

William R. Tyler Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 03/07/64
Administrative Information

Creator: William R. Tyler
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Biographical Note

Deputy Assistant (1961 - 1962), Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs (1962 - 1965). In this interview, Tyler discusses his professional relationship with John F. Kennedy and the major events of his presidency, among other issues.

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By William R. Tyler

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William R. Tyler

Date: _____

May 25th 1971

William R. Tyler – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

WILLIAM R. TYLER

March 7, 1964

By Elizabeth Donahue

For the John F. Kennedy Library

TYLER: My name is William R. Tyler. I am Assistant Secretary for European Affairs. This is Saturday, March 7, 1964, and I am sitting at my desk with Miss Elizabeth Donahue, who is interviewing me on my recollections of my professional and personal association with President Kennedy. I haven't really prepared my material as well as I would have liked to, but I thought I might start by recording my personal history, or rather the history of my job in the last two-and-a half years in the extent to which I saw the President and on what occasions. I was in Germany before coming back to Washington. I was Chief of the Political Section, and I came back from Bonn in May 1961 to be Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, under Foy Kohler, now our Ambassador to Moscow, who was then the Assistant Secretary. Shortly after I arrived, Foy Kohler went off with President Kennedy to Paris and to Vienna. The President saw General de Gaulle in Paris. That was his first, and indeed his only contact with General deGaulle. He never saw him again, though he did speak to him again once on an occasion which I will later describe.

In Vienna, of course, the President saw Khrushchev also for the first and only time, and it was quite clear from his talk with Khrushchev that we were in trouble over Berlin.

Khrushchev tried to intimidate the young man who was President of the United States. The President said to Khrushchev: "Well, Mr. Chairman, it looks as though we are going to have a cold winter."

Foy Kohler got back with the President early in June and right away we in the State Department, on the President's and Mr. Rusk's instructions, started making preparations for the crisis which we saw clearly ahead over Berlin. This had a bearing on my work because Foy Kohler was appointed Chairman of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Berlin, which later became known as the Berlin Task Force, and he was instructed by Mr. Rusk to put all other work aside and to hand over the rest of the work of the Bureau to his Deputy, which was myself. So I became, oddly enough, Acting Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, even though the Assistant Secretary, Foy Kohler, was still in Washington and was still, of course, ultimately the responsible Chief of the Bureau.

Then when Mr. Kohler was appointed Ambassador to the Soviet Union in July 1962 I was appointed to succeed him and I have been Assistant Secretary since that time.

My first recollection of President Kennedy in anything but the most fleeting social sense was on December 12, 1961, when he wanted to call General de Gaulle on the telephone in

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order to get General de Gaulle to agree to some language in the NATO Communique, during the December session of the North Atlantic Council in Paris. Mr. Rusk was over there, and was having trouble with the French Delegation, which was under instructions not to agree to certain language which would have approved efforts by other countries to pursue discussions with the Soviet Union in the hope of finding ultimately a basis for negotiations. De Gaulle was very hard-necked about this. He did not agree that it was a good idea to probe or to have discussions with the Soviet Union, and President Kennedy was asked by Mr. Rusk to call de Gaulle personally and to try to get him to change his mind. I remember the occasion clearly: I was at my desk... it was about ten minutes before one... and I was just about to go out to lunch with the Norwegian Ambassador, when I was called by Mr. McGeorge Bundy at the White House on the phone, and he asked me if I spoke French well enough to act as interpreter. I said yes, and he said: "Well, drop everything and come over; the President wants you in his office." So I left a message with my secretary to call the Norwegian Ambassador and apologize, rushed over to the White House, and was introduced into the President's outer office. Mr. George Ball, Under Secretary of State, was also there, as I recall, and Mr. Bundy. My recollection is that

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the President was talking with Billy Graham, and through the open door I saw the President and Billy Graham standing and talking together. The association of these two personalities struck me as something unusual... it was rather strange to see them standing together. Then the President came out, and I was introduced to him, though I think he remembered who I was from having seen me around on one or two occasions before then. He said: "Well come

on in; we have to talk to de Gaulle and try and get him to agree to some language.” Finally the call was put through... it was an open telephone line by way of the President’s desk. The President asked me to sit by him. There was only one receiver. The President said he would start off by a few words of courtesy in English, which he knew that de Gaulle would understand; and then, for the actual discussions, he would tell me what he wanted me to say and I would transpose it into French, and conversely I would tell him what de Gaulle was saying at the other end of the line. Well, the conversation was quite a long one. It’s recorded in a memorandum of conversation which is part of the record. I was very much struck by the President’s kind of puzzled mood as to how he could get General de Gaulle to understand that what he wanted him to do was something that was really

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in the interest of the West and was not merely something that he was trying to get de Gaulle to do against the interests of France. De Gaulle was very rigid, very inflexible, very courteous, and what the President was finally able to get de Gaulle to agree to was really very little. He didn’t go nearly as far as we wanted. Anyway, that was my first major recollection of the President and de Gaulle, and the President was extremely appreciative of what had been quite an exhausting effort on my part, and he put his arm around my shoulder and said I had done a fine job; and of course that pleased me very much.

