

**George F. Kennan Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 03/23/1965**  
Administrative Information

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**Biographical Note**

Kennan, United States Ambassador to Yugoslavia (1961 - 1963), discusses his position as United States Ambassador to Yugoslavia and his working relationship with John F. Kennedy, among other issues.

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*March 4, 1966*



## George F. Kennan – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

GEORGE F. KENNAN

March 23, 1965  
Princeton, New Jersey

By Louis Fischer

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MR. FISCHER: March 23, 1965. This is an interview with Mr. George F. Kennan who was United States Ambassador to Moscow and, during the Kennedy administration, to Belgrade. We are seated in Mr. Kennan's office in the Institute for Advanced Study where he is Professor and permanent member of the faculty of Historical Studies. I am Louis Fischer, author of books on the Soviet Union, on India, etc. With us in the office is Mr. Charles Morrissey, Chief of the Oral History Project of the John F. Kennedy Library, and, also, Mr. Kennan's fifteen-year-old son, Christopher. Mr. Kennan and I are old friends, and it would be stilted and formal to address one another as Mr. or Professor, so it will just be "George" and

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"Louis." George, what acquaintance did you have with John F. Kennedy prior to his election as president?

MR. KENNAN: Well, I had seen him and heard from him several times. So far as I can recall, the first time I met him was at a party in Washington in the early 1950s. I think, actually, around 1953, at the time that I was leaving the Foreign Service [United States Foreign Service] for the first



time.<sup>1</sup> Then, I once spoke from the same platform with him at Brandeis University at a later period in the '50s. I can't remember just when it was, but probably around 1958. It was an afternoon ceremony devoted to foreign students in this country; he and I were both speakers. Of course, I met him, and I met Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy], again on that occasion.

MR. FISCHER: How did he speak? Do you recall?

MR. KENNAN: I thought—reasonably well, but not greatly effectively because he was then deeply immersed

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in political life. He gave a great many such speeches. This was, I think, one written for him, and he just read it off. It was all right; it was suitable. But one didn't have the impression that it was a statement to which he himself had given a great deal of thought and which came out of his heart, so to speak.

MR. FISCHER: What impression did he make on you as a person?

MR. KENNAN: On those occasions merely a pleasant one. I was impressed with his youthfulness—he looked like a sort of overgrown student in those days. I was impressed with Mrs. Kennedy's beauty. But these were very casual meetings. I can't remember whether he was a senator on both of those occasions or not. Perhaps he was.

MR. MORRISSEY: In 1953 he would have been just beginning.

MR. KENNAN: I think he was just beginning as a senator. Of course, I was amazed to see anyone looking so young and so modest in the senatorial position.

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MR. FISCHER: Did you ever have any correspondence with John F. Kennedy before his candidacy or election as President?

MR. KENNAN: Yes, I had several exchanges of communications with him. On February 13, 1958, when I was living and teaching at Oxford in England, I was very surprised and pleased to receive from him a letter about the Reith Lectures which I had recently delivered in England on the BBC [British Broadcasting Company]. Those lectures are, of course, the annual BBC lecture series, that is the main series of their "Third Program." The ones that I delivered in the

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Kennan retired twice from the Foreign Service: once in 1953, and again after his service in Yugoslavia.

autumn of 1957 received, I think, a particularly large amount of attention. The BBC told me that all six of them had had listening audiences greater than any lecture previously given on the BBC except for the initial Reith Lecture, the first one given by Bertrand Russell when they were started, which had about the same. They were rebroadcast in this country and in Canada, and they were actually heard by

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millions of people. They were completed in the middle of December, and it was in January, about three weeks later, that I had—or February actually—that I received this letter from the then Senator Kennedy.

MR. FISCHER: Yes. Would you please read it?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. It was addressed to me in England—correctly to my home address there in Oxford. Wherever he got it, I don't know.

“Dear Mr. Kennan: Having had an opportunity to read in full your Reith Lectures, I should like to convey to you my respect for their brilliance and stimulation and to commend you for the service you have performed by delivering them. I have studied the lectures with care and find that their contents have become twisted and misrepresented in many of the criticisms made of them. Needless to say, there is nothing in these lectures or in your career of public service which justifies the personal criticisms that have been made. I myself take a differing attitude toward several

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of the matters which you raised in these lectures—especially as regards the under-developed world—but it is most satisfying that there is at least one member of the “opposition” who is not only performing his critical duty but also providing a carefully formulated, comprehensive and brilliantly written set of alternative proposals and perspectives. You have directed our attention to the right questions and in a manner that allows us to test rigorously our current assumptions. I am very pleased to learn that these lectures will soon be published in book form, almost simultaneously with the appearance of the second volume of your magisterial study of U.S-Soviet relations after World War I. With kind regards and every good wish for your stay in Oxford, Sincerely yours, John. F. Kennedy.

MR. FISCHER: That's remarkable, and I'm sure you were very pleased. George, could you give us in a paragraph or so the thesis, or theses, of

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your Reith Lectures, so that there would be a background for this letter?

MR. KENNAN: The main thesis was a plea for reexamination by our policy makers of the questions of disengagement in Europe and of disarmament. But also there was one lecture, and it is this to which he particularly refers there, which dealt with the underdeveloped world, and which carried forward—I think for the first time from myself publicly—the thesis that we ought to be prepared to let some of these countries go Communist when they try to blackmail us with threats along those lines rather than overloading them with aid.

MR. FISCHER: It's to this that he took exception?

MR. KENNAN: I think it is to this that he took exception.

MR. FISCHER: Where had he read these?

MR. KENNAN: They were very widely published in excerpts and other ways for this kind of thing.

MR. FISCHER: He must have read them in a British publication.

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MR. KENNAN: I think he read them in the *Listener* because later he wrote me about other things of mine that appeared in the *Listener*. I think he saw the *Listener*, which is the organ of the BBC. They were all published in full in the *Listener*. But they were also republished in many ways elsewhere.

MR. FISCHER: There was great charity in that letter.

MR. KENNAN: There certainly was. I was, of course, particularly moved that he should know about my scholarly work. Very few people knew where that stood at that moment.

MR. FISCHER: I wonder how he did know.

MR. KENNAN: I don't know.

MR. MORRISSEY: Could you tell us the date of that letter?

MR. KENNAN: That letter was written to me on February 13, 1958.

MR. FISCHER: How was he aware of the attacks? He says personal attacks.

MR. KENNAN: I think he had in mind, particularly, the attacks levied against me by Dean Acheson [Dean G. Acheson] and by a group of so-called German "experts,"



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who were close to Acheson and close to the Bonn [West German] government, who attacked me very bitterly. There were something like fourteen of them. These attacks were, indeed, to some extent personal, and I was deeply upset about them because Mr. Acheson, in particular, took occasion to reproach me publicly for recommendations I had made to him as his subordinate in government several years earlier—recommendations which he had not acceded to, which he had rejected, and which I had never taken to the public as an issue, you see. This seemed to me to be improper because I felt that any man who serves in an advisory capacity in government has a right to give his honest advice to his superior. But the superior must not reproach him with it later, publicly, because it was his duty to give him his honest judgment.

MR. FISCHER:                    Then the letter from Senator Kennedy was certainly balm for you.

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MR. KENNAN:                    It certainly was....

MR. FISCHER:                    And I suppose it was so intended.

MR. KENNAN:                    Yes, I'm sure it was. I'm sure that he didn't feeling that this was the right way to respond to the lectures—by personal attacks.

                  Would you like me to go on with the other communications I had from him then in that period?

MR. FISCHER:                    Yes, I was about to ask.

