

Matthew Brzezinski. *Red Moon Rising: Sputnik and the Hidden Rivalries That Ignited the Space Age*. New York: Henry Holt, 2007. Pp. 322. Paper \$23.00.

In *Red Moon Rising*, Matthew Brzezinski, former Moscow correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* and contributing writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, argues that the Soviet launch of the first satellite, Sputnik, had lasting consequences on U.S. politics by establishing the U.S.S.R. as a militarily superior power to the United States. Having shocked the world with this technological victory, the Soviet Union won immense international acclaim and gained a new and powerful weapon for its aging Cold War arsenal, while U.S. President Eisenhower's popularity sank at home and American global confidence shrank.

Brzezinski organizes his narrative history into eleven chapters, beginning with the post-war "brain drain" of Nazi Germany by the United States and the U.S.S.R. This emigration resulted in the United States bulk acquisition of many top German scientists, including rocket engineer Wernher von Braun, architect of the infamous V-2 missile program and one of the book's primary characters. Left to collect the literal scraps of Germany's foray into advanced rocketry, the Soviets needed a mind as brilliant as von Braun's if they wished to compete with the U.S. Here the book shifts focus to Sergei Korolev, lead rocket engineer for the Soviet Union during the 1950s and '60s, and Soviet First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev, as they oversaw the development and launch of Sputnik. Brzezinski then cuts to the Soviet battle to reach low Earth orbit and the equally frantic American response. By the time Sputnik launched on 4 October 1957, there was a technology gap between the two powers that left the United States at an uncomfortable disadvantage. A perceived "arms deficit" galvanized the American public to demand immediate action and a reworking of the federal government's defense policy. This ultimately resulted in the decision to compete for the Moon, the next step in the so-called "Space Race."

Red Moon Rising's biggest scholarly contribution is the thesis that before Sputnik, the United States government and its citizenry did not see the Soviet Union as a military threat; after Sputnik, Brzezinski argues, Americans were both afraid of this new technology and angered that their government had failed to develop it first. This dynamic is best covered in the last two chapters of the book and is important to understanding a fundamental shift in American politics from complacent neglect of the U.S.S.R.—which was perceived as a backwater country prior to Sputnik—to active engagement with a now-equal superpower. Relying heavily on newspapers, official government documents, memoirs, interviews, and other biographical sources, Brzezinski constructs his narrative of the "hidden rivalries" of the space race.

The vivacity and simplicity of Brzezinski's prose makes the book accessible to general readers. At the same time the embellishment of certain details for which there are unlikely to have been eyewitness sources, results in the oversimplification of historical figures. For example, the "hawkish" John Foster Dulles, U.S. Secretary of State under Eisenhower, can appear far too antagonistic; his characterization borders on parody. While Brzezinski may have intended this style for dramatic effect, it is sure to irritate some readers. Nevertheless, the book is a history full of depth, color, and great insights into some of the major players of the Space Race and their tremendous contributions to modern space exploration. *Red Moon Rising* is highly recommended for space enthusiasts and those interested in Cold War era politics.

Daniel Garcia