The next occasion on which I saw the President at some length was the Bermuda Conference in December 1961. We went there with the Secretary of State, Mr. Bundy, and David Bruce, our Ambassador who came over from London. The substance of the conference is a matter of record, and I don’t think that I can go into it at this distance usefully. But I have a clear recollection of the informality and the ease with which the President talked with Macmillan, and, as he then was, Lord Home, the Foreign Secretary.

I don’t have any particular recollections of the year 1962, though looking back I can see that there were a good many visitors at the White House whom I accompanied to be

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with the President. Among them I see Edgar Faure, the former French Prime Minister, who had a talk with the President, and was extremely interested in what the President had to say to him. I also see Charles Ritchie, the new Canadian Ambassador. I remember accompanying him when he presented his credentials to the President. It was a beautiful May morning and the windows of the President’s study were open onto the porch; and outside Mrs. Kennedy and Caroline were playing around with the two ponies, Macaroni and the other one: I’ve forgotten its name. Caroline suddenly came running into the President’s office while the new Canadian Ambassador was solemnly reading out the rather pompous language... the traditional language... of his credentials. It was an amusing scene to see the little girl coming up and pulling her father by the arm, and the President very good-naturedly and quietly turning around to say: “Caroline, couldn’t you go out again and not interrupt.” Mrs. Kennedy came in and reached out a long arm and pulled Caroline out and the door was closed and the ponies were removed.”

I was also present at the talks which were held in September 1962 with Lord Home, the British Foreign Secretary. There again I have not been over the memoranda of conversation

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and it is not possible for me at this time to recall any salient or particular feature of these talks. And I was also present in early October at talks which the President had with the French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville.

Later on in 1962 there was a visit by Chancellor Adenauer of Germany, and he was accompanied by Foreign Minister Schroeder; and I will say this: I had the impression that of all the people I saw with President Kennedy, the one figure which seemed hardest for the President perhaps to understand or to reach was Adenauer. I remember being conscious of the President watching Adenauer while he was talking, and all the while what Adenauer had said was being interpreted, with a look of, not of puzzlement, but at least a kind of lack of expression on the President's face which suggested to me a certain feeling of bafflement on his part. Of course Adenauer's very immobile facial expression always looked kind of mysterious and vaguely Oriental, and rather tended not to reveal his sentiments. I thought that the President was less at his ease with Adenauer, or less able to find a way to establish a personal rapport with Adenauer than with anyone else I saw him with.

On other occasions in 1962 in the latter part of the year there was a visit by the former German Foreign Minister von Brentano at which I assisted, and a visit by the German

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Defense Minister von Hassel. I think those were also in November or early December 1962.

Then in December 1962 there was the Nassau Conference with Prime Minister Macmillan, which took place in order to deal with the stopping of the Skybolt weapon production and resulted in an agreement with the British to sell them Polaris nuclear missiles for submarines. I was personally apprehensive of what the effect of this deal with the British would have on our relations with the French and with other countries, and I had definite reservations on the wisdom of concluding the agreement with the British to sell them Polaris submarines. I was afraid that it would persuade de Gaulle that our policy was really directed toward the UK, that we were as it were courting the UK in order to play a larger role in Europe through the UK, and that de Gaulle would see in this agreement confirmation of his claim that the United States was more interested in dominating Europe than in encouraging Europe to be really an independent and entirely self-reliant entity. So I did express my doubts about the wisdom of selling the British Polaris missiles, and I recall, in a conversation which took place in Nassau within the US delegation (there were present Mr. George Ball, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and David Bruce, our Ambassador in London)

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the President turning to me and saying: "All right, Bill, let's have your views. How do you feel about this?" I spoke and explained the reasons why I had these doubts, and the President was very encouraging, or rather encouraged me to say everything I had on my mind. This was certainly the factor in everything... every experience I had with the President... the sense of the emphasis he placed on knowing what was in people's minds and encouraging them to say what they really thought. He was obviously impatient with anything which concealed what one really thought or which appeared evasive. I never knew him to show any sign of resentment at hearing an opinion which was different from that which he himself held. Where he did seem to be at times impatient in meetings was if he couldn't get at the essence of the situation. So both in analyzing a problem and in dealing with people, the first priority seemed to be in his mind to get at the essence of the situation, and then he would take a decision with complete confidence and ease.

I suppose the informality of these meetings, I refer to the one in Bermuda in December 1961 and the one in Nassau in December 1962, made it easier to establish a personal rapport. But I certainly felt by the end of the Nassau meeting that the

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President was used to having me around, and I felt that he conveyed a sense of confidence in me which was certainly very encouraging and made it easier for me to talk to him. I might say that as always there were frequent... when I say frequent, there were a good many telephone calls in the course of the year from the President... sometimes early in the morning or late at night at my house, or at my desk; and on occasion his language was quite picturesque. In fact, on one occasion when he called me at my desk, he was irritated with a press conference, or statements of the press, which Chancellor Adenauer had made and he used language to describe that press statement which I won't repeat here but which my secretary, Miss Tise, heard because she was listening on the other telephone in order to make a record. I was wondering how she was going to handle that particular adjective. She handled it very well, because when she brought in the memorandum of conversation the adjective was missing, and so I reproached her for editing the President's language.