MR. KENNAN:                    Nearly a year later on January 21, 1959, I had another letter from him concerning two more things that I had written that had come to his attention. One of these was an article entitled "Disengagement Revisited" which had appeared in the January 1959 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. This was really a reply to Mr. Acheson and to the other critics of the Reith Lectures. The other article to which he referred was a piece entitled "America's Administrative Response to Its World Problems." This was a

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contribution I had made at a conference at MIT [Massachusetts Institute for Technology], and it dealt with the problem of Washington bureaucracy, with the growth of administrative staffs in Washington. He had read this, too. It was these two that were mentioned in his letter. Now, since his letter refers to the content of these, it might be advisable for me to mention

one or two of the things stated in the article about “Disengagement Revisited.” I was wondering if there was any particular....No, I think that’s too long for me to go into. It was a reexamination of the assumptions of our policy in Germany, especially the assumptions with relation to the Soviet Union. I’ll read the letter. This was written on stationary of the Senate, January 21, 1959, addressed to me here at the Institute.

“Dear Mr. Kennan: I understand there is a chance that you may be in Washington during the next weeks, perhaps to testify before the Foreign Relations Committee [United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations]. At

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all events, I am most anxious to have the opportunity of talking with you when you are next here. If you would let me know just a little beforehand by letter or telephone, I would be most happy to have you for lunch or dinner—or even breakfast if that suits you best. During the holidays I had the opportunity to read both your article in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs* and your earlier piece on “America’s Administration Response to Its World Problems.” Both of these articles raise issues which I would very much like to discuss with you. I think that you have made it unmistakably clear in the *Foreign Affairs* article what we must negotiate about if we hold talks with the Russians and I think you have disposed of the extreme rigidity of Mr. Acheson’s position with great effectiveness and without the kind of ad hominem irrelevancies in which Mr. Acheson unfortunately indulged last year....”

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MR. FISCHER: Very interesting. Now, what happened, George? Did you see him?

MR. KENNAN: I did arrange to have lunch with him when I went to Washington to testify, shortly after that, at some hearings which were conducted by Senator Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey]. But, actually, as I recall it, his schedule was cluttered up that day, and the best I was able to do was call on him in his office in the afternoon, briefly. I can remember that only as a sort of courtesy call in which he was pretty harried. He had some labor union problem on his mind, and I didn’t detain him long because I could see what sort of thing he was into.

Now, that was in January 1959. A year later, in January 1960, again I had a note from him. This time, a handwritten note undated except for “Monday” and written in Jamaica, where he was vacationing. This was, of course, within a few months of his nomination and election as president.

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MR. FISCHER: Before, yes.

MR. KENNAN: Yes. While I will be glad to turn this note over to you, it is, as you see, a handwritten item. As far as I can read it—the handwriting is not entirely easy to read—this is what it says: “I had the opportunity belatedly today of reading your talk reprinted in the October issue of the *Listener*. It impressed me, as does everything you say, with its dispassionate good sense. I was especially interested in your thoughts on our considering not merely limitations in testing but the abrogation of the weapon itself. I wonder if we could expect to check the sweep south of the Chinese with their endless armies with conventional forces? In any case, we shall all be discussing this two or three years after the moment of opportunity has passed. I hope to see you when you are in Washington after the first of the year. Good wishes for you for Christmas and peace on earth. Sincerely, John Kennedy.”

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MR. FISCHER: That’s very warm and prescient, I think.

MR. KENNAN: Yes, and this letter is of particular interest because of its reference to testing and to the question of abolishing the atomic weapon. I thought, for that reason, I might read here one or two of the key passages of the article which he had read and to which he refers, to which he was responding. I had pointed out that, whereas the Russians had manifested at all times since 1945 a readiness in principle and even an eagerness to agree on the total abolition and outlawing of atomic weapons, we in the West had taken an ambiguous position on this. And I go ahead here in citing what was said in the article: “We appear, in particular, to have committed ourselves extensively in our military planning to what is called the ‘principle of first use.’ This position is intelligible only on the hypothesis that we consider ourselves to be outclassed in the field of conventional weapons, that we are looking to the atomic

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ones to redress the balance, that we could, therefore view an abolition of atomic weapons only as an unacceptable deterioration in our strategic situation, and that we would be disinclined, accordingly, to agree to any such abolition unless it were accompanied by a wide measure of disarmament in conventional weapons as well.” That’s one passage. I then polemized later in the article with this position that we couldn’t defend ourselves with conventional weapons and said: “So far as our weakness in conventional weapons is concerned, let us be frank with ourselves. This is a matter of convenience and of political will. The resources of the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] group are in no way inferior to those of the Soviet Union when it comes to the ingredients of conventional military power. Whether we develop or fail to develop these resources is a matter of our own political choice. I am wholly unwilling to believe that we could not compete militarily in an atomless world.

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Can one seriously suppose that, had atomic weapons never been invented, the western nations would not have found means to assure their own security in this postwar period? Plainly, the abolition of the atomic weapons would free considerable financial and technical resources for the improvement of the conventional ones, and, if this improvement also involved more disciplined mobilization and utilization of manpower, this, too, would be cheap at the price compared to the dangers we now face.” And, then, finally, I polemized in this article against the cultivation of the weapons of mass destruction because they threatened, as I said, “the very intactness of the natural environment in which civilization is to proceed if it is to proceed at all.” I would like to quote the passage that follows, because of the fact that he wrote me this note. “I must say that to do anything that has this effect (and that is to threaten the intactness of our natural

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environment) seems to me simply wrong. Wrong in the good, old-fashioned meaning of the term. It involves an egocentricity on our part that has no foundation either in religious faith or in political philosophy. It accords poorly with the view we like to take of ourselves as people whose lives are founded on a system of spiritual and ethical values. We of this generation did not create the civilization of which we are a part and, only too obviously, it is not we who are destined to complete it. We are not the owners of the planet we inhabit; we are only its custodians. There are limitations on the extent to which we should be permitted to devastate or pollute it. Our own safety and convenience is not the ultimate of what is at stake in the judgment of these problems. People did not struggle and sacrifice and endure over the course of several thousand years to produce this civilization merely in order to make it possible for us, the contemporaries of 1959,

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to make an end to it or to place it in jeopardy at our pleasure for the sake of our own personal safety. If we are to regard ourselves as the heir to a tradition and as the bearers of a faith, or even a culture, then our deepest obligation must be realized as relating not to ourselves alone but to that which we represent, not to the present alone but to the past and to the future.” So much for the excerpts. This was, of course, another speech given on the BBC and reprinted in the *Listener*. I cite these passages because it does seem to me important that he should have written to me concentrating on this question of the atomic weapon. It is important from the standpoint of the fact that during his subsequent administration he did move both to the limitation of testing and, also, to the strengthening of conventional weapons as a means of getting away from an exclusive dependence on the atomic ones. Both of these things begin to appear in here.

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MR. FISCHER:

George, did you have any contact with John F. Kennedy between the time of his election and the time he took office?

MR. KENNAN: Louis, before I go on to that, I ought, perhaps, to tell you about one more communication. Two more, actually, that I had with him. The first was that I, of course, acknowledged this letter he had written to me about the *Listener* article, and I had a reply very shortly after that to the effect that he had read a further article of mine which was the one which appeared in *Foreign Affairs* in which I polemized with Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev] on the subject of coexistence.

MR. FISCHER: Oh yes, I remember that—a very good article.

