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Wayne Biddle, *Dark Side of the Moon: Wernher von Braun, the Third Reich, and the Space Race*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2009. xix + 220 pp. \$25.95.

Reviewed by Michael J. Neufeld, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution

As the author of a recent biography of Wernher von Braun (*Von Braun: Dreamer of Space, Engineer of War*, 2007), and as someone who has known Wayne Biddle since he was a fellow at my museum in the mid-1990s, I cannot review this book without explaining from the outset my somewhat complicated relationship with its author. I am thanked in the acknowledgments for assisting him during his fellowship, when he began working on the book. He also cites some of my work in his endnotes and bibliography. But after he left the museum in 1995 and I began working on a biography again in 1997 (I started for the first time in 1987 and then decided to write a book on the German rocket program), we ended up in something of an undeclared race to publish our von Braun books. Although both of us were and are critical of von Braun for his involvement with the Nazis and the crimes related to the V-2 rocket program, I knew that he took a harsher view than my own. I always figured, however, that there was room for a book on that end of the spectrum, which until recently was dominated by hero-worship.

Dark Side of the Moon does not pretend to offer a full-length biography. It is essentially an essay with only 152 pages of actual text, focusing on the Nazi question and Biddle's views of von Braun's culpability and moral inadequacy. Biddle explains in his introduction that he stops in the late 1950s because von Braun after the launch of *Sputnik I* "became all about hardware so to speak. Other writers have brought him almost day-by-day through Project Apollo in the 1970s, but I find that the story gets fetishistic then and of interest mostly to buffs" (p. xii)—which has the effect of eliminating some of the rocket engineer's most important technical accomplishments. In fact, everything after 1945 seems to be an afterthought, reduced to an epilogue largely about von Braun's immigration to the United States under Projects Overcast and Paperclip and the attendant whitewashing or suppression of his record as a Nazi Party member and SS officer involved in concentration-camp labor.

Given the relatively few pages Biddle devotes to his subject, he makes an interesting choice to spend nearly thirty of them on family history, notably the career of von Braun's father. Biddle makes extensive and intriguing use of the father's primarily political memoir (Magnus von Braun, Sr. briefly held high German government posts during World War I and at the end of the Weimar Republic). However, this has the effect of making Wernher's appearance seem belated in the narrative, although it does provide context for the ease with which he moved into working for the Reichswehr and the Nazi regime. Because Biddle focuses on von Braun's work for the Nazis, the book treats German technical accomplishments superficially and with a slightly snide undertone. Biddle tries to find ways to chip away at the rocket engineer's reputation as a spaceflight obsessive and as a brilliant manager and to make him into a pure opportunist, but this effort is ultimately unpersuasive. Although Biddle scores some hits on

von Braun's willing collaboration with the Nazis, his handling of the evidence surrounding the engineer's responsibility for the murderous use of concentration-camp labor in the V-2 production program is selective. He quotes at length two French survivor testimonials that are dubious as evidence (both may be cases of mistaken identity, confusing Wernher with his younger brother Magnus, Jr.) and consigns to a passing mention in a footnote the one prisoner testimonial favorable to von Braun. He lists my own detailed article on these questions in the bibliography but fails to argue with my positions in the text or the endnotes, depriving readers of a complete and fair discussion of the book's central question: von Braun's guilt. Biddle waits until the epilogue to discuss the rocket engineer's ten-day imprisonment by the Gestapo in 1944, rather than treating it in context. This arrest has always been inconvenient to hardcore von Braun critics, just as his Nazi record has been inconvenient to his hero-worshippers.

Biddle's book is smoothly written for the wider public for whom it is primarily intended. Scholars may find *Dark Side of the Moon* a stimulating alternative view of von Braun's relationship with Nazism. But Biddle's research reflects little originality; almost everything in this book has already appeared elsewhere. And for readers of this journal, it is noteworthy that the Cold War American half of von Braun's life is scarcely treated at all.



Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones, *Reagan at Westminster: Foreshadowing the End of the Cold War*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010. 160 pp. \$19.95.

Reviewed by H. H. Gaffney, CNA Corporation (former official in the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense, 1962–1990)

This book is a contribution to the Library of Presidential Rhetoric. It reprints in numbered paragraphs (52 in all) the speech of President Ronald Reagan on 8 June 1982 to members of the British parliament at the Royal Gallery in Westminster. As background it provides a chapter on the evolution of U.S. Cold War policy and rhetoric, followed by a detailed exposition of the drafting of the speech, including the parts done by Reagan himself (15 percent of the speech). The authors analyze the speech as a matter of “ultimate definition and dialectical engagement,” describe the reactions to it at the time, and end with comments on its importance.

The contribution of the book lies first in its presentation of the speech itself and then in its account of the drafting process—which, for students of how senior U.S. officials and their staffs produce high-level statements of U.S. policy, is exemplary in its details. The most senior officials, and especially the president, rely heavily on their staffs to gauge their thoughts, reflect the consensus of their administration, and provide them with sufficient opportunities to massage the near-final drafts. The process can be difficult, as the authors scrupulously report. Competition rages to get favored