Before coming to the end of 1962 I feel I must at least refer to the Cuban crisis of October 1962, which affected us all deeply. I was not one of those who were part of the inner circle of the discussion and planning on the crisis, but I remember very well when it was over all that I heard from those

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who had been part of the inner group was that no other issue quite brought out to the same extent the qualities of calm and leadership and responsibility which we all admired in him. There was no other comparable issue. I have a feeling the same thing was true for my colleagues. That was perhaps the greatest role that any human being has played in history which concerns the destiny of the human race in terms of life and death. So I think all of us, even those of us who were not in on the inside discussions but were close enough to know what was going on, felt that the President's example of calmness and the confidence we had

in him more or less made us feel that even at the moment of supreme danger, everything was under control, and that nothing was being left to chance: that a man of superior character and intelligence was at the helm... I think that that had much to do with helping everyone to keep steady.

I recall the President calling me early in November to ask if I had talked to the French Ambassador about the Khrushchev letter of October 26. As I recall he had earlier asked me to talk to the French Ambassador. That's right, he had asked me to talk to the French Ambassador earlier on that day and ask him if he would return the Khrushchev letter of October 26, Friday, which apparently the President had sent

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the Ambassador a copy of. Others can correct my recollection of this, but I think that the President had sent Alphand a copy of the Khrushchev letter and then had decided that it would be better to have it back, and he wanted to get it back. I had, of course, carried out the President's instructions and talked to Ambassador Alphand, and Alphand had said he would return the letter and had sent it back to me. I also told the President that Alphand had asked whether my request for the return of the letter implied that we were suggesting the leak to the press which had occurred had come from his Embassy. I told the President that I had told the French Ambassador that this was not the case. We were not implying anything. We just wanted (the President wanted) to have the letter back.

I don't think I need to go over the further substance of this memorandum which I have before me here, which is dated November 2, because that would be duplicating, but it's quite clear to me that the President believed that there had been a leak from the French Embassy and that he was annoyed at this having happened. He made his annoyance very clear.

In March 1963, the President decided that I should go to Italy and take a message from him in the form of a letter to the Prime Minister Fanfani explaining the reason why it would not be possible for Mrs. Kennedy to go to Rome on a state visit,

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as had been planned, that summer, because Mrs. Kennedy was pregnant and would not be able to make the trip. This had not been publicly announced at the time. As I recollect it was the end of March, and the President wanted to communicate by letter rather than by a telegram or any other way which would have risked a leak. So I had a reason for the trip, other than the real one, which happened also, nevertheless, to be a valid reason. I went to Bonn to talk to the Germans about our interest in the multilateral force and to explain to them the political and, in general, the military arguments in favor of examining with our Allies who are interested the possibility of establishing a multilateral nuclear force with surface vessels. I went to Bonn, and then I went to see Chancellor Adenauer who was at his vacation place in Northern Italy at Cadenabbia, and I spent an afternoon with him. Then I went on to Rome and delivered the President's letter to Prime Minister Fanfani and also talked to him about the multilateral force. But that was really the purpose of my trip to Rome. Before

leaving on this trip the President asked me to come to his office; as I recall it was a Saturday morning, and he asked me if I minded if he had his hair cut... that the barber could come in... and we could go on talking. I told him that on the contrary I thought it was an honor to be there

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while he was having his hair cut, and he thought this was very funny and laughed a good deal. The barber came in and put a sheet down on the floor; the President had his hair cut and went on giving me my instructions for the trip.

My next recollection of an important occasion with the President in 1963 was the meeting in May with Prime Minister Pearson of Canada at Hyannisport. We flew from Andrews Air Force Base to Edwards Air Force Base on Cape Cod and with helicopter from there to Hyannisport. There were two-day meetings with Prime Minister Pearson. The President seemed very much at his ease with Pearson. Pearson was as always very articulate, very smooth, with a light touch, and the President seemed to like that and to warm to Pearson. Of course, it was a wonderful opportunity to see the President because of his being in his own house. He was very much at his ease, very informal, and we had pleasant and delicious meals. I remember there a small number of people... Mr. Bundy and... no, Mr. McGeorge Bundy did not go, I think on that occasion, I don't think he was there... Walt Butterworth, our Ambassador to Canada, and I think I was the only State Department person on that visit. Anyway I have the record of the conversations which lists the people present. But there was no doubt that the President was very much at his ease with Prime Minister

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Pearson and I could tell that he was speaking very frankly and very informally and felt very much reassured by the conversations they had.

Then coming back from Hyannisport with the President we stopped off at Edwards Air Force Base, and the President took a helicopter to go to Cambridge, I think to look the site for the Kennedy Library. I think he was deciding on the actual site about that time... May 1963. Then he came back to Edwards Air Force Base and we flew on to Washington.

