H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

**Philip Nash**. *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy and the Jupiters, 1957-1963.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. xvi + 231 pp. $18.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8078-4647-6; $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-2339-2.

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**Published on** H-Pol (October, 2000)

**Missiles, Credibility, and Meaningful Encounters with History**

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In a previous life as a high school history teacher, I often showed students the film *The Missiles of October* as part of their unit on the Cuban Missile Crisis. In one scene in the movie, President Kennedy (played by William Devane) screams incredulously about the many times he previously had ordered U.S. missiles out of Turkey, and he complains that the failure to follow through on his numerous requests put the United States in the embarrassing position of potentially trading removal of the U.S. missiles in Turkey for removal of Soviet missiles in Cuba. I couldn't help but think of this scene when reading Philip Nash's *The Other Missiles of October*, for readers of this impressive piece of scholarship will be hard-pressed to believe that President Kennedy ever ordered U.S. Jupiter missiles out of Turkey prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

They will be equally challenged to accept the argument, promoted by the U.S. government and reinforced in much historical scholarship, that the United States did not agree to remove the missiles from Turkey as part of the negotiations aimed at ending the October 1962 crisis in Cuba. Nash impressively refutes these interpretations of events in six substantive chapters that add to our knowledge not only of the Cuban Missile Crisis itself but, more importantly, events leading up to and resulting from that watershed event.

Nash begins his study not with John Kennedy but with Dwight Eisenhower. For a variety of reasons, most notably the October 1957 Soviet launching of Sputnik, the Eisenhower administration in late 1957 offered its NATO allies intermediate range ballistic missiles. However, not all of the allies accepted the IRBM offer as quickly and as graciously as Eisenhower had hoped. Domestic politics, issues of control, fear of Soviet reprisals, and in some cases fierce nationalism, led many nations to reject the missiles. President Eisenhower therefore was left "trying to dump them on our allies" (p. 34). After a twenty-two month long U.S. search, a less than eager Italy joined an enthusiastic Turkey in late 1959 in signing agreements to have the Jupiters located in their nations. The U.S. Air Force then took on the task of working out the details of deployment.

President Eisenhower, meanwhile, besieged by criticisms from Congress, defense journalists, and nuclear analysts who argued that the missiles were obsolescent and provocative, privately "took an increasingly dim view of the IRBMs" (p. 89) but publicly praised them as a valuable part of U.S. national security. He then passed the torch of responsibility to John Kennedy, who, although faced with the same questions about the IRBMs which had been raised in the Eisenhower administration, in the end followed his predecessor in supporting the missiles' deployment. By March 1962, thirty Jupiters in Italy and fifteen in Turkey "stood ready, pointed at the sky" (p. 1).

When Nash turns to the Kennedy administration, he focuses particular attention on the similarities between the U.S. missiles in Turkey and the Soviet missiles in Cuba, including the oft-repeated argument that the U.S. missiles were defensive while the Soviets' were offensive. He notes that administration officials in private conversations accepted the accuracy of the analogy (and the weakness of the offensive-defensive distinction), but that publicly they presented a series of rationales designed to subvert the truth. Their denials, Nash writes, "do not stand up to scrutiny" (p. 123). Thus, when the Soviets

suggested a trade of the missiles in Turkey for the missiles in Cuba, Kennedy accepted the necessity, and the inevitability, of the proposal; he became, in fact, the "leading advocate of a trade" (p. 144). However, Kennedy had to accomplish the feat without leaving a paper trail that might indicate weakness on his part, and without upsetting both the American public and the few allies, notably Turkey, who would object to removal of the missiles. Remarkably, removing the missiles turned out to be easier than deploying them, and they were in fact out of both Italy and Turkey by April 1963.

John Kennedy's willingness to pursue the U.S.-Soviet trade strikes Nash as one of the few positive decisions made at a time when presidential "leadership was in short supply" (p. 175). *The Other Missiles of October* is very much a study of such leadership, but it is also a study that reveals serious flaws in the ways that presidents and their advisors engage in the decision-making process. If Nash is correct, and I suspect that he is, both Eisenhower and Kennedy acted without first thinking through the consequences of their actions. They asked the hard questions only when it was too late and therefore were forced to live with policies which they might have rejected, or at least revised, had they done their homework more thoroughly. Their reluctance to do this initial homework can perhaps be explained by the immediacy of the Cold War, but their unwillingness to change direction once policy was set is best explained, as Nash effectively argues, by the fear of losing credibility.

