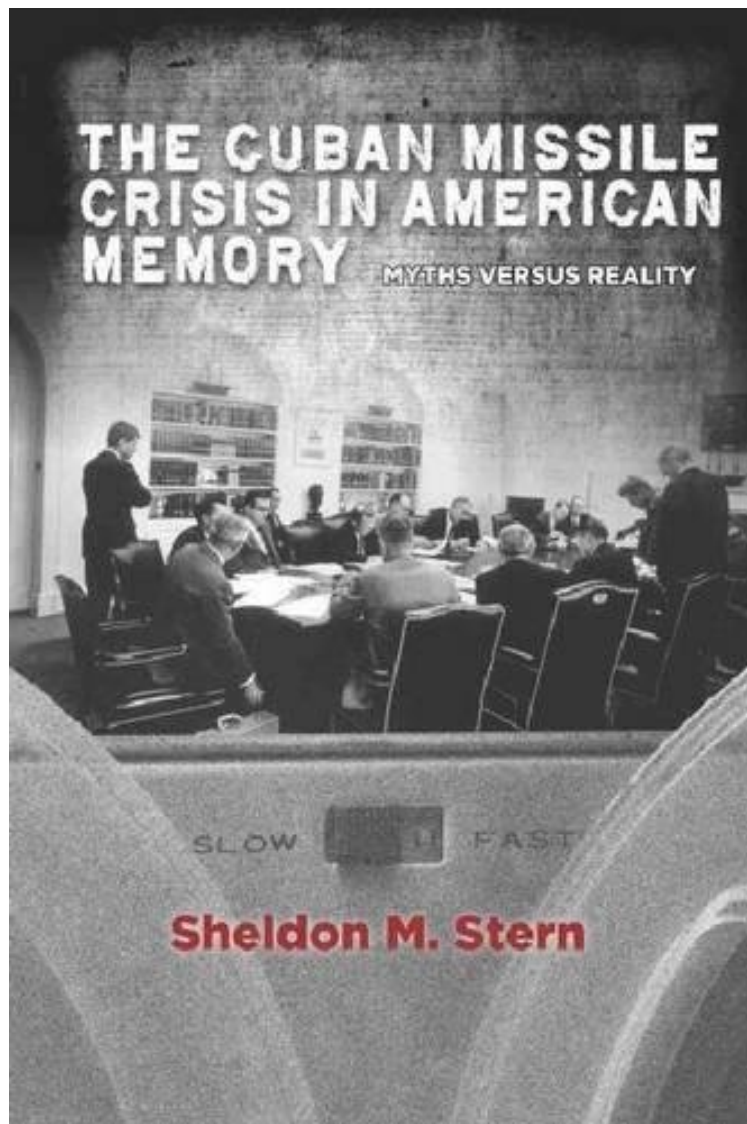


[Free download] The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myths versus Reality (Stanford Nuclear Age Series)

The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myths versus Reality (Stanford Nuclear Age Series)

Sheldon M. Stern

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Sheldon M. Stern : The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myths versus Reality (Stanford Nuclear Age Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myths versus Reality (Stanford Nuclear Age Series):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Revelations from President Kennedy's secret tapes show how the