In the course of the same year, 1963, I accompanied the President on his trip to Europe. We left on Saturday June 22. As always on such occasions it was rather frantic business, and I recall that we were working with McGeorge Bundy and Ted Sorensen and Arthur Schlesinger and the Secretary of State and Mr. Ball, until about 7:30 that evening on papers and on texts for the President's speeches in Germany... and we were leaving from Andrews Air Force Base I think at 9:30. We had to be on board by 9:00pm and I hadn't packed and it was perfectly frenzied. But we did all get on the plane; the President had gotten on the plane a little earlier so I did not see him until next morning when we got off at Cologne. Well of course the impressions of the trip are extremely vivid in a human sense. When we arrived in Cologne on Sunday June 23

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it was a rather warm, pleasant morning I was conscious of the fact that I had brought my top-coat and I was the only person in all the thousands of people assembled who had an overcoat, so I was conscious of this. After the greetings at the airport _____ we got into a motorcade and drove to Cologne, and already something of the enthusiasm which was later to be even greater was evident. There were people lining the road who had obviously been there for hours in order to catch this view of the President. When we crossed the bridge and got into Cologne itself the crowd was perfectly tremendous. It was a very beautiful day, and this of course encouraged the people to be out and the crowds there were overwhelming. As I recall we first went to the City Hall where the President addressed the crowd in the square outside of City Hall. And it was then that I first heard that rhythmic, almost hysterical scanning of his name: "Ken-ne-dy, Ken-ne-dy." They all shouted and stamped their feet and pronounced those syllables with enormous enthusiasm, and you felt that the popularity of the President was something which went far beyond anything that could be accounted for by any act, or policy, or by the fact that he was the President of the United States. There was something about him which just seemed to echo in the hearts and voices of all the people when they greeted him. We were

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nearly crushed to death, getting into the Cathedral, but fortunately not the President who, of course, was properly protected. Those of us who were with him, and who were supposed to be taken into the Cathedral, found ourselves being more or less crushed outside and against the doors. They had closed the doors from the inside because there were so many people and the crowd was surging around us and trying to get into the building too. It was really an unpleasant moment.

The service, the pontifical high mass, in the Cathedral was very fine, and the arrangements inside the Cathedral were dignified and adequate. The President sat in the front pew with Chancellor Adenauer. I was three or four pews back. I noticed that the congregation in the Cathedral was very respectful and very dignified, and people were not craning their necks and reaching around to look at the President. The high mass was properly celebrated. The singing was particularly fine. They had a choir in the Cathedral, and it was a moving and solemn and quiet occasion.

After the service was over, the President and those of us with him were escorted on a tour of the Cathedral, or that part of it which was in the Choir and the Apse. The congregation waited, standing in silence, while the President was shown some of the fine medieval things in the Cathedral itself and in

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the Treasure of the Cathedral. Then from the Cathedral we got into the cars again and started off for Bonn.

We got to Bonn I should say about 12:30 or 1:00 o'clock and the square before the Town Hall was filled with people. There again the same manifestations of jubilation and

sympathy, and the President spoke... gave a brief talk... listened to with great attention and wildly applauded.

From Bonn we drove on to Bad Godesberg, where our Embassy is, and the crowds were very thick along the road. There in Bad Godesberg the President went to the Embassy theater and spoke to the staff of the Embassy, both Americans and Germans... to all the employees... and he said he was glad to be there. He asked the German employees to raise their hands to see how many were Germans and how many were Americans. Then he went on to the house on Turmstrasse where he was to stay. He did not stay in the Ambassador's residence. It was considered easier to stay in the house which is occupied by the Minister of the Embassy, at No. 36 Turmstrasse, as I recall. No, I think it is No. 44 Turmstrasse. Anyway, then the rest of us were put up in various places. I stayed with Ambassador McGhee with Mr. Rusk.

I don't really remember the order of the various dinners. There was a dinner that evening. And on the next day there

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were talks between the President and Chancellor Adenauer which took place in the Schaumburg Palace which is the residence of the Chancellor. I don't think that I will try to recall the details because they are a matter of record; but everywhere, everytime the President moved there were crowds waiting for him. People showed enormous enthusiasm in Germany, and he responded to it, always striking the right note and always making people feel that it was a personal pleasure on his part to be with them. It seems to me that the enthusiasm grew, and after the people had seen him they seemed to become even warmer in the expression of their feelings toward him.

There was one occasion which was very moving, which was I think the dinner on Tuesday evening; as I recall, that would have been Tuesday evening the 25th; at the Embassy Club in Bad Godesberg. It was a dinner given by the President for Chancellor Adenauer. It was not a very large dinner considering the occasion. There must have been about a hundred people present, with all members of the government present. Adenauer made a speech which perhaps was the one occasion on which I saw the Chancellor deeply moved. He said that never in the history of relations between countries had there been an act of generosity and understanding to parallel that of the United States in its attitude toward Germany after the war, because

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the United States had held out its hand to Germany and helped to raise her up again even though they had been enemies during the war. If it had not been for this, Germany would never have found her dignity again. That was the only time when I heard Chancellor Adenauer say, or any other German in an official position say, that Germany had started the war and that in spite of this the United States had helped her at the end of the war.