MR. KENNAN: You remember Khrushchev had had an article in *Foreign Affairs* defining the Soviet idea of coexistence? I was asked to write a reply to it and did. This he had read, and this is a very brief...I thought I might just read it into the record because then we have

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a complete record of what he wrote me in those years. January 26, 1960, written from the Senate. "Dear Mr. Kennan: Thank you very much for your kind personal letter elaborating on the article in the *Listener*. Meanwhile I have also received a copy of your article in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs*. I think that your article is most effective and masterfully written. The tone and content of this article could hardly be better. I hope that there may be an opportunity of chatting with you again on one of your future visits to Washington." Now, that brought us up to the election. Shortly after the election, but before he took office, I, taking advantage of what appeared to me to be his interest in my views, sat down and wrote him on August 17, 1960, a long letter putting before him my views about some of our basic problems of foreign policy, particularly with regard to the Soviet Union, and making a number of

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points which I thought he might like to bear in mind in the final stages of his campaign. That is a long letter, and I will not read it all into the record. I give you a copy of it, but I might read the summary paragraph of it, to let you know what sort of thing I had said to him in this letter. "Let me then summarize. We may, by January, be faced with an extremely disturbing if not calamitous situation. It will in any case be an unfavorable one and in urgent need of improvement. Such a situation could be brought under control only if we could regain the initiative. To do this, a new administration should move quickly and boldly in the initial stages of its incumbency, before it becomes enmeshed in the procedural tangles of Washington and before it is itself placed on the defensive by the movement of events. The needed curtailment of our world commitments gives opportunities for initiative, but it should be balanced by a strengthening

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of our defense posture, particularly in the conventional weapons. The main target of our diplomacy should be to heighten the divisive tendencies within the Soviet bloc. The best means to do this lies in the improvement of our relations with Moscow. An effort along these lines is essential to any sound policy, but this should not lead us into any new involvements concerning summit meetings, nor should it be assumed that it necessitates the extensive negotiations of formal agreements.” I might explain that I had pressed him here, particularly, to take advantage of the opportunities for private communication with the Soviet government. I had taken a position against trying to solve our problems with the Russians in general by concluding formal agreements which would require Congressional approval in our country and would get the suspicions of the Russians up. (The Russians always become suspicious when one gets legalistic about language with them.)

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I had urged him here to try and seek an improvement of our relations with the Soviet Union by reciprocal concessions—that we do something that eases their position; they, then, do something that eases ours, and each one is a pledge of good faith for the next one. In order to be able to do that, I recommend—and this is important because I’ll return to this later when we discuss my own work in Belgrade—I had recommended that we make maximum use of the possibilities of private, fully private, discussion with the Soviet government. I said, “These things are difficult, but they are not, I reiterate, impossible. (That is, private discussions, with them.) And, if private discussions of this sort happen to provide the only favorable possibilities, as they did actually in the liquidation of the Berlin blockage and the Korean War, then we cannot afford to spurn them. Let us remember that a series of conciliatory moves on the part of our government,

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which would be quite unsuitable if they were to be made without corresponding action on the other side, might well be acceptable if they were to be matched and geared in with a similar series of concessions on the other side. Neither party would have to assume any obligation to the other in this respect, but there is no reason in principle why one should not keep in touch, informally, with people on the Soviet side with a view to making such a process of settling issues by unilateral actions as painless and productive as possible.” He wrote me on October 30, only a week before the election, on stationary of the Senate from Washington: “Dear Mr. Kennan: I just want to let you know that I profited greatly from the long letter which you were so kind to send me some weeks back, and I am especially conscious of some of the suggestions it made as we reach these last days of the campaign. I am very much in accord with the main thrust of your

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argument and with most of your particular recommendations. I hope, win or lose, that there may be an opportunity of seeing you after the election is over. May I thank you for your generous willingness to support me publicly in this campaign. With every good wish,

Sincerely yours, John F. Kennedy.” That completes, Louis, the record of the exchanges that I had with him prior to his election.

MR. FISCHER:                   What happened between his election and his inauguration? Did you see him or correspond with him?

MR. KENNAN:                   Yes. On January 3, 1961, I had a phone call from his office inviting me to come to New York on the tenth of January, 1961, and to lunch with him. I accepted and went up there, but his schedule—these were, of course, the hectic days between his election and his assumption of office—turned out to be very heavily burdened that day. So he asked me, instead of lunching with him in

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New York, to get on his private plane, on which he was about to fly to Washington, to fly with him, and to have lunch on the plane. This I did. He came out and sat with me while I had lunch. (There were a number of other people on the plane.) We talked for a portion of the journey down to Washington. I kept a record of this conversation with him. It’s the only one of the several conversations that I had with him in that period and further, later on, during his presidency, of which I have a personal record. I was at that time not in government so there was no question of classification, and I could write this all down for my own purposes. I will not read you the whole record because it’s lengthy. I will be glad to give it to you for the records of the Library [John F. Kennedy Presidential Library] I might, however, read certain passages which give some idea of what he was interested in. I quote—this memo, incidentally, is dated January 10, 1961:

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“He began by telling me of the many approaches made to him from the Soviet side, particularly through Menshikov [Mikhail A. Menshikov], in recent weeks. (I might explain that Menshikov was then, I believe, the Soviet Ambassador in Washington.) He said that to put an end to the many indirect approaches, he had asked Bruce [David K. E. Bruce] to talk to Menshikov and find out specifically what he had in mind.”

MR. FISCHER:                   That’s our Ambassador, David Bruce.

MR. KENNAN:                   Yes. “And he showed me the memo Bruce had written about this talk to which there was attached an unsigned and unletterheaded document in which Menshikov had set forth what purported to be his own personal thoughts. This document, which bore to my eye all the earmarks of having been drafted in Khrushchev’s office but cleared with a wider circle of people, was considerably stiffer and more offensive than Menshikov’s own remarks. Both documents stressed the urgency of negotiation and invited exchanges

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looking toward a summit meeting. Mr. Kennedy asked me what I thought of them, and what he ought to do about them." I don't know whether to go on with my own reply to this. It will be in the record if you want it, but this passage that I have just quoted shows the nature of his problems at that time.

MR. FISCHER: I think it would be interesting to get the impression of the colloquy.

MR. KENNAN: All right. "I explained that I thought there were two camps in the Kremlin, not neatly and clearly delimited but nevertheless importantly different, one of which did not care about relations with this country because it considered that we could be successfully disposed of despite ourselves and without need for any negotiations; the other of which was reluctant to burn the bridges. I thought Mr. Menshikov's statement, which specifically mentioned his being in touch with Khrushchev, Mikoyan [Anastas I. Mikoyan], and Kozlov [Frol Romanovich Kozlov], indicated that he was speaking personally

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for this latter group. On the other hand the written document had probably had to be cleared with a wider circle and was, therefore, tougher in content. I said that I saw no reason why he should take any official cognizance of the written document or give it any specific reply. As for Menshikov and his urgings, I said that in his position I would make no reply to Menshikov or to Khrushchev before taking office. These people had no right whatsoever to rush him in this way, and he was under no obligation of any sort to conduct any communication with foreign governments prior to his assumption of office. As for the subsequent period, I was inclined to think that it might be well to send a private and confidential message to Khrushchev saying, in effect, that if people on that side were serious in their desire to discuss with us any of the major outstanding differences between the two governments, including disarmament, there would be a positive and

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constructive response on our side. But when it came to suggestions from summit meetings, the burden of proof first of all would be on anyone who wanted such a meeting to demonstrate why these questions could not be better treated at lower and more normal levels. In any case, it was difficult to see how an American president could conceivably meet with people who were putting their signatures to the sort of anti-American propaganda which had recently been emanating from Moscow and Peking. I reiterated that I thought such a message ought to be drafted so as to bear publication in case the Russians spilled it or leaked it any other way. However, I said, he ought not to take any step of this sort just on the basis of my advice. Bohlen [Charles E. Bohlen] and Averell Harriman [William Averell Harriman] should also be consulted as well as Thompson [Llewellyn E. Thompson, Jr.] —those were

the other three men who had served as Ambassador in Moscow. And he should listen to their views both on the desirability of making such a

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communication and on the question of the channels by which it might be best sent. In this connection I told him at a later point in the conversation that I hoped he would insist on the right of privacy in the handling of the Soviet problems. I thought the outgoing administration had gone much too far in accepting the thesis that nothing should be done with the Russians which should not immediately be made known to the press. In my opinion privacy of communication with other governments was a right of his office and one of which he could not let himself be deprived without detriment to his possibilities for conducting policy successfully. He asked why I thought Khrushchev was so eager for a summit meeting. I said that I felt that his position had been weakened and explained why. This, I might interject here, I felt had been the consequence of the U-2 episode.