Cuban Missile Crisis was really resolved
By Brad Rockwell
This is one of the most remarkable books of all time. Not only does the author show how close to nuclear war the US and Soviet Union were, but through the tapes of almost all the meetings of President Kennedy and his advisors shows that JFK was the only sane one of the bunch and single-handedly prevented an escalation that likely would have triggered a nuclear war. The reliance of this author on the tapes of the discussions creates an accuracy that is in sharp contrast to all the Camelot mythmakers like Ted Sorensen who survived JFK and sought to burnish their own reputations and that of Robert Kennedy by peddling falsehoods about their own moral stands and caution during the crisis. Among the authors that Stern's book shows to have been misled is Robert Caro, the most important biographer of Lyndon Johnson. In Caro's recent book, *Passage of Power*, he repeats the post-hoc stories that are shown to be lies by the Stern book and the Kennedy tapes. On page 221 for example, Caro reports that everyone agreed with Dean Rusk's proposal to resolve the crisis by offering a private trade of Soviet withdrawal of missiles in Cuba in exchange for US removal of missiles in Turkey. Yet the transcripts show that RFK opposed this offer, even after he was forced to make it by his brother. On page 210 Caro portrays RFK as measured, moderate, and someone who was focused on the moral questions at stake. Caro says that RFK was concerned with the moral implications of a strike against Cuba being a Pearl Harbor in reverse. All of this is untrue. RFK (along with Curtis Le May) was the most hawkish of the Presidents advisers; in the beginning, RFK advocated a full scale invasion of Cuba immediately after Joint Chiefs of Staff Maxwell Taylor warned against such an invasion. Even after the President and the majority had agreed on a blockade rather than an invasion or air strike, RFK pressed for an invasion as "the last chance we will have to destroy Castro." RFK carelessly insisted that the Soviet's would not retaliate with nuclear weapons and argued "we should just get into it, and get it over with and take our losses if [Kruschev] wants to get into a war over this...." There is nothing in the tapes of anyone except the President expressly being influenced in choices by civilian casualties. The President acknowledged that the Cuban missiles had no more technical ability to kill Americans than other Soviet missiles placed around the world. RFK's expressed reference to Pearl Harbor was not a moral concern but a concern of how an invasion might be perceived by the rest of the world. Repeatedly, RFK advocated the creation of a false pretext to justify an invasion. In the beginning he advocated using a Berlin crisis as an excuse to invade Cuba. Later, after the embargo had been agreed to, RFK suggested using the Guantanamo base to stage an incident that would be a pretext for invasion, in his words: "You know, sink the Maine again or something.!" As the crisis was close to resolution, RFK lamented: "I'd like to take Cuba back. That would be nice." The central fact that RFK, the President, LBJ and other decision-makers were willing to risk nuclear war and catastrophic civilian losses in efforts to stop the Soviets from protecting their ally Cuba against a US invasion goes unmentioned by Caro. In contrast, the tapes as revealed by Sheldon Stern reveal President Kennedy to be the one exhibiting moral reasoning. The tapes show President Kennedy saying: "It doesn't make any difference if you get blown up by an ICBM flying from the Soviet Union or one that was ninety miles away. Geography doesn't mean that much After all this is a political struggle as much as military." 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.
The Cuban Missile Crisis by Sheldon Stern
By B. Klein
The author has first hand knowledge of what was on the ExCom tapes that was made by President Kennedy. He did a great job of revealing the factual story of what happened between the JCS, the ExCom and others that played a role in the decision making process that took place during the Cuban Missile Crisis. I found this book to be very informative and gave a clear picture of what really happened during that time as opposed to movies and other documentaries that I have seen. The author also added a part of the book that looked at "what if" things had gone differently, which I found interesting and I'm glad it didn't happen. I was thirteen at that time and if things had gone differently, I probably would not have lived to be fourteen or to write this review. I think the way President Kennedy handled this crisis was an example of his own Profile in Courage. If you are interested in this era in history indulge yourself and read this book.
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.
A must-read
By Susan C
While this book covers the same territory (the tapes JFK made during the Cuban Missile Crisis) over and over, from different angles (covering the role of each of the most important figures), it is an incredible piece of myth-busting (not the Kennedy myth--he comes off pretty well), and contains some real revelations--straight from the horses' mouths--about what actually took place while we were all loading supplies into our fallout shelters. It really should be read by anyone who has seen the U.S. go through a very public crisis and who thinks he knows how things went.

This book exposes the misconceptions, half-truths, and outright lies that have shaped the still dominant but largely mythical version of what happened in the White House during those harrowing two weeks of secret Cuban missile crisis deliberations. A half-century after the event it is surely time to demonstrate, once and for all, that RFK's Thirteen Days and the personal memoirs of other ExComm members cannot be taken seriously as historically accurate accounts of the ExComm meetings.