The next day the President reviewed a NATO division, I've forgotten the name of the place but it's the big military camp, or establishment near Heidelberg... and then he lunched

there. After lunch he drove to Frankfurt to the Town Hall, and there the acclaim of the crowd and the number of the crowd seemed to get larger and larger. It was arranged that the President would drive through the industrial and less wealth part of Frankfurt in order that the workers should have a chance of seeing him. Certainly there was every evidence of his popularity there as everywhere else.

From Frankfurt, where he was received in the Town Hall and made a speech to the crowds in the Town Hall square... there was a tremendous waving of arms and shouting of "Ken-ne-dy" again and again... and I think to the alarm of the Secret Service the President went off into the crowd and was literally lost

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from sight for about 10 or 15 minutes of shaking hands and just making everybody feel happy and appearing to enjoy it enormously himself.

From Frankfurt the President helicoptered to Wiesbaden where we spent the night. That was the one quiet evening the President had. He was able to be quite quiet that evening. There was no dinner, nothing, he was able to rest.

Then the next morning, the flight to Berlin, and that whole day of course... over and over again, all of us who were there can probably really say the same thing, which was the overwhelming impression of the welcome extended to the President which went far beyond anything that I had ever witnessed or read about. I think the Germans and the Berliners were both thanking the President for what the United States had done to keep Berlin free and secure, and also addressing a kind of supreme appeal, asking the United States in the person of the President, to continue to stand by Berlin. This very moving impression gradually grew with the passing hours, and with the thousands and thousands of faces past which we drove hour after hour. I had the impression not just of a festive occasion, but of an extremely poignant sentiment in the people. They were saying something other than the noise they were making. There were times when I found it very difficult to conceal my emotions,

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particularly at Check Point Charley, when the President was standing looking over the wall and down into the street leading into East Berlin, and just about 50-yards away there was an East German officer and other East German soldiers - Volkspolizei - with field glasses looking at the President. Behind them thousands of silent East Berliners obviously not able to demonstrate their feelings but doing it almost more by their silence than they would have been able to do had they been allowed to shout. Then, in the apartment houses on the other side of the wall the windows were open and within the rooms you could see people waving white cloths and handkerchiefs, but waving inside toward the President so that he could see them but they could not be seen by the East Berlin police on their own side of the wall. All this part of the Berlin visit was highly charged with emotion, and looking at the President I had the strong feeling that he was feeling it very deeply too. It was this ability he had, I think, to enter into the inner mood of an occasion which accounted for the extraordinary degree of communication that he had with people.

Then of course in the afternoon after the Rathaus luncheon we moved on, the President spoke again through the same overwhelming crowds in the streets, to the Free Berlin University where the President made an extremely important speech.

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Oh by the way, I realize I've forgotten to mention the occasion in Frankfurt at the Paulskirche where the President made a very important speech on US/European relations. But still it is not important that I remember every detail in order now because everything is a matter of record. But it was again a very impressive performance in Frankfurt at the Paulskirche before a selected audience of the most influential and most important people in Germany, and the President got across to them, just as he got across to crowds or to the young people. He impressed these Germans enormously as a human being as well as a statesman.

To go back to Berlin: after the Free Berlin University speech, then came the last drive to Tegel Airport where we had landed eight hours earlier that morning, and crowds all the way, and crowds - thousands and thousands - at the airport. Now Mr. Rusk was going to London, so he didn't get on the plane, but I was going with the President to Ireland, and so I got on the plane before he did. Mrs. Shriver and Princess Radziwill already were on the plane. General Godfrey McHugh, who was the Air Force Aide, was on the plane, and we waited for the President to come on board. When finally the last farewells had taken place, and the crowds waving and shouting "goodbye," the President came on board; the door was closed and everything

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was silent. The jets started whining, and the sound increased, but inside the plane everything was silent. Mrs. Shriver said: "Oh, John, you're the champion." And the President smiled, and although he looked tired, he wasn't affected by the tremendous ordeal he'd been through, and in fact he asked me what my impression had been of the day, and I said I couldn't find words for it. He said: "No. It's quite something, it's really something, isn't it?" And I said: "Yes, Mr. President, it's just indescribable; it's something you feel but you can't convey." And he said well he thought he'd rest a little before arriving in Dublin, which was only a short flight away. But he found the time even after all the terrific strain he'd been under to read *The New York Times* and to get indignant about an editorial. He came out of his cabin on the plane and called for me and said: "Did you read this? What's the matter with those people?" And I said: "Mr. President, it just makes no sense at all, and it's just because they were against your taking the trip... and now that the trip is a success, they're trying to get back on board and aren't able to do it very generously or handsomely." The President was quite mad about the editorial, and it struck me that this was an example of his enormous vitality, that anyone else really wouldn't have cared what they had read at that time, but at the end of this

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ordeal he was just the same as though he had started off reading something in the morning which hadn't pleased him.