MR. FISCHER:                   And the break-up of the summit meeting.

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MR. KENNAN:                   And the breaking up of the summit meeting, and, also, the growing intensity of the Chinese-Soviet conflict. I thought there was a real sense of urgency in Moscow about achieving agreements on disarmament, and that this stemmed largely from concern over the "nth country" problem and particularly China. Khrushchev, I thought, still hoped that by the insertion of his own personality and the use of his powers of persuasion he could achieve such an agreement with the United States and recoup in this way his failing political fortunes.

Senator Kennedy said that he was giving thought to the problem of staff with relation to foreign policy. He wondered whether he should not have around him in the White House a small staff of people who worked just for him and did not represent other departments. He said that he did not want to be put in a position where he had only one or two people to whom he could turn for certain types of

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advice. He said that Rusk [Dean Rusk] had already come to him about our possible intervention in Laos. He felt that this was too narrow a basis of advice for decisions of such gravity. He did not want to be in the position of Mr. Truman [Harry S. Truman], who had, in effect, only one foreign policy advisor, namely Mr. Acheson, and was entirely dependent on what advice the latter gave. I said that it was and had been for long my emphatic view that the President should have staff of his own and should not be dependent merely on advice that came up through the various departments and agencies. I will not go ahead with all my views on that unless you think it necessary.

MR. FISCHER:                   Did you find him a good listener?

MR. KENNAN:                   Excellent always. He is the best listener I've ever seen in high position anywhere. I might say at this point, Louis, that what impressed me, I thought most of all about Mr. Kennedy over the course of the years,

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as I saw him repeatedly, was the fact that he was able to resist the temptation, to which so many other great men have yielded, to sound off himself and be admired. He asked questions modestly, sensibly, and listened very patiently to what you had to say and did not try, then, to tell jokes, to be laughed at, or to utter sententious statements himself to be admired. This is a rare thing among men who have arisen to very exalted positions. I don't want to name other names, but I can think of some of the greatest with whom it was very hard, indeed, to have a conversation because they tended to monopolize it.

MR. FISCHER:                 Did you sense at that time, on that airplane trip, that he was already the President of the United States?

MR. KENNAN:                 Oh, yes. Very much so. He was feeling his way. He sincerely wanted advice—the broadest and best advice he could get, and I was well aware that my voice was only one

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of many that he was consulting. I fully approved of that, as you see, by telling him that I felt that on certain of these subjects he ought to....

MR. FISCHER:                 George, did he make any suggestion to you about your personal participation?

MR. KENNAN:                 Not yet.

MR. FISCHER:                 Not on that trip?

MR. KENNAN:                 No. I might read on a bit here because there are two or three other indications of what he had in mind. He told me of certain of his difficulties choosing people, and I don't think I need to repeat that; it mentions the people in question. We talked about who would be good for the policy planning stuff and that sort of thing.

MR. FISCHER:                 I'm not asking you for the names, but was he seeking advice? Was he asking for guidance?

MR. KENNAN: Yes, he knew that I had been director of the policy planning staff, and he did want my views as to what sort of person would be good to fill that position. We talked about

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foreign aid; I gave him my views on that, urged that we concentrate on India, said I thought we had wasted large amounts of the aid. We talked about the Foreign Service and the State Department. I told him I thought both were grotesquely overstaffed and gave him my views on that. On leaving him in Washington, I thanked him for his courtesy and assured him both of my enthusiasm for the way he was going about his tasks and of my readiness to be of service to him in any way that I could. At some point in the conversation, incidentally, he said that “he had made it a rule not to consider any diplomatic appointments prior to his assumption of office. In pursuance of this ruling he had resisted some very heavy pressures from the political side. He had done this for the sake of the career service, and he hoped the men in the service realized this and would repay him in loyalty and application accordingly. He then talked to me about the

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question of the ambassadorship in Moscow, whether he should make a change there—Thompson was there. I said that I thought it’d be an excellent thing if he could keep Thompson there at least for the immediate future, but I thought that he ought to be called home at an early date and consulted by the President about the problems of our relations with the Soviet Union.” Let’s see if there’s anything else here.

MR. FISCHER: There was no intimation tentatively about what he wanted you to do?

MR. KENNAN: Not then but very shortly thereafter. This meeting on the plane was on the tenth of January. Very shortly thereafter, on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, when I was up at Yale University where I was teaching a weekly seminar, I just happened to walk into the college—the office of the college—at which I resided, and with which I was connected up there, to see whether there was any mail for me. I wasn’t spending the morning there, in fact

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I was going along the street. But I thought, “I’ll just walk into the college office and see if there’s a letter for me.” As I walked in there—it was the noon hour and the regular secretary was gone—there was an undergraduate who was tending the telephone in the office. He got up, and I could see that he was agitated. He had the telephone receiver in one hand, and he said, “Mr. Kennan, you came just at the right second. The President of the United States wants to talk to you.” This was, indeed, Mr. Kennedy—President Kennedy. He had now been in office for what was it—three days. He asked me whether I would be prepared to serve as



Ambassador either in Poland or in Yugoslavia, and, if so, which I would prefer. I told him that I would be happy to serve, and I would give him an answer as to which I would prefer very shortly, if possible later in the day. So I did. I thought it over for the rest of the day and called him back in the

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evening and told him I would prefer to serve in Yugoslavia.

MR. FISCHER: George, out of your knowledge of diplomatic procedure, is this the normal way of doing things? Of a president calling a private citizen and asking this sort of question?

MR. KENNAN: I think it is. That is, he might, more normally, in more leisurely days have asked such a citizen to come to Washington to see him. But I could well understand he had a great deal to do in a short time. I thought it was a very courteous way. He could have done this through the Secretary of State. But this was the proper way because an Ambassador is the personal representative of the President. Therefore, it is really proper, in my opinion, that the President should ask him to serve and almost important that this should come this way. I don't know whether this is always done this way or not.

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MR. FISCHER: Did he say anything else? How did he begin the conversation?

MR. KENNAN: You know, I can't remember exactly, but I thought he put it to me very bluntly. I think he simply said that "I would hope that you would consent to serve as Ambassador for me, and I have two posts that I'm interested in your filling." So, from that time on I had agreed, of course, to serve. Then, very shortly after that, I was asked to come to Washington and to confer with him. I did this. The date named was February 11<sup>th</sup>. I went down there and met in his office with a group of people who included Vice President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], Mac Bundy [McGeorge Bundy], and the other three men who had been ambassadors to the Soviet Union, Harriman, Thompson, and Bohlen. The purpose of this was simply to get our advice on problems of relations with the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc. I don't remember the conversation. I would have voiced sentiments similar to the ones that I expressed

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to him on the plane. The Vice President, as I recall it, said nothing and merely sat in. I had the impression he that he was just there to be briefed. The only thing that I remember about that is that, at the end of our conversation, Cuba came up and the question of possible intervention in Cuba by these exiles. This was, of course, only two months before the Bay of Pigs episode. I can remember both Bohlen and myself telling him that "whatever you feel

you have to do here, be sure that it is successful; because the worst thing is to undertake something of this sort and to undertake it unsuccessfully.”

MR. FISCHER: The best kind of advice. How long did that conversation last?

