288 pp. \$29.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

*Reviewed by Robert S. Norris, Natural Resources Defense Council*

The book’s seven chapters cover the time period from 1943 to 1957. The opening chapter recounts the often-told story of how Los Alamos became the central scientific laboratory of the Manhattan Project. Hunner, an associate professor at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, sets the scene describing the evolving community amidst the spectacular landscape of northern New Mexico. General Leslie R. Groves chose the site in November 1942, the first scientists began arriving in the spring of 1943, and by the end of the war the population had soared to nearly 6,000.

Hunner’s contribution to the extensive literature about this unique place is to examine Los Alamos in broader terms than just the scientific ones that are at the center of most accounts. During the war years life was difficult. “Cramped quarters, electrical outages, water shortages, overcrowding, army regulations, censorship, stress, isolation from the outside world, secrecy, mud, cold, and wind all dampened enthusiasm for the project.”

With the end of the war Los Alamos changed dramatically. While staff felt jubilation and pride that the bomb had helped end a horrible war, their feelings were mixed with concern about what sort of world the country was about to enter. Hunner de-

scribes a tension that serves as his main theme. On the one hand is Los Alamos's struggle to become a normal community occupied by American families who, like their counterparts elsewhere, were searching for security and normalcy in an uncertain world. He describes how a school system was established, how they entertained themselves, practiced their religions, built suitable housing, and pursued the many other activities that constitute normal town life. Juxtaposed against this was the reality that Los Alamos was a unique and privileged enclave, funded by the federal government to fight the Cold War and build bombs that could, if ever used, end civilization, a haunting psychological weight for its inhabitants.

Hunner argues that somewhat unavoidably Los Alamos became the model community for the new atomic age. The media depicted it as a high-tech, Wild West boomtown on the frontlines of the Cold War that showcased the promise of nuclear energy while designing the weapons that supposedly offered security to the nation. In the aftermath of the first Soviet atomic explosion in August 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War the following year, Los Alamos's funding and population grew significantly as Washington decided to develop the hydrogen bomb and mass-produce nuclear weapons of every sort.

Not everything was rosy on the mesa though. Hunner describes some of the dysfunctional elements that affected Los Alamos, such as extramarital affairs and alcoholism, the latter a commonplace among the bored housewives living in an isolated community in the early 1950s. Hunner also discusses topics such as class differences and ethnic diversity and the tensions they elicited. When the idea of opening the town was raised, an overwhelming majority wanted to keep the fences up in order to preserve the sense of safety and security. But the fences could not keep the world out. Hunner treats the impact the 1954 J. Robert Oppenheimer security affair had on Los Alamos as a case in point. Finally in 1957 the fences and guardhouses surrounding the residential areas did come down.

Hunner includes three dozen photographs, two maps, 40 pages of notes, and a bibliography that testify to a solidly researched book. A few final pages are spent on more recent events involving waste and abuse at the laboratory, the alleged espionage case of Wen Ho Lee, and a less-than-sterling environmental legacy. The careless environmental and safety practices began decades ago with the dumping of toxic and radioactive wastes in various canyons and open-air experiments involving the detonation of conventional explosives laced with radioactive substances.

As the laboratory enters the 21st century it faces profound challenges. Its main business, designing nuclear warheads is no longer a top priority, and the other activities it is pursuing—such as mapping the human genome or inventing composite materials—may not fill the void.

A couple of minor clarifications and corrections: Oppenheimer's quotation about "technically sweet" referred to the hydrogen bomb design as of 1951 and not the fission designs during the war, as Hunner implies. The United States built an estimated 66,500 nuclear weapons from 1945 to 1990 (not 23,000), and plutonium does not age quickly. In fact, according to an independent scientific panel that advises the

government, plutonium “primaries of most weapon system types in the stockpile have credible minimum lifetimes in excess of 100 years.”

Hunner has chosen an interesting angle to view Los Alamos and has brought into focus some of the complexities and consequences of living with the bomb at the place where it was born.



Michael Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro on the Brink of Nuclear War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008. 448 pp. \$28.95.

*Reviewed by Len Scott, Aberystwyth University (UK)*

How close was nuclear war in October 1962? As the title of Michael Dobbs's compelling and evocative book suggests, he believes that we were one minute from midnight on the Doomsday Clock. His arguments and his account are based on extensive research, drawn from U.S., Soviet, and Cuban sources. He interviewed more than 100 veterans of the missile crisis and used archival sources (mainly American) that included raw U.S. intelligence material, from which photographs are produced to fascinating effect in the book. Dobbs's goal is to “help a new generation of readers relive the quintessential Cold War crisis” (p. xiii). In this task he is highly successful, bringing to bear his skills and experience as a former staff writer and bureau chief for *The Washington Post* to provide a gripping account of what he terms “the human story,” which he claims has been lost in the academic literature. The structure and style of the book help make the crisis into a drama. The aim is to tell the story minute by minute with particular emphasis on the day known in Washington, DC as Black Saturday: 27 October. “If the Cuban missile crisis was the defining moment of the Cold War,” Dobbs argues, “Black Saturday was the defining moment of the missile crisis” (p. xiii). More than one-third of the book is devoted to the day when we may have come closest to the end of history.

A key focus is on often overlooked “accidental figures.” Among others portrayed in the book are Cuban saboteurs trained by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to blow up a copper mine in western Cuba, Soviet cruise missile crews positioning their nuclear weapons to destroy Guantánamo Bay, and the hapless U.S. Air Force pilot whose attempts at celestial navigation were thwarted by the aurora borealis, leaving him flying into Soviet air space as the crisis reached its climax. Dobbs convincingly demonstrates that understanding the crisis and the risk of nuclear war requires far more than just knowing what leaders thought and decided. Yet those leaders are an essential part of the human story, whose role Dobbs explores and portrays as vital to the outcome. One illuminating insight is Che Guevara's willingness to travel the “path of liberation even when it may cost millions of atomic victims” (p. 245)—an attitude seemingly shared by Fidel Castro. This finding has potentially great significance for understanding the rationality of revolutionary leaders confronted by the logic of nuclear deterrence.