We got to Dublin, and in the golden light of the sunset the President was welcomed by the Irish with enormous warmth and cordiality. The crowds were of course smaller and there wasn't the same degree of excitement, but there was the same unlimited sense of welcome which the President met everywhere along this trip. We drove into Dublin. I was with Mr. Aiken, the Foreign Minister, a few cars back, and although the crowds weren't as large they were tremendously friendly. I did not accompany the President on the trips within Ireland. I stayed behind and did some work, so I can't speak about the visits to the home of the Kennedys and all that side of it. I didn't see him on those occasions, but I did participate in the banquets and luncheons that took place in Dublin. I was present at his private talk with Prime Minister Lemass before he left.

Well, from Dublin we flew... I think it was a Saturday, and it must have been Saturday the 29th... to Birch Grove, which was the country house of Prime Minister Macmillan. We arrived there in the afternoon. We'd stopped between Dublin and Birch Grove for the President to be able to go and visit the tomb of his sister near Chatsworth, and so we didn't arrive at Birch Grove until around 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. The

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President Macmillan and the other members of the British Cabinet who were there had a good many talks, but the talks were fragmented. We didn't all just sit around in a circle. Mr. Rusk at times would be talking separately with Lord Home, who was then still Foreign Secretary, and the President would be talking with Macmillan. But it was a difficult time for the British, for Macmillan personally, because the Profumo affair weighed heavily on Macmillan and members of the Government, and it was not... although the welcome which they gave the President naturally was very warm... it wasn't as easy a moment I thought, the rapport was not as carefree as it had been on other occasions, for example, in Bermuda in 1961.

Then the next day, on Sunday the 30th, we had more talks, and the President and Macmillan went to church together... and more talks... and then a very pleasant lunch. Then after lunch we all went off, the President flew to Northern Italy, to the villa Zerbelloni, I think it's called, the Rockefeller villa on Lake Como, and Mr. Rusk and the rest of us who were not with the President flew directly to Rome.

The discussions I mentioned already were not conducted in a very orderly way. For one thing, Birch Grove is a pleasant, rambling English country-house, and the rooms don't lend themselves to formal conferences. So that what really

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happened was that the Prime Minister and the President would sit down in the largest and most convenient chairs, and the rest of us would sit around as best we could. And if there wasn't room to be close to the two principals, we would just sit in whatever part of the room

we could and do our best to hear what was going on. Inevitably, except for the subjects which were definitely on the agenda where there was formal note taking, it was rather difficult to be sure that you really heard everything that was said about a subject because it could well come up between the Prime Minister and the President while they were talking over their brandy or going for a stroll on the lawn. You couldn't be sure that you heard everything that was said. But as I said, my impression was that there was a certain embarrassment in the air which I think was due to the fact that the Prime Minister himself was depressed about the Profumo affair, and the President was aware of the fact that Mr. Macmillan was depressed and concerned, and so that although very cordial, there wasn't much gaiety in the air. I remember standing with Macmillan after dinner on the first evening, and, as I had known Macmillan since 1943 and he was always very pleasant to me, as I was alone with him I said to him that I would not have mentioned this had I not

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known him personally, but that I wanted him to know that all the friends of the United Kingdom were very sorry about the Profumo business, and that I personally felt that it must be very hard on the Prime Minister. This kind of touched off a spring in Macmillan, and he talked at length to me about how depressed he'd been and how well he'd felt that this was a blow of fate which he really found it hard to reconcile himself to; and what amused me was that Macmillan implied that part of the trouble was that Profumo was not of good old English stock, but was one who came from a foreign country where one would expect these things to happen. He didn't actually say this, but he said: "You know, look at Alec Home. Now you know that when you're with him... well you know that it's just not conceivable that anything dishonest or wrong could possibly take place. But Profumo, I had nothing against him, I always thought he was very bright. But after all it isn't the same thing. But then of course (said Macmillan) in a sense I'm a foreigner myself here because I'm from north of the border." So he was disassociating himself from the Profumo business as much as he could.

But to go back to the Roman trip. In a sense that was the one place where there was a definite difference in the extent and strength of the public welcome to the President. I

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think I know the people of Rome; they are proud of being citizens of the Eternal City... they are not like the Neapolitans, they are not very excitable, and they feel that it is natural that the great of the earth should come to Rome more perhaps as a pilgrimage than in order for the Romans to applaud them. So, driving from the airport to Rome, while the crowds at the airport were friendly, they were not very numerous considering the occasion. And there were relatively few people on the streets in Rome. But the talks in Rome that the President had with Prime Minister Leone and Foreign Minister Piccioni were not very significant in themselves in substance; but the formal luncheon which was given for the President on that Monday at the Villa Madamma by the Prime Minister was a very beautiful and well carried out, well organized occasion. Then in the evening, after the talks in the afternoon, there was a

reception and a dinner at the Palace Quirinale, which went very well, but it was a social occasion and was not really an occasion for popular manifestations.

Then the next morning the President called on the Pope and I had the privilege of being one of those who went along. The President was received alone by His Holiness and one of the Monsignori said to me as we waited in the ante-chamber: that it was very obvious that the Pope was very pleased to be

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talking with the President because they'd already been together forty-four minutes, and apparently the duration of the conversation is an indication of the importance which the Pope attaches to his visitor.