MR. KENNAN: This was a Saturday morning, as I recall it, and it lasted most of the morning. I think from about nine-thirty or ten to twelve. It was a long session.

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MR. FISCHER: What do you feel he was after? Anything specific or...

MR. KENNAN: He wanted to know how to tackle the main problem of diplomacy for him which was relations with the Soviet Union, to what extent he should credit the good will of the approaches that were being made on the other side, whether he should have a summit meeting, how he should go about this. He was very uncertain about all this.

MR. FISCHER: Do you think he had made up his mind to go into a summit meeting and wanted your advice?

MR. KENNAN: No, I do not think that he had made up his mind at that time. He was very troubled about this problem because, having been in Congress, he was very sensitive to the strong anti-Communist feelings that were prevalent in a portion of the electorate and in a large portion of the Congress. He wanted to handle this problem, if he could, in such a way as to make progress in composing our differences with the

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Russians, but not to get himself attacked at home for being soft on Communism or anything of that sort.

MR. FISCHER: On Cuba did you have an impression that he had already made up his mind to intervene?

MR. KENNAN: No, but I had the impression that he was being pressed to authorize intervention or to wink at it. That is my recollection. I saw him incidentally, once more then before I left for my post. I paid a formal call on him on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, the day that I was sworn in as Ambassador. I cannot remember what we discussed. It would have been partly with relation to Yugoslavia, partly again, probably, the Soviet problem. He always sought my advice on problems of relations with Russia as well as Yugoslavia.

MR. FISCHER: George, how long did you serve at Belgrade?

MR. KENNAN: I served there from the first days of May 1961 until the last day of July 1963. In other words, I was actually at my post about two years and a quarter although my

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actual period of being formally Ambassador was somewhat longer than that.

MR. FISCHER: Would you now give us an account of your contacts with the President either in person or in writing during that period?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. First of all, it was my understanding from what I was told by Mac Bundy and others that the President gave instructions that all of my major political telegrams and communications were to be sent over for his personal reading.

MR. FISCHER: Sent over from the State Department?

MR. KENNAN: From the State Department. I don't think that this was the case with very many ambassadors, but he did want to see—either he or Bundy or both—particularly everything that I sent in. I think that one reason he did was that I tried to make these communications have a little more flavor and a little more interest and put a bit of humor in them and make them a bit peppery to get away from the dullness of normal official communications.

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He always enjoyed that. In addition to this, during this period that I served in Belgrade, I was called home to Washington five times. Four times for consultation on the problems of my post and once to accompany the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, who was passing through Washington and who wanted to call on the President.

MR. FISCHER: That was Koča Popović?

MR. KENNAN: That was Koča Popović. The President thought that it would be advisable for me to be there. He wanted to consult with me before he received Popović and he wanted me to escort Popović to see him. So I was called home five times in all, and on every one of those occasions I saw the President. I didn't have to take the initiative in asking to see him. He always knew I was coming home and asked to see me. He simply made known the time when he would see me. I don't have the records of our conversations on those occasions. I remember with particular distinctness the time that I

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took Popović to see him. I had already seen the President alone the day before and told him what I thought would be on Popović's mind, and what sort of line I thought he ought to take. Then I did, of course, accompany Popović and sit there with him during the interview. I was full of admiration for the way the President handled him.

MR. FISCHER: Popović speaks good French. Did he speak French?

MR. KENNAN: He spoke English.

MR. FISCHER: He spoke English.

MR. KENNAN: Yes. He doesn't like to, but he can. On this occasion he spoke English. The President received him in his upstairs sitting room, motioned him over to the sofa, sat down in his rocking chair, and began to question him. He couldn't have asked him a better question than the one he started with. It really made, I am sure, a deep impression on Popović because it was so different from the usual beginning of such a diplomatic conversation.

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MR. FISCHER: And what was that?

MR. KENNAN: What the President said to him was substantially this: "Mr. Minister, you are a Marxist, and the Marxist doctrine has had certain clear ideas about how things were to develop in this world. When you look over the things that have happened in the years since the Russian Revolution, does it seem to you that the way the world is developing is the way that Marx [Karl Marx] envisaged it, or do you see any variations here or any divergences from Marx's predictions?"

MR. FISCHER: Wonderful question!

MR. KENNAN: Yes. I don't think he got a very clear answer from Popović on this, but he asked it in such a humble and disarming way that Popović couldn't be annoyed with him because it was entirely respectful and apparently naïve, you know.

MR. FISCHER: But hardly naïve.

MR. KENNAN: It was hardly naïve. But he did very well; he was courteous, hospitable, kindly, and relaxed with him, not at all stiff, showed

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himself to be in no hurry, was quite prepared to let him talk. He had, on this as on other occasions when he received foreign visitors, a sort of a boyish, crude but very impressive courtesy—instinctive courtesy—which seemed to me to be rather Lincolnesque. It was a sort of Lindberghian boyishness—like Lindbergh, you know. There was something very appealing about it. There were no elaborate fancy manners connected with it. It was very quiet, but all the more impressive for this reason. Everyone understood it and got it right away. They realized that this man had a certain old-fashioned gallantry about him, really, in everything that he did, and they responded to it. Popović did on this occasion and Tito [Josip Broz Tito] later when I took him to see the President—very much so.

MR. FISCHER: Was the President aiming at some goal in this conversation with Koča Popović?

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MR. KENNAN: No. I don't think that...

MR. FISCHER: Either for his own education or in the way of achieving some kind of better relations with Yugoslavia?

MR. KENNAN: Well, this came at a very unhappy moment, and the President knew that he had no backing in Congress for a constructive policy toward Yugoslavia. The result is, as I recall it, that he rather avoided getting into questions of Yugoslav-American relations.

MR. FISCHER: Did he ask Popović about the Soviet Union? I'm interested in knowing whether the Soviet Union was very much on his mind.

MR. KENNAN: As I recall it, I think he did. I think on both of these occasions with Popović and later with Tito that he pressed them both to say what they thought of Soviet policy. Popović, of course, is a very intelligent—extremely intelligent—man, very sharp, the ex-military commander of the Yugoslav forces in the Partisan War all the way through, and then who had been a military commander in Spain.

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MR. FISCHER: But, also, a poet.

MR. KENNAN: Also a poet. Very sharp, a man who didn't suffer fools gladly.

MR. FISCHER: That wouldn't have arisen on this occasion.

MR. KENNAN: He had no opportunity to demonstrate that peculiarity in his character. Actually, I liked Popović and respected him. He was a very sensitive man and a bit bristly, but I never had any complaint against him.

MR. FISCHER: I suppose you left with Popović.

MR. KENNAN: I left that interview with Popović.

MR. FISCHER: Yes, that's what I mean. Did Popović at that time, or at any other time, give you his impressions of Kennedy?

MR. KENNAN: I can't recall that he did, Louis, I can't recall it. I think he was reserved.

MR. FISCHER: Would you go on, George, with any subsequent contacts? Did the President respond to any of your reports or messages that you sent through the State Department?

MR. KENNAN: Only through Bundy as I recall it. I suppose I ought to go on and tell about the difficulties

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I encountered at this post. Of course, it was normally my task there to try to improve the relations between our country and Yugoslavia. I thought it very important to do this for several reasons. First, because if we could achieve a mutually profitable and pleasant relation with Yugoslavia, it would help to fortify that country in its position of independence vis-à-vis the Soviet bloc. But not only would it fortify the Yugoslavs in this position, it would encourage other satellite countries to move in the same direction. This, I thought, was of the greatest importance in view of the Chinese-Soviet conflict. As you know, I was a person who had been concerned with the Soviet Union and with matters of world Communism for many, many years, so that this seemed to me a very serious question.

