

1969

## Thirteen Days: a Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis

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public opinion leadership by the President. Gauging public opinion remains a shaky science at best, however, and the President still must depend upon intuition and faith in himself in formulating foreign policy. Perhaps most important is the conclusion that it is difficult to generate active support for either subtle or pedestrian policies, such as long-range economic assistance programs; but, at the same time, vocal dissenters find it much easier today to create the impression of a public opposed to such policies. The author suggests that the President must develop more effective means of communication to maintain the support of a population that is becoming better educated and more sophisticated, or he risks being forced into a policy of crisis publicity which exaggerates crises or potential benefits in order to mold public opinion and maintain public support.

While the bibliography is not all-inclusive, the book is extensively footnoted. It is a well-presented and thoroughgoing analysis of the Presidential role in early American foreign policy, and it merits the attention of any researcher in that field. The volume must be regarded as an essential reference by anyone studying the impact of public opinion on foreign policy formulation.

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Kennedy, Robert F. *Thirteen Days: a Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York: Norton, 1969. 224p.

During the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, the world was probably in more immediate danger of a major nuclear war than ever before or since. *Thirteen Days* is Robert F. Kennedy's personal account of what went on in the high councils of government during that crisis. It is a book that should be read by all those concerned with the effective and judicious use of force, and that includes—or should include—everybody.

The United States had two overriding objectives during the Cuban missile crisis: to avoid a major war with the Soviet Union and to get the Soviet offensive missiles out of Cuba. Despite the fact that withdrawal of the missiles by the Soviet Union involved a virtually unprecedented reversal of policy and loss of face by a major power, both U.S. objectives were achieved in full—and at the cost of but one American life. Most observers count this as one of the most significant successes of U.S. foreign policy—and as such it is a case worthy of careful study.

Disturbing to this reviewer, as a professional military officer, is that, as recounted by Kennedy, at every decision point the military advisers recommended more violent and potentially hazardous courses of action than those finally adopted. He states that President Kennedy

... was distressed that the representatives with whom he met, with the notable exception of General Taylor, seemed to give so little consideration to the implications of steps they suggested. They seemed always to assume that the Russians and the Cubans would not respond or, if they did, that a war was in our national interest. . . . President Kennedy was disturbed by this inability to look beyond the limited military field.

As a case study, *Thirteen Days* sometimes suffers from Kennedy's personal and perhaps somewhat biased point of view, but the immediacy and authority of the account more than compensate. Of added value is a documentary annex of photographs and communications.

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Liska, George. *War and Order*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968. 115p.