Well, then after the talk... his private audience was over... about eight or ten of us who were with the President were admitted, and the Pope and the President were seated together, and the Pope read in English a prepared text of greetings and welcome to the President. And then he presented each of us with a silver medal in memory of the coronation, which had taken place of course only two days before.

Then from the Vatican we went to the North American College in Rome where Cardinal Cushing was waiting for the President. The President was received there by the young men studying for the priesthood, and was warmly welcomed by them; and Cardinal Cushing spoke and said a few words of greeting to the President.

From there we went back to the Embassy to the Villa Taverna, and there the President gave a very small stag lunch for the Prime Minister and one or two other members of the Cabinet. The Defense Minister Andreotti was there. We lunched, and talked not very substantively but in general about the US/Italian relations and the Alliance. After

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lunch we got into the helicopters and went down to Naples, where the President gave a speech at the NATO establishment in Naples. He showed no signs of fatigue whatsoever. It was exactly as though he'd been doing something routine. After all these days the President didn't give any sign, either physically or in the way in which he greeted people or in the way in which he talked to us when one had occasion to be with him, that he was feeling any strain or fatigue whatsoever.

After this speech came a tremendous drive through the streets of Naples, where there was complete bedlam, everything was absolutely wild, and a marvelous welcome... spontaneous welcome by the population... no signs at all of any Communist propaganda or activity of any kind. It was perfectly clear evidence that the sentiment of the people of Naples, even though there is a large Communist element in Naples, is such that any Communist manifestations would have been to the disadvantage of the Communist Party. As a matter of fact, Naples by and large is traditionally a monarchist town, but anyway the local Communist party obviously felt that there was no advantage to it at all in trying to attack the President or put up any propaganda signs against the President.

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The President left Naples airport at 7:30 that evening, and I flew back in the second plane with Mr. Rusk. After refueling in the Azores, we arrived at Andrews Air Force Base about 2:30 in the morning local time.

That whole trip provided the longest and most concentrated impression I have of the President, but what is very noteworthy about it is that it gave me an idea at first-hand which I had not been able to imagine before... it gave me the sense of the degree to which the President had become identified in the minds of foreigners who had never seen him before and who probably were not very familiar with his particular policies... he identified himself with them with their interests to a degree which was really perfectly extraordinary; you felt it everywhere; there was instant communication, and all the crowds received the President as though they were welcoming an old friend, even though they had not seen him before. There was a familiarity of the crowds with the President and a rapport between them which was absolutely astonishing to witness and to experience.

Well, looking back on this toward the end, after that trip there were some more visits: the French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville in October 1963, and a visit by the Irish Prime Minister Mr. Lemass also in October 1963. Marshall Tito, of

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Yugoslavia, also came to see the President... flew up from Williamsburg and stopped off for the inside of a day. I was present at the talks between Tito and the President, both before lunch... then he had lunch at the White House... and after lunch before Tito went on to New York. I sensed in the President and interest in the personality of Tito and a kind of... well, an admiration for this rugged old battle-scarred Communist partisan... The President I thought outdid himself in psychological perceptiveness in talking to Tito. He did not talk to him in an over-familiar way, nor in a distant way. He seemed to find the words which made Tito seem completely human in his replies, and I could see that Tito was impressed... Tito is a very soft spoken man, much smaller than his photographs suggest, and although he's 71 or 72, he has brown wavy hair and a face with rather strong features, and a low voice with a pleasant musical quality to it. And it was a very interesting to observe the way in which the President handled Tito, and the dexterous way in which he spoke to him and established a rapport with him. They couldn't be two people more unlike each other, and yet they seemed immediately to have something in common. Perhaps that's the best definition I can give of the President's personality, that in a completely artless way but with absolute sureness of touch, the President immediately made it seem to his visitors

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as though they had something in common together. And having been with so many people with the President, I've seen the effect on individuals unfailingly. It's more than appreciation for having been received by the President, more than a sense of having been received kindly or politely. It was as though they'd walked through a door into a room where they'd never

been before... a new experience for them. And I must say an experience that those of us who participated on these occasions... so many of these occasions... also an experience which was unique and which one never got tired of or used to.

I must mention one more visit. I can't remember very well when it took place, but it was in its own way perhaps one which I remember most clearly... a call on the President by the Prime Minister of Malta. I can't even remember his name at this minute, but we can find that in the record. Anyway, the Prime Minister Designate of Malta... of course Malta was not independent... and still isn't independent, but the Prime Minister Designate of Malta who is a small and unimpressive man was received by the President just at the time of some of the worst racial troubles in the South... I don't know whether it was Birmingham, or which of the occasions it was... but the President certainly had a great deal on his mind and great cause for worry. But he did not cancel the appointed visit,

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and I went in with the Prime Minister Designate and the President was in his best form. Although the Prime Minister was very shy and self-conscious to start with, within a few minutes the President had put him perfectly at his ease, and kept him there about 45 minutes. In the course of their discussion, the President asked the Prime Minister a lot of searching and very pertinent questions about Malta's economy. Then he turned to the history of Malta and paid tribute to the gallantry and courage of the people of Malta and said that Malta had had a long experience with adversity and had had many occasions on which to display its courage, and that that was well known to everyone. Then the President talked about the Order of the Knights of Malta, and asked questions in a way which showed that he was very well informed on the origins of the order and of its history. Then the President talked about the siege of Malta, the great siege in 1565, and asked the Prime Minister questions rapidly. The Prime Minister was out of his depth and it became evident that the President knew more about the history of Malta, at least in that period, than the Prime Minister did; and the Prime Minister said to the President that he really couldn't get over the fact that President Kennedy, with all the things that he had to do, all the responsibilities he had, and the burdens on his shoulders,