"[Stern's] new book marshals irrefutable evidence to succinctly demolish the mythic version of the crisis . . . Reached through sober analysis." (Benjamin Schwarz *The Atlantic*)
"The latest addition to the outstanding Stanford Nuclear Age series . . . Informed and informative, *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myths versus Reality* is a

seminal work of impressive scholarship and a highly recommended addition to academic library 20th Century American History reference collections in general, and 'U.S. – Soviet Union Cold War Studies' supplemental reading lists in particular." (James A. Cox *The Midwest Book*) "In Stern's judgment, President Kennedy displayed leadership, remaining calm during the crisis and staring down his belligerent civilian advisers and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. . . Recommended." (S. G. Rabe *CHOICE*) "Stern is not alone in questioning the precision of the transcripts offered, but he has made the most painstaking attempt to clarify what was really said and done." (Alice George *Journal of American History*) "Stern's book is a great example of how much is being discovered and revised regarding the Cold War and its major events as more archival sources are declassified. This work is a must read for any scholar of the Cuban missile crisis or the Kennedy administration. It provides a complicated and broad understanding of both the crisis and the Kennedy presidency." (Javan D. Frazier *H-War*) "The Cuban missile crisis may be the most thoroughly documented yet grossly misunderstood episode in Cold War history, and the value of Sheldon Stern's splendid book is that it punctures the myths and unearths the truth so compellingly, drawing on irrefutable evidence, that you'll never think about the crisis or about JFK and his 'best and brightest' advisers in the same way again." (Fred Kaplan *Slate's "War Stories"* columnist; author of *1959* and *The Wizards of Armageddon*) "It has taken nearly 50 years to get a history of the Cuban missile crisis as it really was, as opposed to how it was initially (and for many decades) managed and manipulated by the Kennedy inner circle as well as gullible journalists and historians. For that we have Sheldon M. Stern to thank." (Max Holland *Contributing Editor, The Nation*, and *Editor, washingtondecoded.com*) "Timed for the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Stern. . . exposes myths about the crisis. [He] provides an important interpretation grounded in careful research." (Karl Helicher *Library Journal*) "The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory offers a compelling reassessment of [the] events [of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis]. Using tapes of ExComm meetings (the ad hoc group formed to meet the crisis), Stern challenges much of the received wisdom. In particular, he rejects Robert F. Kennedy's dovish self-portrayal in *Thirteen Days* (1969), finding instead a consistent hardliner who, for instance, opposed an American naval blockade in favor of air strikes." (James Clyde Sellman *Colloquy*) "For nearly half a century national security decision makers have relied on three lessons derived inappropriately from the Cuban missile crisis: success depends on (1) the threat of superior force, (2) toughness and inflexibility, and (3) the use of a small ad hoc group like the ExComm to advise the President. Sheldon Stern's trenchant analysis, based on the most careful and exacting review to date of the ExComm's recorded conversations, turns the three traditional missile crisis lessons on their head. He effectively demonstrates that the outcome depended on President Kennedy's repeated refusal to use or threaten to use force, and on his persistent search for a compromise that could end the stand-off peacefully. Most important, Stern highlights that the ExComm did not provide Kennedy with the well-considered advice he supposedly used to avoid war, but instead Kennedy directed its discussions towards the conclusions he sought. This is a clearly written, timely, and significant contribution to our understanding of the Cuban missile crisis." (Philip Brenner *American University*) About the Author Sheldon M. Stern taught U.S. history at the college level for more than a decade before becoming historian at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, Massachusetts from 1977 to 2000. He was the first non-member of the ExComm, as well as the first historian, to listen to and evaluate all the secret White House tape recordings made during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. Stern is the author of *Averting the Final Failure: John F. Kennedy and the Secret Cuban Missile Crisis Meetings* (2003), and *The Week the World Stood Still: Inside the Secret Cuban Missile Crisis* (2005), both in the Stanford University Press *Nuclear Age Series*.