

profile hearings, Holifield called for a massive shelter system, “the acid test of a national will to build an effective civil defense.” Unfortunately for Holifield, that will wasn’t there. In the 1955 run of Operation Alert, an annual exercise simulating nuclear attack on American cities, waving schoolchildren lined Eisenhower’s route to one of the “secret sites” to which the president and 15,000 other federal employees were to repair. Plans for rapid evacuations of cities were blasted as “so much moonshine” by no less a figure than New York planning boss Robert Moses—a true believer in even the most farfetched postwar commuting schemes.

Of course, it wasn’t just a case of practical failings. Philosophically, the notion of a mass shelter scheme had an enemy in Eisenhower, who thought it would signal that America had become a “garrison state”—unreliable to its allies in Europe and elsewhere. Ike shelved a report calling for expanded shelter construction.

With government uninterested, the private sector was left to build structures to sustain life through a nuclear winter. Pushed by the standard array of experts, ad men, and hucksters, the family shelter business took off in the early ‘60s, as tensions over Berlin rattled the world and as Defense Secretary Robert McNamara affirmed that the main responsibility for civil defense lay with heads of households themselves.

In the most domestic of eras, the backyard shelter—the hermetically sealed preserve of domesticity that breadwinner Dad built and homemaker Mom ran—remains a stirring metaphor. But the reasons few Americans took any steps whatsoever to build or find a fallout shelter ultimately say much more about cultural life under the threat of the bomb. Americans’ inaction was Eisenhower’s geopolitical question about the message sent by shelters, writ small.

From debates about whether a nation of shelter-owners would be more or less likely to stumble into war; to questions about whether a post-nuclear world would be worth surviving in; to all manner of moral dilemmas about whether to lock the shelter

door on family, friends, and strangers, a country newly cognizant of imminent death grappled with questions about the meaning of life. Their answer—aided, no doubt, by the high costs and dubious practicality of many shelters—was, more or less, “let’s just forget it,” a perfectly logical reaction to the situation.

In examining the complex reactions of theologians, legislators, and ordinary people to the lure of the fallout shelter, Rose shows how the stolid citizens of pre-Vietnam America don’t quite measure up to their security-at-all-costs modern stereotype. If the shelter of contemporary pop culture makes them and their suburban can look goofy, the fact that so few of them built the things makes them look a lot more interesting.

These days, of course, the stakes in our new debate over civil defense are much lower. And, precisely because the missile defense system George W. Bush hopes to build would be up above the country—and not just up above a specific family—the moral dilemmas are much less complicated. And yet one can’t help but wish that the debate over Bush’s own scheme, as a matter of policy, culture, or even technology, had just a little bit of the depth that’s evident in the history Rose has unearthed.

MICHAEL SHAFFER is an associate editor at U. S. News & World Report.

Dr. Strangelove’s Diary

By Andrew Cockburn

IN THE DECADES AFTER Hiroshima, most of the physicists who had conceived and built the first fission weapons and their thermonuclear successors had the grace to admit that there might be some drawbacks to their achievement. Many of these physicists lent their weight to lobbying for arms control, while the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, the house organ for such

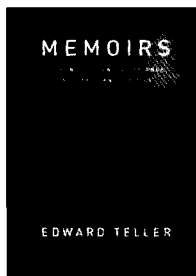
types, used as its banner the clever device of a clock set close to midnight to warn how close we were to extinction.

Edward Teller was always the exception among the original elite Los Alamos team. He really liked nuclear weapons, said so repeatedly, and resented prevailing prejudices against their further development and use. In an understandable paradox, he promoted the cause of his beloved monsters by arguing that they weren’t really all that dangerous, deriding descriptions of their apocalyptic consequences as “dangerous myth” and citing the “fact” that streetcars were running in Hiroshima within three days of the first

bomb—an utter canard (it actually took three months for mass transit to begin moving amid the nuclear ruins).

True to his beliefs, Teller argued forcefully for nonmilitary use of nuclear explosives in digging canals or gouging out harbors while energetically lobbying for ballistic missile defense (using nuclear weapons, of course) decades before he found a ready audience in Ronald Reagan. Some of his non-nuclear activities were hardly more appealing, most infamously his betrayal, through damning testimony, of his colleague and friend Robert Oppenheimer when the witch-hunters went after him in 1954—an act for which many old friends and colleagues never forgave him.