[End Side One]

[Side Two]

MR. FISCHER: George, on your arrival in Belgrade as

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Ambassador what impression did you get of the feelings that the Yugoslav leaders, particularly Tito and Koča Popović and others, had towards Kennedy as President and towards you as his representative?

MR. KENNAN: With regard to the President they were uncertain. They simply didn't know what they were up against. They wanted to see how he was going to conduct himself. They had encountered many difficulties, in their relations with the United States, at the hands of certain elements of the Catholic Church hierarchy in this country, and I think this made them uncertain as to what they could expect from Mr. Kennedy. You see, the Croatian exile element in the United States, being strongly Catholic, had been very prominent in stirring up trouble for them in Catholic circles here, and especially in the hierarchy in certain parts of the country, and they didn't quite know what they were getting into.

MR. FISCHER: Because they thought that Kennedy might act as a Catholic?

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MR. KENNAN: Yes, and that he might then be responsive to the pressures from these Croatian émigré circles which they regarded, and with a great deal of justification, as thoroughly Nazi in their political views. In other words, as fascists.

MR. FISCHER: Were the Yugoslav leaders conscious of the internal political situation in the United States—say the small majority by which Kennedy had been elected?

MR. KENNAN: Yes, they were quite aware of that. They knew that, in general, his position had been a somewhat more liberal one than that of the previous administration.

MR. FISCHER: How did they know that? Was that the speech on Algeria?

MR. KENNAN: From his speeches and from his campaign statements. But on the other hand they realized that it hadn't been much more liberal, that the real issues had not come out in the campaign, and they were not certain as to which way the cat would jump. So that, so

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far as the President was concerned, it was a case of their waiting to see. I think Tito, in particular, was skeptical. Tito had been very deeply shocked by the U-2 episode; it had affected, very greatly, his confidence in American statesmanship, and it had to be proven to him, I think, that the new president was going to get away from this sort of thing. He tended to see our policy as dominated by the military and the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. Of

course, the Bay of Pigs episode, happening just the day I left Washington to go to my new post, was not helpful. On the other hand toward myself, personally, the Yugoslavs were extremely cordial, and I think they were very pleased with my assignment there. I got this in many roundabout ways as I arrived. I think the reason for this were these: They had been favorably impressed by the Reith Lectures and by the positions on East-West relations. I had, just as it happened, visited Yugoslavia the previous summer, in the summer of 1960,

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and had had an interview with Tito on that occasion. When I was named Ambassador, the Yugoslavs immediately formed the impression that I had come the previous summer, as they said, “to case the joint,” and nothing could cure them of this. But in any case they were pleased; they viewed me as a person who understood the Russian problem, who understood their position, and who was a man of peace. Furthermore, they considered me, rightly or wrongly, a distinguished person in the United States, and they were pleased that someone whose name they had heard before was being sent to Belgrade. They viewed this as a sign that President Kennedy did attach importance to the relations between the United States and Yugoslavia.

MR. FISCHER: George, you of course, had a conversation with Tito when you presented your letters of credence.

MR. KENNAN: I did.

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MR. FISCHER: You must have seen Kardelj [Edvard Kardelj] and others. Did they ask about Kennedy? What were they interested in about Kennedy?

MR. KENNAN: I cannot remember that they asked personally about Kennedy. I do not recall those conversations sufficiently well. They were interested, of course, in our policy, and they were very anxious to explain their own view of things. They believed in disarmament; they believed in disengagements; they wanted to see the military tensions reduced; they felt, as Tito always said to me, that we ought not to dramatize our differences with the Soviet Union; they thought that Khrushchev was, for all his angularities, a man of peace—that we didn’t understand this, that we were better off with him than we were likely to be with anybody else.

MR. FISCHER: Did they think that Kennedy did not understand this?

MR. KENNAN: They didn’t know yet, Louis, but they felt that, in general, American statesmanship



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had been clumsy...

MR. FISCHER: That is, in the previous administration.

MR. KENNAN: ...and over-militaristic in its handling of the whole Soviet problem, and they wanted to explain to use why they felt this. Also, of course, they had very strong feelings—and ones with which I could not agree, in very large part I could not agree—on our policies toward the underdeveloped areas, toward places like Vietnam and all that. They wanted to see us withdraw militarily everywhere and leave the decision to local forces.

MR. FISCHER: George, do you feel that you were successful in accomplishing the mission that President Kennedy had assigned to you?

MR. KENNAN: Definitely not, if the mission be considered one of improving relations and establishing a sound relationship and good understanding between Yugoslavia and the United States. I felt my mission in this respect was a failure, and it was so marked a failure, really, that

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I felt personally discredited and obliged to leave the post after this period of two and a quarter years.

MR. FISCHER: Were the difficulties from the Yugoslav side or from the American side or both?

MR. KENNAN: There were difficulties from both sides. I might mention the Yugoslav ones first because they came generally first, chronologically. It was only shortly after I arrived there—only about four months after I arrived—that they had the Belgrade Conference....

MR. FISCHER: The Belgrade Conference of so-called non-aligned nations.

MR. KENNAN: ...In which the heads of state of some twenty five so-called non-aligned nations assembled in Belgrade. On this occasion Tito made statements, both in his speeches, and, as I recall it, outside, which came as a shock to us, which seemed to be definitely unneutral, which seemed to be weighed on the Soviet side, which were a very serious jolt to our relations, which caused a formal protest on

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the part of our government in Belgrade.

MR. FISCHER: Did you stimulate this?

MR. KENNAN: I did not stimulate it, and it came as a particularly unpleasant surprise to me because I had been given the impression, prior to the conference, that what he would say at the conference would be quite agreeable to us. I have the feeling that something happened in the last two or three days before that conference began which changed all this and caused him to come down very strongly on the Soviet side. I think I know what that was. I think, if I may offer the following explanation: first of all in general at this particular time, Tito was very concerned to register, so far as he could, his solidarity with Khrushchev on world problems. This was for two main reasons. First, in the light of the Soviet-Chinese conflict. The full seriousness of this conflict had only recently become visible—outstandingly at a Communist conference which was held in Bucharest, as I recall it, in June 1960.

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MR. FISCHER: Yes, I remember.

MR. KENNAN: This had made a deep impression on Tito, especially the fact that the Albanians had gone over to the support of the Chinese, and were being used by the Chinese as a weapon, made him feel that he had to support Soviet influence in Eastern Europe to some extent and certainly Soviet influence in the world Communist movement generally against the Chinese. For this reason he did his best to emphasize the points where he was in agreement with Khrushchev. But, in addition to this, he realized that the Russians now wanted his support very badly, that in order to defend themselves against the Chinese attacks the Russians had to be able to argue that Yugoslavia, after all, was a good socialist country, that it was as strongly anti-imperialist as anyone else, that it had not abandoned its socialist principles...

MR. FISCHER: As the Chinese were asserting.

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MR. KENNAN: ...as the Chinese were asserting. And he wanted to give Khrushchev ammunition with which to prove before the world public and especially the world Communist public that Yugoslavia's position as an independent Communist nation—Communist country—was not detrimental to the world Communist cause, that Yugoslavia was a loyal and helpful member, in that respect, of the ideological family even though she occupied an independent political and military position. He felt that Khrushchev, too, needed help. I'm quite sure morally that he was appealed to just before the Belgrade Conference to give Khrushchev help because of Khrushchev's own personal position in Russia. The result was that he said these things at the Conference which came as such a jolt to us. Now, it is true, and I realized this more later as I

served in Yugoslavia than I realized at the time, that this was not anything new, that repeatedly over the course of the years Tito had rocked

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this boat by making statements which sounded very pro-Soviet, and therefore, came as a jolt to the American representatives in Yugoslavia and to our public opinion. But this hit me particularly hard for certain reasons. You know, the Yugoslavs at that time often came to me and said: "Why did you react so sharply to things that Tito said at the Belgrade Conference? These are only things we've been saying for years." I said: "Yes, but they have not been things that were said by your President in the presence of twenty-five other chiefs of state with seven or eight hundred foreign newspaper correspondents in attendance. When you say things like this on such an occasion, they go deeply, and you have to realize that we can't pass them off so lightly."

