

## FOREWORD

### **Transcript Warning:**

All written transcripts are imperfect abstracts of spoken conversation. Variations in sound quality and in the aural acuity of listeners can and do produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared at great effort and with great care, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous interpretations from transcripts are always possible. Therefore, to ensure full confidence in any and all quotations from the presidential recordings, users are strongly urged to check all transcript renditions against the actual tape recordings before publication.

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### **Punctuation:**

The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

- \* \* \*      To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.
- [ ?]      When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.
- . . . .      To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.
- . . .      When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.
- \_\_\_\_\_      To indicate the speaker's emphasis.
- [ ]      Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as */Meeting appears to be breaking up/* or */Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible./*

### **Names:**

The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

### **Preparation:**

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the audiovisual research room in the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

## **Dictabelt 14A**

Conversation #4: President Kennedy and Arthur Sylvester

March 11, 1963

President: Is it closed or open?

Mr. Sylvester: I believe it is a closed session.

President: What are they going to ask you about? Is it this supposed remark on Friday?

Mr. Sylvester: Yes, they want me to bring the transcript of, uh, we keep a transcript of the remarks of the uh . . .

President: What exactly did you say?

Mr. Sylvester: I haven't got it in front of me. I didn't question their fairness at any time, so I have answered it tonight. We have been pressured day after day for some comment on the hearing, and I have refrained until last Friday, when during that period at the end of last week, when the thing got worse and worse. Bob [Robert S. McNamara] and the rest of us, we thought we would go ahead and make some response for a change. So they were asking the question again by asking me if I had any comment to make about the inaccuracies. And there was some conversation, and in the course of it, I made no reference to any Senator's personal fairness at all. I did say that it was unlikely where state interest was involved, and that we would get a judicial rendering because the Senate hearings and House hearings are not judicial procedures, and I've never heard of anybody who said they were. If they were, they couldn't achieve some of the great things they have done. [laughter]

President: Alright. Balls, but go ahead. So then, what are you going to say?

Mr. Sylvester: Well, that's what I said there at the, uh, I did say that reading . . . All I'm . . . My point is that all I did was to read from the transcript. I do have a news clipping from the Chicago Daily News, which I am taking with me, if they ask

me what is it based on, in which committee investigators are quoted in the direct that they have made up their minds, and this was a bad decision, and the quotation of the committee investigator who said what McNamara did means that if the Russians took the other plane, the one he turned down, and they would shoot down all the American planes that he selected. This is a direct quote.

President: I wouldn't eat too much crow for those bastards.

Mr. Sylvester: Well, I didn't want to. Bob [Robert S. McNamara] was insisting, uh, I didn't have a chance to talk to him, but he left directions that I should write a letter this afternoon. I wrote sort of, if you read it, it is a pretty equivocal letter. I didn't say that I was apologizing to him, I said that I was sorry if somebody interpreted the remark. And I don't believe I should, myself, and I haven't really any intention of doing that. I don't see where I should back water on it.

President: Yea, just say I don't think we have had a chance to express our case.

Mr. Sylvester: I am just going to say that the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Secretary in his letter today that the thing is fragmentary, confused. That our side had not been brought out and, quote, a couple of these stories in which it's made us look very bad, which stories are attributed to committee sources.

President: Okay, that is fine. That will be closed, won't it? Then they will come out and say.

Mr. Sylvester: That the transcript will be made available, because there won't be anything classified.

President: Okay, fine, righto.