

Cold War, hot bunkers

*Underground Structures of the Cold War:
The World Below.*

Paul Ozorak

Barnsley (UK): Pen & Sword Books, 2012. xx + 364 pp.

Illustrated, notes, references, index, £25.00.

It was the 'Spies for Peace' pamphlet, *Danger! Official Secret RSG6*, that was distributed on the 1963 Aldermaston March, and mailed to the media (some 4000 copies in total were printed), that first alerted us slumbering public that if we weren't going to survive a nuclear war, the government certainly was. Vast underground bunkers had been built up and down the country during the Cold War to ensure the state would survive even if its subjects didn't. A big secret had been kept for nearly twenty years.

Well, it wasn't some insider whistle-blower who let this cat out of the bag: it was Nicolas Walter and the far left Solidarity group (I should be more precise here: Nick Walter was an anarchist, and, if I remember correctly, Solidarity was anarcho-syndicalist). What else was out there? Members of CND and the Committee of 100 were ever vigilant for suspicious constructions, and there were many. Investigations into these Cold War contingency structures produced Peter Laurie's *Beneath the City Streets: A Private Enquiry into the Nuclear Preoccupations of Government* (1970) and culminated, it would be fair to say, with Duncan Campbell's *War Plan UK: The Truth about Civil Defence in Britain* (1982).

Since then many of these bunkers have been declared obsolete and closed down or sold off to private companies and used for document storage or computer hubs; or even, in one case, opened as a tourist attraction.

The literature on the subject has steadily grown, whether on the structures themselves or the policies behind them: for example, English Heritage's *Cold War: Building for Nuclear Confrontation 1946-89* (2005) and Peter Hennessy's

The Secret State: Preparing for the Worst 1945-2010 (2010). A special mention should be made of two volumes by Nick McCamley, *Secret Underground Cities: an Account of Some of Britain's Subterranean Defence, Factory and Storage Sites in the Second World War* (2000) that details the WW2 installations out of which the Cold War bunkers would arise, and *Cold War Secret Nuclear Bunkers: The Passive Defence of the Western World During the Cold War* (2007), that between them leave little more to be said.

If we have a pretty fair idea of what was going on in the UK, what of other countries? Ozorak in *Underground Structures of the Cold War* has produced a detailed and comprehensive account, in alphabetical order, of some 64 countries starting with Afghanistan and ending with Vietnam, via such unlikely suspects as Lesotho, Panama, and Qatar which, numerically, demonstrates if nothing else how good the Cold War was for Big Business generally, and the construction industries particularly. However, no entry for Australia. How come? Did they think the money would be better spent on Fosters, or what?

Some of the entries are slim but are still revealing. This is the entry on Panama in its entirety:

'The US Army built a bunker in Ancon Hill in the Quarry Heights section of Panama City. It was used by US Southern Command, and included an intelligence centre. Other underground bases include tunnels at two anti-aircraft posts and a bunker at Gordo Hill between Paraiso and Gamboa which were built during the Second World War.'

Not much escapes Ozorak.

Sections on the United Kingdom and the United States run to, respectively, around 30 pages and 90 pages, both of which contain a lot of information that is new to this writer. There are also lengthy sections on Canada, France, and Germany, and Ozorak (the name does sound like an acronym) has done a skilful job on researching and collating information on Russia and its former satellites.

There are several appendices of lists that Cold War anoraks will find of interest: lists of nuclear storage sites in Russia, 'Earth-covered Ammunition Bunkers in the United Kingdom' and Nike missile launch sites; while Appendix L is 'Examples of Cover Organisations throughout the World' and details about forty instances. Or how about, Appendix N, 'East German Ministry of State Security Emergency Operations Bunkers'?

For a one volume, global round-up of Cold War detritus this will surely stand for some time as the first port of call for any serious researcher. The work is richly illustrated. I haven't counted the number, but according to the jacket there are over 170 illustrations. However, there is a serious failing in the work. The 'Notes' are just that, notes not references; while the 'References' should more rightly be termed a bibliography, which lists upwards of 360 items and is neither annotated or linked to the country entries. So, sources are not provided, and this does flaw the book.

The publishers have done a fine job with the typography, paper and printing; and, surprisingly, it is printed not in China, but in the UK, a bit of a rarity these days.

Anthony Frewin

Anthony Frewin is a screenwriter.