Now, at the age of 93, Teller has produced his memoirs. Not surprisingly, they present a kinder, gentler Teller, an engaging self-portrait of a brilliant gadfly who spent much of his life in the company of other geni, many of whom he had known since childhood. It is astonishing how the world was changed by a small group of Hungarians. During his last two years at school, for example, Teller met three young men who were, like him, from the Jewish community in Budapest: Eugene Wigner, John von



MEMOIRS:
A Twentieth Century
Journey in Science and
Politics
by Edward Teller
Perseus Books, \$35.00

Neumann, and Leo Szilard. They would talk after school about physics. Szilard later conceived the notion of an atomic chain reaction and went on to convince Roosevelt to start the American bomb project, while von Neumann and Wigner also played significant roles. Moving on to Germany and Denmark, Teller rubbed minds with other towering intellects, including Werner Heisenberg, Enrico Fermi, Hans Bethe, Lev Landau, and Niels Bohr.

These brilliant physicists were a close fraternity, and even Heisenberg, who remained in Hitler's Germany while the others fled, retained the affection of his peers. It was Teller himself who poisoned the punchbowl by his role, sparked by ambition and old jealousies, in the downfall of Oppenheimer.

Teller himself protests in his memoirs that he hadn't really meant to damage Oppenheimer and that his role in the security hearings had been a reluctant one. But he protests a little too much. Teller was a most helpful source for the FBI agents investigating the man who had directed Los Alamos on suspicion of spying for the Soviets. He also urged that Oppenheimer be charged with giving "consistently bad advice," curbing the development of the hydrogen bomb. Penning his memoirs almost half a century later, Teller recalls plenty of disobliging stories about his old colleague and friend, suggesting that the rancor has not died away.

The H-bomb was Teller's greatest love, and he pursued it with undeviating passion even during the war, to the irritation of colleagues who were still trying to figure out how to make an A-bomb work. (I could never understand why they kept him around.) Hence his chagrin at the fact that the conceptual breakthrough that made the (American) thermonuclear weapon possible has always been attributed to him and Stanislaw Ulam jointly. "What's this?" he exclaimed when shown the patent application for the H-bomb, which Ulam had already signed. "I am the inventor of the hydrogen bomb." His peevishness has evident-

ly not died away, given his painstaking efforts in these pages to demonstrate that Ulam does not deserve any real credit for this dubious achievement.

Today, in his semidotage, Teller must be a happy man. Most of the peers who so despised him for his actions in the Oppenheimer affair are long dead. The communist system that he hated with such unbridled passion has been utterly vanquished, but without extinguishing the market for some of his favorite weapons concepts. And George W. Bush is ready to pour money into the latest incarnation of ballistic missile defense, an idea no more feasible today than it was when Teller first started talking about it back in the 1950s.

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Absolut History

By Markos T. Kounalakis

MUTUALLY ASSURED HEADLINES was the operational doctrine of newspapers during the height of the outwardly cool, yet constantly simmering, conflict between Moscow and Washington that ended nearly a decade ago. Since that time, Russian news has slowly, yet steadily, migrated from Page 1 to the business sections of American dailies.

Chandra replaced Chechnya in the news hole as the Soviet superpower broke down from a threatening nuclear adversary to a diminished (though nuclear-armed) Russian state. The prevailing news trend gives the popular impression that Russia is on the irreversible—if somewhat rocky—road to a functioning market economy and electoral democracy.

Two new books chart that progress and fill in the missing context and color of the often ignored, but dramatic story born in revolution 10 summers ago. *Russia's Unfinished Revolution* by Michael McFaul and *Casino Moscow* by Matthew Brzezinski are unintentionally complementary volumes.

McFaul gives an erudite and well-documented history of the last 15 years, from Gorbachev to Putin. Brzezinski's personal anecdotes and journalistic observations flesh out McFaul's solid outline.

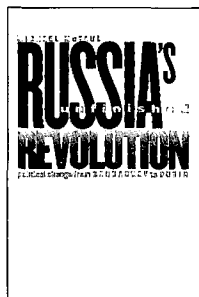
Most of us lack the power of President George W. Bush to divine instantly a Russian leader's soul and

intentions, so a historical review of how Russia got to Putin is helpful in guessing its future moves. McFaul starts his story with Gorbachev, the once all-powerful, all-controlling Soviet leader who introduced perestroika and glasnost into a system where "simultaneous political and economic change had a logic of their own that eventually could not be controlled." The details of these developments do not get lost in McFaul's telling of the story, and his step-by-step analysis of political and electoral events reinforces their significance.

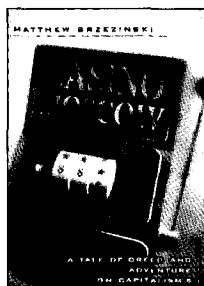
McFaul deftly takes us through the failed first republic that culminated in the shelling of the Russian White House and the establishment of a new political order in 1993—what he refers to as the second Russian republic. The result is a country where, despite the many imperfections of its electoral democracy, leaders are voted in and the law has a basis in the constitution.

The author, a political science professor at Stanford

and a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, came to study the



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