

12/18/74

Mr. AV Westin
American Broadcasting Company
New York City, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Westin,

In advance of tonight's showing of The Nisales of October I write to ask for a copy of the script if there are any spaces for two purposes possible use in a book on this subject researched in 1965 that I hope to get back to soon; and to leave as part of an archive, where all my files will be at some future time.

It is good that important events be dramatized for popular comprehension. I regret very much that ABC did not go for my own proposal along this line beginning this past summer. If it did not reach your personal attention during the decision-making, I enclose the only descriptive material I have on it.

Government just does not function as schools teach it. One of the more effective ways of telling it to the people as it is is by drama. The mass means of this, of course, is TV. Even if not from my work, which I do regret, I hope there is more of it.

In early 1971 I was in touch with your office about the TV possibilities of my book then appearing, Frame-Up/ The Martin Luther King/James Earl Ray Case. I was referred to the Washington bureau, where interest seems to have ended at low levels. I believe this case lends itself to both documentary and dramatic treatment and that it also deals with how an aspect of government, the administration of justice, works. Beginning with that book Ray is finally in the courts in his effort to get a trial. I am his investigator. Most of the legal work, which includes establishing an important precedent, has been done by my colleagues in the new book. It is his first real case, a situation of natural drama when among his many adversaries is the country's most famous criminal lawyer, Percy Foreman - who did not appear at the recent hearing where, in effect, he was on trial. No TV coverage I saw gave any of the major new developments in this hearing, not even the flavor. The enormity of the record we built was beyond either the comprehension or the reporting of the excellent reporters who were there. The permeating corruption, which included perjury and deliberate framing, and the Constitutional abuses which make those in the Ellsberg case seem modest, are both, I believe, without precedent or parallel. In part this is because for the first time ever there was "discovery" in a habeas corpus case. Despite all the official opposition to the court's orders Jim Leary and I obtained documentary proofs. These range from establishing the deliberateness with which Ray was framed to the orders to deliver all his communications, including those with counsel and for use in his defense, to the prosecutor for his searching. In the latter category we obtained at least one communication with every lawyer who in any way represented Ray from the secret files of the prosecution and at least one sample with the two different defense lawyers in the criminal case of Ray's preparations for his own defense, stolen from Ray's cell, with delivery receipts to the prosecutor. Even a registered letter to the judge, from the prosecutor's files. The Supreme Court has asked for written arguments by January 6 on whether it should grant certiorari to the State's appeal from this discovery precedent.

Sincerely,
Harold Weisberg

Stick with 'The Missiles of October'

F.P. Post 12/18/62

THE

NEW YORK (AP) — Three hours may seem a long time to stick with one TV show, but give it a try tonight with ABC's "The Missiles of October." It'll be three hours well spent.

The show dramatizes the reactions of American and Russian leaders during the 13-day Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

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when the U.S. learned Soviet crews were installing offensive nuclear missiles in Cuba.

I've no doubt that historians will have a field day picking apart the program — scriptwriter Stanley Greenberg insists the show is of the "theater of fact" breed of drama — but no matter.

"Missiles" as an entertainment effort is a consistently engrossing show, which largely succeeds in conveying the atmosphere of those tense, awful days when the world was at the brink of nuclear war.

Much of the credit for this has to go to two actors, William Devane and Martin Sheen, respectively cast as President John F. Kennedy and his brother, U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

They do a remarkable job in suggesting, without mimicry, the way the brothers talked and acted in their dealings with each other, the National Security Council's executive committee

and the Soviets.

Veteran character actor Howard da Silva, cast as Nikita Khrushchev, seems less convincing and not quite as forceful as the late Russian leader appeared in real life. But he still turns in a good performance.

"Missiles" occasionally interjects old newsreels of Russian and American atomic bomb tests and U.S. military forces readying for possible war during the most tense moments of the Cuban missile crisis.

