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David F. Krugler. *This Is Only a Test: How Washington D.C. Prepared for Nuclear War.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 248 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4039-6554-7.

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David Krugler's *This Is Only a Test* is an intensively researched assemblage of information regarding how the U. S. capital failed to prepare itself for nuclear war between 1945 and 1962. Like most histories of U.S. civil defense, the book's climax is the Cuban Missile Crisis, and its main focus is the 1950s. While it presents no new interpretive or historiographic framework to aid our understanding of early Cold War preparations on the home front, the book does report much more evidence to support earlier scholarly arguments, such as those found in Laura McEnaney's *Civil Defense Begins at Home*, Andrew Grossman's *Neither Dead Nor Red*, or Guy Oakes's *The Imaginary War*, all of which are cited by Krugler. In addition, *This Is Only a Test* offers three main contributions to the scholarship on civil defense: it presents probably the fullest analysis of 1950s proposals for defensive urban dispersal; it is the first case study of a single U.S. city's preparation for nuclear attack; and, that city being Washington D.C., Krugler's book has the advantage of discussing local physical planning solutions and interventions in the built environment that were effected on behalf of national civil defense goals.

Urban dispersal had been a longstanding debate among town planners when its concepts were repurposed by proponents of civil defense. Krugler carefully details the ideals and problems of dispersal, which was attractive to civil defense planners who invariably (at least in Krugler's period) assumed ground zero would be the downtown core. Dispersal of industries, homes, businesses, and in the case of Washington, government offices, would undermine the target value of the nation's cities. As Krugler shows, D.C. was a main focus of the dispersal movement for a number of reasons: it was a one-company town, it had no political representation anxious to defend its tax base, and it hosted numerous activities vital to national security (p. 30). It was also the home base at the time of defensive dispersal's strongest advocate, Tracy Augur, whose professional biography is here presented for the first time. Augur, working for a series of federal agencies in the late 1940s and 1950s, produced sweeping dispersal plans for D.C. that involved the establishment of new satellite communities associated with relocated government offices. If successful, this would have entailed a radical restructuring of America's urban landscape. If we look at today's North American cities, dispersal was successful in the long term, but it never occurred with the urgency of civil defense preparations. Dispersal's failure as a defensive strategy, Krugler shows, was for political, economic, and social reasons; that is, politicians were loathe to spend taxpayers' money to disperse and protect federal workers who themselves were resistant to moving to the countryside.

The failure to disperse 100,000 and more government employees to new satellite towns in Maryland and Virginia led directly to the creation of the more secretive, selective, and temporary Federal Relocation Arc. Krugler's is the first sustained, scholarly discussion of the Arc, removing it from the realm of pulp press and Internet speculation. The history of civil defense is usually a history of plans only. In contrast, the history of the Arc is particularly interesting because it details what the government actually built in preparation for war, how it managed and manned its emergency relocation sites, and how it established secure communications networks connecting the sites to each other, to the president, and to the American people over broadcast radio and television. Readers may be aware of the hardened federal government relocation sites of Mt. Weather and Raven Rock, or the Congressional bunker at the Green Brier resort in West Virginia, now a museum–Krugler gives detailed histories

of their construction and use. The Arc represents the main split between civil defense preparations for the capital and those for the city of Washington. As with other U.S. cities, Washington and its citizens received few infrastructural improvements in preparation for war. The purely propagandistic nature of most civil defense plans for citizens contrasts instructively with the highly secretive construction programs of the Arc, developed entirely for the purposes of "continuity of government."

Certain spaces of the Arc were designed as television backdrops for the presidential proclamations contained in the Emergency Action Papers (EAPs), a collection of legal documents kept always at hand that would amount to the declaration of martial law after a national disaster (pp. 156-162). Krugler could have made more of the continuity of government paradoxes that he describes. In the aftermath of nuclear war, the emergency broadcast of a presidential proclamation would have been reminiscent of the *requiremento* read in Spanish by the conquistadors, when they claimed the land from supposedly awed Native Americans: legal language read into a vacuum. Who would be listening to the president? Would they care or understand what he said? Or more broadly, what does it mean to plan for continuity of government over a citizenry that may no longer exist, or at the very least exists under rather different circumstances? One is struck that the EAPs would have made use of the frameworks of democratic institutions to delegitimize democracy itself.

Except for a brief section exploring the failure of civil defense with politicians and the public, the author seems uninterested in the broader questions of what all his facts mean for U.S. society and history, which is another way of saying that the book often bogs down in archival details. How are we to respond to an eight-page description of the White House bomb shelter renovation (pp. 68-75) that gives us the name of the general contractor and the budget of every item, down to the $1168.39 for folding chairs and tables? As an architectural historian, even I fail to see the point of reporting all this detail about construction unless there is some significance to the book's larger argument. Since Krugler's paragraphs, sections, and chapters often lack conclusions, he does not help us see the point, and many parts of the book seem like a listing of information.

Finally, I question the value of the book's "Postscript," which presents the history of U.S. civil defense from 1962-2001 in three pages, before offering five practical lessons for post-9/11 disaster planning in D.C. While every book on civil defense published after 2001 is liable to mention 9/11, given the forty-year gap following this book's climax, can it really offer practical lessons for contemporary urban security planners? The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), now in its twenty-eighth year of operations, has long outlasted the nascent civil defense organizations of the early Cold War; FEMA's history, yet to be written, is arguably of more practical pertinence to 9/11, and of course to Hurricane Katrina. Planning for security against the so-called war on terror is in almost no way similar to planning for sweeping nuclear devastation. Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security clearly has found it useful to conflate these two types of catastrophe in its representations to the public.

For subscribers to H-DC, this book provides a way of seeing the capital city through the eyes and anxieties and plans of the Cold War. It also serves as a particularly poignant example of the perverse split between the abstract political requirements of the capital and the everyday activities of the city's inhabitants. This split helps position the book as a local history with national implications, and vice versa. Though presented within a standard historiographic framework, this book is trove of facts and anecdotes for civil defense nerds such as myself, both inside and outside of academe. It may be too bogged down in facts for general undergraduate reading, and it may present too little interpretation of those facts to inspire graduate seminars, but *This Is Only a Test* remains a useful addition to the historical literature on civil defense.

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