Credibility, in fact, lies at the heart of this well-told tale, as it does with so many other events in recent American history, particularly United States involvement in Vietnam. The parallels with Vietnam are striking. Eisenhower and Kennedy's public support for the Jupiters, when they personally had serious reservations about their usefulness, reminds students of the Vietnam War of the U.S. government's open support for Ngo Dinh Diem when, even as early as the mid-1950s, administration officials privately agonized over his numerous failings. The hypocrisy evident in public statements differentiating between the offensive and defensive nature of Soviet and U.S. missiles when officials privately denied the distinction mirrors a host of similarly mendacious announcements during the Vietnam War, not the least of which were public pronouncements denying any degree of responsibility for the Gulf of Tonkin incident or claiming to have respected the territorial integrity of Cambodia prior to the United States' 1970 "incursion" into that nation. John McNaughton, who ironically was charged with seeing that the Jupiters were proficiently but quietly removed from Turkey, later noted, in a memo which echoes Nash's credibility argument with the IRBMs, that the overwhelming majority of the U.S. effort in Vietnam was designed not to defeat communism but for the United States to "save face."

While contributing to an increased understanding of the critical role played by credibility in U.S. policy making, *The Other Missiles of October* makes at least two other meaningful contributions to the field of U.S. foreign relations. By examining the domestic debates carried on in NATO nations over the deployment of the Jupiters, Nash takes a small step in answering critics who in recent years have decried the failure of U.S. scholars to step outside national boundaries in examining U.S. relations with the rest of the world. In addition, Nash's description of John Kennedy's successful efforts to keep knowledge of the U.S.-Soviet missile trade within increasingly smaller circles of advisors, with only those in the innermost circle knowing the whole truth, serves as a frighteningly accurate example of what J. Garry Clifford has termed the "bureaucratic politics" approach to the study of foreign relations.

Nash accomplished much of value in dissecting the story of the "other" missiles of October, but he left some questions unanswered. Readers will not come away from the book understanding the doubts Nash claims both Eisenhower and Kennedy had about the efficacy of the Jupiters. While he repeatedly refers to their fears about the missiles' obsolescence, Nash fails to adequately explain the presidents' specific concerns. Did the missiles lag behind in terms of technology? Were they simply too old? Was there something special about the next generation of weapons?

There may be obvious answers to these questions, and in asking them I may be begging Nash to write a book that goes beyond his original intent. But assuming that readers understand the changing nature of technology without making at least a token pass at explaining the historical context of weapons production weakens an otherwise powerful critique, particularly when Eisenhower's and Kennedy's doubts about the Jupiters were so central to Nash's thesis of a lack of presidential leadership. Along these same lines, *The Other Missiles of October* also leaves this reader asking some questions about the chronology of events. If Sputnik was the key to understanding American policy, why did IRBM production begin in 1955, two years before Sputnik? And what was happening between 1945 and 1955 in terms of missile development? Were there any links between 1945 and 1957 that might help us understand later events? I again may be asking Nash to answer questions he believes are out-

side the parameters of this particular study, but I think the answers to these questions would make *The Other Missiles of October* an even more impressive addition to our understanding of Cold War events.

I used to tell my high school students, and I now repeat the claim for all of my university students, that the point of studying history is not to identify definitive answers to their questions. In fact, when students leave a history classroom they should do so with more questions than when they first walked in; that is the sign of a successful encounter with history. The next time I have the opportunity to teach about the Cuban Missile Crisis, I intend to show students the William Devane version of events and require them as well to read Philip Nash's *The Other Missiles of October*. What happens after that is anyone's guess, but I suspect the combination will provide the basis for a meaningful encounter with history.

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**Citation**: Bruce E. Field. Review of Nash, Philip, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy and the Jupiters, 1957-1963* and Philip Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Jupiters, 1957-1963*. H-Pol, H-Net Reviews. October, 2000.
**URL**: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=4573

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