But the bulk of the drama is played out

at the White House, where high-level debate on "surgical" air strikes against missile sites, a ground invasion of Cuba, a naval blockade of Cuba, and what could and couldn't be negotiated with Russia is depicted.

As I've said, historians undoubtedly will dispute some of the scenes, but watch all the show anyway. It revives a moment in history all of us should study time and again.

PROGRAM



The Missiles of October

By John Carmody

"The Missiles of October," which airs tonight at 8 on Channel 7 (WMAL), is the story of the 13 days in the fall of 1962 when the United States first learned of the construction of Soviet missile bases 90 miles off Florida. By employing a naval blockade instead of harsher methods, the United States forced Chairman Nikita Khrushchev and the USSR to back down.

It was an historic two weeks that restored President Kennedy's prestige throughout a world that admired his nation's restraint after the Bay of Pigs fiasco and, in retrospect, marked the beginning of the increasing cooperation that led to detente.

But don't be misled by the respectful, even solemn praise that has been dished

out recently for "The Missiles of October."

The three-hour dramatization is about an hour too long; it has patches of poor casting and dialogue; and it never really succeeds in doing what a lot of viewers will tune in for—and overwhelming evocation of the spirit and manner of the Kennedy Camelot at serious work.

Yet for all that, this remembrance of John and Robert Kennedy displaying grace under extreme pressure is good theater and excellent history—given some undoubtedly debatable characterizations.

At least two of the participants portrayed in tonight's drama have differing views of its historical accuracy, incidentally.

Former press secretary Pierre Salinger insists it's

"98 per cent correct," that it's a "great show" and, besides, he likes the way he was portrayed by Michael Lerner.

United Nations Ambassador John Scali, then an ABC reporter who played a critical role in the resolution, told Newsweek recently that the program is only "65 per cent accurate."

ABC recently ran the film for both Sen. Edward Kennedy and Ethel Kennedy at the latter's Hickory Hill home. Neither has made public comment on their impressions, however. Most of the other living participants have yet to see "Missiles," according to the network.

ABC television likes to call this \$1-million production an example of "the theater of the mind," and the net-

See MISSILES, C11, Col. 1

'The Missiles of October': Debatable

MISSILES, From C1

work plans to do similar programs in the future.

One of the questions posed by this concept, and certainly by tonight's program, is whether the Hollywood casting offices are where one goes to summon up the shades of recently dead personages such as the Kennedy brothers or Khrushchev.

At a recent screening of "Missiles" nearly everyone present remarked on their difficulty with the first five or 10 minutes of the drama.

William Devane, who plays President Kennedy with a nice ear for accent, unfortunately looks very much like Robert Kennedy.

And Martin Sheen, play-

ing the late Attorney General, speaks with a voice that sounds exactly like a track from one of those Chipmunk Christmas records of a few years back (he also substitutes a full slump for RFK's slight athlete's slouch).

Howard da Silva plays Khrushchev very broadly in the early stages, like a villain in a melodrama—although the old pro recovers beautifully and late in the drama makes the Soviet leader totally believable.

Stanley R. Greenberg, who wrote the drama, seems to have drawn on the late Robert Kennedy's brief among other sources. The title of the program is the same as that used in British printings of a book written

on the topic in 1968 by Elie Abel, now dean of the Columbia School of Journalism. (It appeared in this country as "The Missile Crisis," published by Lippincott.)

Abel has advised the network that he believes a substantial portion of his book was used in its production and has consulted an attorney regarding possible legal action. Greenberg told The New York Times Monday that Abel's book was only one of many sources he had consulted.

In telling of this highly dramatic event in American

life, Greenberg did not have a great deal of real dialogue to return to.

Viewers may notice, as the evening progresses that often the principals on both sides of the conflict are reduced to merely asking questions of each other ("Has Kennedy gone mad?" and "What will Khrushchev do if we pull back to the 800 mile limit?"), which may be one reason that foreign TV networks currently bidding for the program plan to cut an hour out of the running time of two hours and 40 minutes.