MR. FISCHER: And they echo in Washington, yet.

MR. KENNAN: They echo in Washington. Immediately after the Conference I received a large group of foreign correspondents at the Embassy. I

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talked to them for about an hour, and I explained to them the reason why these statements were unacceptable to use. The Yugoslavs didn't like this at all. It took me some time to live this down with them, but I felt that they had to be advised, themselves, of the full extent to which they were damaging their position abroad. In any case, this did a lot of damage because these statements were picked up, of course, by our press; they were played up and, as Tito would say, dramatized by the headline writers and so forth. They definitely did increase the bad press that Yugoslavia had already had in this country.

MR. FISCHER: George, would you refer specifically to Tito's statement about the explosion of the Soviet Union?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. I think the thing that came as the greatest blow to use was that just one day, as I recall it, before the Conference opened...

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MR. FISCHER: Yes, September 1.

MR. KENNAN: On the very day that it opened (it was September 1)...(it was the day that he was greeting these arriving heads of state out at the airfield), the Soviets announced the resumption of testing.

MR. FISCHER: And of giant bombs.

MR. KENNAN: Yes, nuclear testing. This was in violation of the existing understanding.

MR. FISCHER: Tacit understanding.

MR. KENNAN: Yes, tacit understanding. Had we done this, we would have been lambasted endlessly in the Yugoslav press. As it is, when Tito came to speak—two or three—days later or the following day, I don't remember which it was—at the Belgrade Conference, there was inserted in between the lines in his speech, or on a little separate slip of paper which was attached to the copies of the speech given to us, a statement to the effect that he understood the Soviet reasons for resuming testing. I am sure that this was the result

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of some twisting of his arm that was done by the Soviet Ambassador on the eve of the Conference. Of course, it looked all the worse because it looked as though the Russians were in a position to make him say anything they wanted to. The Soviet Ambassador had gone all the way out to the airport to see him that day in the midst of these arrivals, and I'm sure that something was said. It must have been a message from Khrushchev to the extent that "if I ever needed your help, I need it now, and I want you to support me on this particular position."

MR. FISCHER: Did you talk to any of the chiefs of state at that Conference? Did you see Nehru [Jawaharlal Nehru] or...?

MR. KENNAN: I did see Nehru briefly, and he is the only chief of state, I think, that asked to see me there. Oh yes, I also had to speak, officially, with Sukarno [Achmed Sukarno] because the Conference decided to send a joint appeal to the United States and Russia. Sukarno was charged with transmitting that to us which he did

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through me. So he called me over to his hotel.

MR. FISCHER: Did Nehru talk about Kennedy?

MR. KENNAN: No, he didn't. Again, it turned out to be very hectic and unsatisfactory. We only had a few moments to speak, and I can't remember that there was any more said other than pleasantries and platitudes.

MR. FISCHER: Did Sukarno assume that he was going to see President Kennedy?

MR. KENNAN: Yes, Sukarno was there with an entourage of some sixty people with a great Pan-American jet plane which he had been hiring steadily for some months. He was about to take off for Washington to deliver this message.

MR. FISCHER: And he wanted to see the President?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. I can't remember in what connection I was called in, but it was in connection with this message, and I had to go over and accept the advance copy of it or something like that. But those were the only two heads of state I can recall seeing. However, I

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would emphasize this Belgrade Conference because it made my task much more difficult. I felt, in a way, that Tito had really let me down. Of course, I understood better after I had been there longer why he felt that, in such a situation, this was the best move he could make. I don't want to take too much time to get into this here. It is a matter of Tito's whole outlook on world politics. You must remember that Khrushchev had taken the initiative of going to Belgrade and trying to compose the differences that had arisen.

MR. FISCHER: In 1955.

MR. KENNAN: Yes. And while they had had differences in the meantime, again, over the Party program, nevertheless, Khrushchev was the best friend they had in Moscow, and Tito thought it important at this time to support him. Tito also thought it important to emphasize his own quality as the leader of a socialist state and his usefulness to the others.

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MR. FISCHER: George, I was going to ask you about any further difficulties you had with the Yugoslavs, but it seems to me they intermesh with the difficulties that arose in your relations with some authorizes in the United States so that perhaps you would discuss the whole problem together.

MR. KENNAN: I might say that after that Belgrade Conference I had very few difficulties with the Yugoslavs. Although a year later, Tito did go to Moscow. He was received by the Supreme Soviet, permitted to address the Supreme Soviet, and given an ovation. Of course, on these occasions and when he came back, naturally moved by his experience, which contrasted very greatly, I

may say, with the stinking demonstrations against him here in the United States, he did make statements, again, which were upsetting, which went very far. He even, after that, began to drop the use of the word non-aligned with regard to Yugoslavia's position because the Russians

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didn't like it, I think.

MR. FISCHER: One must never forget that, although he's the leader of a nation, he's a Communist.

MR. KENNAN: Yes. Well, I got to understand all this much better later on and to realize that, while he would make these verbal concessions to the Russians, he had no intention of giving up his independence. Also, that he was not ill-inclined toward either President Kennedy or myself at all, or to us, but he was well aware of the sharp rejection with which he was confronted on the part of the majority opinion here in the Congress. He never forgot this. You can understand that being treated with the greatest of courtesy and cordiality on the Russian side and with insults of one sort or another over here, that this naturally affected his position, too.

Now, this brings me, of course, to this other matter that you raised which is the difficulties experienced here. These difficulties consisted, quite simply, in the

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fact that at no time during the period that I was Ambassador there did the decisively influential body of opinion in the legislative branch of our government sympathize with the objectives of the President toward Yugoslavia. At no time did it appreciate the advantages of a better relationship with Yugoslavia. On the contrary, the decisive impulse on the part of people in Congress was to use our differences with Yugoslavia—to use Yugoslavia itself—as a sort of a target against which to demonstrate the depth of their own anti-Communism. That is, most of the legislators—the influential ones, the ones who carried the day—valued Yugoslavia principally as something that they could use as a target for hostile sentiments with a view, then, to going back and confronting their electorate and beating their breasts and saying: “Boys, you see how anti-Communist I was; I told them where to head.” It was harder to do this in the case

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of the Soviet Union because you are always apt to be asked: “Well, what is it you want? A war?” But in the case of Yugoslavia, everybody knew that Yugoslavia was not going to make war on us. And you could use this as a sort of symbol of Communism and draw a certain amount of political advantage, I suppose, from it. In any case, at no time did the President or myself have support in Congress for the policies we wanted to follow. Not only this but the

Congress did persist during this period in taking actions with regard to Yugoslavia which were directly detrimental to our relations.

MR. FISCHER:                   What were those actions?

MR. KENNAN:                   They were primarily the following: First, in 1942 there was a modification—in 1962, I'm sorry—of the aid bill which forbade the President to give any aid to Yugoslavia except when he found that it was vital to the national security. This was troublesome. I, personally, did not favor aid to Yugoslavia.

