

Nikita Khrushchev Written Statement – JFK#1, 06/29/64
Administrative Information

Creator: Nikita Khrushchev

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Biographical Note

First secretary, Communist party (1953 - 1964), chairman of Council of Ministers (Premier) (1958 - 1964) Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In this written statement, Khrushchev discusses his relationship with John F. Kennedy and his legacy, among other issues.

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Written Statement

Of

Nikita Khrushchev

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Dear Mr. Kennedy,

I received your letter in which you set forth the plans to establish in Boston the library to commemorate your brother John F. Kennedy. You express the wish that we, too, take part in some form in the realization of these plans. We regard with understanding the intention to establish the John F. Kennedy memorial library and are prepared to make our contribution. You will receive through the Soviet Embassy in Washington some Soviet documents and materials relating to the activities of President Kennedy in the field of foreign policy, especially in the field of Soviet-American relations.

John F. Kennedy, as I have already said, will, without doubt, take his place in history as an outstanding statesman. Having held a high and very responsible in our times office - that of President of the United States, he proved to be a man of broad views who sought to realistically assess the situation in the world and to look for ways of solving the unsettled international problems through negotiation. I keep in memory my personal meetings with John F. Kennedy in the course of which we frankly exchanged opinions on questions of interest to both sides. It is appropriate to note here that although the main problems dividing the world today remained unsettled, nonetheless with President Kennedy we succeeded by joint effort in bringing about

The Honorable
Robert F. Kennedy
The Attorney General of the
United States of America
Washington, D.C.

a certain change for the better in the international situation and in relations between our great powers. Testimony to this is first of all the signing of the treaty banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water. The signing of that treaty was a convincing proof that however complex the present international problems may be, their solutions can be found. To reach these solutions in the interests of maintaining and strengthening the universal peace was and remains the most important task of all Governments, their duty before the peoples.

Recalling now President John F. Kennedy, I would like especially to note his speech at the American University in Washington, on June 10, 1963. That statement can be called courageous and more realistic than what the Soviet Union and other countries of the socialist world often heard from American shores. Although that statement of the President of the United States, too, had some conflicting points and a tribute unfortunately was paid in it to the so-called policy of "containment and pushing back of communism", as a whole, however, it proceeded from acknowledgement of the inevitability and necessity of coexistence of states with different social systems.

Today, I would not like to go into details of the negative points of that statement by John F. Kennedy since, let me say it again, it contained the main idea: in that statement the President said - "let us reexamine our attitude toward the Soviet Union";

he said that "peace need not be impracticable and war need not be inevitable".

President Kennedy realized that the United States of America should in their own interests and for the improvement of entire international politics look for stands which would ensure peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems. That statement reflected more correct understanding of the fact that unsettled issues between states cannot be solved by means of war, since no sound minded man, especially if he recognizes the other side to be militarily equal to him, would start a war.

That speech by John F. Kennedy, as one could assume, was a sort of preparatory, the President defined a platform for future election campaign. Although everyone knows that President John F. Kennedy was a man of an ideology which is opposite to ours, and represented interests of a state standing on a political platform which is opposite to ours, nevertheless in that statement of his he was outlining already more realistic principles of the relations between countries with different social systems and thus, if his idea is to be broadened, between two social systems.

The President said that it is not competition in the arms race and demonstration of military force in the international policy, it is not the policy "on the brink of war" but peaceful coexistence and competition of the two systems that can help the world to avoid total war which "makes no sense in an age when

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great powers can maintain large and relatively invulnerable nuclear forces and refuse to surrender without resort to those forces". "Total war makes no sense in an age, - said John F. Kennedy, - when a single nuclear weapon contains almost 10 times the explosive force delivered by all of the Allied air forces in the Second World War".

Regretfully, only a few months had passed since President John F. Kennedy made this important statement, and he was no more. I go back to the thoughts expressed in this statement, which attracted attention, also because, however tragic a loss is, the duty of the living is to work in the interests of the cause of peace, in the interests of preventing world thermonuclear war which would be a great catastrophe for mankind.

The relations between the Soviet Union and the United States are an important link in the system of international relations of many countries of the world. In the cause of reducing international tensions and establishing such relations among states, when existing issues would be settled by peaceful means on the basis of realistic understanding of things as they exist, much depends on our great powers, possessing nuclear weapons of enormous destructive force.

President John F. Kennedy passed away at a time when his activities in his high state office, as I have already said, were beginning to be marked by some agreed constructive decisions, connected with establishment of better mutual understanding

between our countries. It is precisely in this sense, in the sense of activities aimed at strengthening the peace and reducing international tensions that we regarded with understanding the statements made by the President of the United States, who proclaimed the continuity of the foreign policy of the late President John F. Kennedy.

Sincerely,

N. KHRUSHCHEV

June 29, 1964.