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should be so well informed about his country, indeed better informed than the Prime Minister himself was. The President laughingly said to the Prime Minister: "Well, that's because a year or so ago I read a book on Malta called 'The Great Siege.' Have you read it?" No, the Prime Minister had not read it. And the President turned to me and asked me if I had read it. I was hoping he wouldn't do that, but he did, and I had to admit: no, I hadn't read it. So there was the Prime Minister of Malta who hadn't read a book about his own country, and I who had not read it either, and President Kennedy had. But he certainly charmed the Prime Minister right out of the tree and impressed him enormously.

One last recollection which is of no importance, but I've thought of it of course since, is that when Home saw the President the last time, which I think was in - I don't know

exactly when but I think it was in September or so 1963 when he came to Washington, or October, even, I was present with the President and Lord Home, the President was talking about the multilateral force in particular about the mixed-manning demonstration ship which was going to give the different nationalities that would be part of the multilateral force a chance of working together and learning the way in which a mixed-manned ship would be organized and commanded. And the President said

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to Lord Home that of course it would take a good deal of time before this mixed-manned demonstration experiment is completed, and the thing may take a good many months, and maybe a year or a year-and-a-half. The President laughed and said: "Of course, Bill Tyler will still be around then, but some of us may not be." And of course although he was only thinking about his political fortunes, nevertheless I've recalled with a sense of poignancy that remark he made.

As I said, the last official visit that I participated in was the visit of Prime Minister Lemass of Ireland, and this was really a visit which was after the President's own heart. And I've never seen him enjoy anything more. It was really a wonderful occasion, and the President was at this very best. The talks were not important in themselves, but this was a visit of real enjoyment for the President. That was only about a month before he was assassinated.

One other visit which I have not mentioned and which was of importance was a visit which was made by Andre Malraux, the French Minister of State, when he came with the Mona Lisa - this must have been in early January 1963 - and the President and Mrs. Kennedy asked me to dinner with Msr. and Mdme. Malraux, and the others present I think were the Alphands, the French Ambassador and his wife; and McGeorge and Mary Bundy. I was

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asked because of the fact that I speak French and could be useful to interpret. Malraux's English isn't very good. I'm not sure that there is. I think, I rather think, though Mr. McGeorge Bundy could check this, that I was asked not to write one. But the President had China on his mind that evening in talking to Malraux. He wanted to get a message de Gaulle through Malraux, which is that really there was no reason why there should be differences between us and France in Europe, or between us and our European Allies, because there was no longer a likely Soviet military threat against Europe... ever since Cuba. The President felt that that was the time when the great powers had looked down into the abyss and what they had seen there had had a sobering effect on them. So, the President was convinced that the Soviet Union was not going to undertake any rash adventure in Europe, that it knew that our interests in Europe were so great and our commitments so complete that there was no latitude for the Soviet Union to try any experiments... it would be dangerous to try any experiments in Europe. So Europe really wasn't the area where we had problems. But the area where we would have problems in the future... in a few years... was China. So he

said it was so important that he and de Gaulle and other European leaders should think together about what they will do, what the

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situation will be when China becomes a nuclear power, what will happen then... and this was the great menace in the future to humanity, the free world, and freedom on earth. Relations with the Soviet Union could be contained within the framework of mutual awareness of the impossibility of achieving any gains through war. But in the case of China, this restraint would not be effective because the Chinese would be perfectly prepared to sacrifice hundreds of their own lives, if this were necessary in order to carry out their militant and aggressive policies. So it was to some extent an evening which was marked by broad conversation, very pleasant conversation, but also rather sobering and solemn conversation. The President had very much on his mind.

After dinner we sat upstairs with Mrs. Kennedy and Madame Malraux and Mrs. Bundy and looked at things which Mrs. Kennedy showed Monsieur Malraux. And then the President and Mrs. Kennedy took us downstairs to look at the unfinished rooms on the first floor.

Well that about finishes up my recollections. I don't think I have anything very original or very special to add. The memory of President Kennedy as a human being is the one which I have... which I think of the most. I think of him more as

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a man than as a statesman, though my respect for him as a statesman was unbounded. And curiously enough he converted politics into such an art by his personality and his warmth and his human qualities, that in him politics really did become a supplementary, complementary achievement to already a marvelously endowed human being. I never thought of him as a politician, because he had so much intelligence, so much sensitivity, and he set such store on personal human relations that it was just impossible to think of him as anything but a human being, and one didn't see in him ever those sides of the politician which sometimes make it rather hard to accept in others.

If there is any more in what I've said that we may want to look into further, I'll be glad to do it. But that's about as far as I think I can comment now.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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