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We hardly had any aid programs left at the time I was there, and I folded up the aid mission. All that we had running when I came there as Ambassador was a small technical assistance program which was being folded up when I left, and we had outstanding four or five loans for industrial construction—development loans. That is, we had authorized the loans before I went there as Ambassador, and some of these objects were now being constructed during the period that I was there. I thought that we ought not to extend the technical assistance any further; I thought that the surplus wheat should be sold to them only in exceptional circumstances, in drought years such as indeed they had while I was there; I thought that we ought to retain the freedom to give them further loans for industrial development because I thought it undesirable that this sort of assistance should be left entirely to the Russians in Yugoslavia. It wasn't very much; these could

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be dollar loans. The Yugoslavs were quite prepared to repay the money, and I thought it desirable that they should keep these connections with American industry. So that I had to regret such a clause in the act, first of all, because it really did prevent further developmental loans, but, also, because it tied the hands of the executive branch to a degree which I thought undesirable. I didn't want to see aid extended to the Yugoslavs in general, but I thought that the administration ought to be able to extend it if it wanted to. It should have this flexibility in order to deal effectively with the Yugoslavs. Furthermore, the very denial of it in a specific paragraph like this was offensive to people who are as sensitive as the Yugoslavs are. And wholly needlessly so, because the Yugoslavs were not asking for aid at this time, and there was absolutely no reason to go out of one's way to put such a clause in the act. During the entire time I was there in

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Yugoslavia, with the exception of the surplus wheat which they simply asked whether they could buy on the going terms, nobody in senior position there ever asked me any aid from the United States government or voiced any interest in it. Now, why, then, put a special clause in the act like this?

MR. FISCHER: Doesn't this reflect the relations between President Kennedy and Congress?

MR. KENNAN: Yes, it did, and I'll go into that in a minute. But much more serious than this clause in the aid bill was a clause then which was introduced into the trade bill in 1962 which had the effect of instructing the executive branch to terminate, as soon as practicable, the granting of most favored nation tariff treatment to the Yugoslavs. Now, most favored nations tariff treatment is not especially favorable tariff treatment. It is the normal tariff treatment granted to over eighty or ninety governments in the world. It was treatment which the Yugoslavs

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had enjoyed at the time when they were a faithful Stalinist satellite. There was absolutely no reason to come along now, when they had liberated themselves from control by the Soviet Union, when they were conducting an independent policy, when they owed us money which they were trying to pay, and inflict this penalty upon them. It would have the effect of raising duties several hundred percent on a number of Yugoslav commodities, and their exports to us were a paltry fifty million dollars a year. This was nothing to us, and it looked very petty, indeed. I could give them no explanation for it. When Yugoslavs came to and said: "Look, why is this being done to us?" I would have to say: "I have no knowledge of why it's being done to you."

MR. FISCHER: Although you knew.

MR. KENNAN: Well, I couldn't name a reason as to why it should be done now when it wasn't done in Stalin's [Joseph Stalin] day. And when they said to me:

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"Well, what would we have to do to avoid this sort of penalty?" I was again obliged to say to them: "I don't know what you could do." Now, this was a very difficult position to be in, and I was terribly shocked when I heard that this was being done. I came home in the summer of 1962 at the time when all this was in the works. At the President's suggestion, I wrote an article for the Sunday edition of the *Washington Post* giving my own reasons why this was not desirable. I saw a number of the legislators in both houses of Congress, called on them, explained my position to them.

MR. FISCHER: Excuse me, George, how was that suggestion conveyed to you?

MR. KENNAN: By the President when I called on him personally. He said, "If I were you, I'd go out and...."



MR. FISCHER: Have you got the date of that?

MR. KENNAN: Yes, I could tell you when that was. We learned in June of these impulses. That is,

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that these proposals had been made in Congress to include such clauses in the act. On June 16 the Department released to the press several of my telegrams of protest about this, or the contents of them, summaries of them. On June 30 I, being in London at that time on a trip, received a message from the Department saying that the Department and the White House did not propose to fight the provision in the Foreign Aid Bill, that they were going to concentrate on the most favored nation thing which was more serious. I was then told to come right home from London, which I did. I published at that time, with the Department's encouragement, a letter in the *New York Times* taking issue with Senator Proxmire [William Proxmire], who had made statements about this whole problem which I thought were inaccurate. On July 3 I called on the President and later that day I think it was...I'm very sorry, excuse me if I go back on this for a moment. On July 2 I got home and was received by the President.

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MR. FISCHER: Were you alone with the President?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. He told me that the new day he wanted me to be over at the White House. He was going to be seeing one or two Senators, and he wanted me to come in casually. He wanted to be able to say to them, "By the way, I think Kennan's waiting out here to see me on another matter. Would you like to talk to him now?" He did bring me in to talk to Senator Humphrey and to Representative McCormack [John William McCormack].

MR. FISCHER: What happened on the previous day? What kind of conversation did you have?

MR. KENNAN: He said on the previous day to me: "I think you ought to state your position for the press." You see, all the way through here...

MR. FISCHER: Did he suggest the *Washington Post*?

MR. KENNAN: Yes, he did. The President was reluctant to speak out personally about this. He did not want to take this on as an issue between himself and the Congress. I'm sure that this had to do with the tenuousness of his majority

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in the election and the fact that he felt he had bigger fish to fry with Congress. He didn't want to have Yugoslavia, which he felt was a fuzzy and unsatisfactory issue, the touchstone of a conflict with a Congressional majority.

MR. FISCHER: That, perhaps, goes back to the Belgrade Conference, and the impression it made.

MR. KENNAN: Perhaps, although I think that he was simply...He didn't want...Well, let me say this: I think he was advised strongly by a portion of his personal advisors in the White House not to touch, publicly, the question of Yugoslavia or the question of international Communism. I think these people told him—I think it was probably Mr. O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] and others of his internal political advisors—that to do this would get him involved in an argument where he could easily be made to appear soft on Communism, and the others could stand up and pose as the defenders of the national interest. The result was that he didn't want

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to take this issue up publicly.

MR. FISCHER: George, did you have any new impression of the President now that he had been in office for some time? Did he look more harried, worried, tired?

MR. KENNAN: No. I thought he was bearing up very well. One saw a bit the strains of his office, but not seriously. I thought he was carrying on very well. He was very nice to me and very understanding. There was no question he understood entirely my position and the reasons why this was undesirable.

MR. FISCHER: Did he at that time—the first meeting on July 2—ask you about the general world situation?

MR. KENNAN: Yes, as I recall it, he did. Then we talked about Yugoslavia, and he said, "Well, I think you ought to state your views publicly and get them out," and so forth. Then he asked me to come back the next day to talk with his Senators. I talked with various other legislators at that time.

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MR. FISCHER: On the next day you saw Senator Humphrey and...

MR. KENNAN: And Representative McCormack in the President's office. That same day he sent me off to see ex-President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] and to get him to bring his influence to bear on the Republicans in Congress.

MR. FISCHER: As you presented your case to Humphrey and McCormack, did the President participate at all?

MR. KENNAN: No, he let me do the talking. He wanted to put me forward.

MR. FISCHER: He wasn't backing you up or indicating where his sympathies lay?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. His position vis-à-vis the senators was that "You know I'm quite impressed with what Kennan says here about this, and I think you ought to hear what he's got to say." This was his position. But he didn't want to say it himself. He sent me, that same day, all the way up to Gettysburg to see President Eisenhower and to get him, if I could, to support my own position with the

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Republicans in Congress. President Eisenhower agreed with me a hundred percent, picked up the telephone, called Walter Judd [Walter H. Judd], and said, "Walter, can't you do something to get some sense into this?"

MR. FISCHER: The last man to ask.

MR. KENNAN: But, anyway, he, too, was fully of sympathy. He said, "This is the problem that I had all the time I was President, and you're absolutely right."

MR. MORRISSEY: Did he make any other efforts in addition to this call to Congressman Judd?

MR. KENNAN: Not that I know of. I don't know what he did after I left his office.

MR. FISCHER: One gets the impression from what you've been saying, George, that President Kennedy was quite conscious of his weak political position.

MR. KENNAN: I'm sure he was, and I'm sure, also, that he had advisors who urged him very, very strongly not to be pushed by me into taking a position on this. Because this was only the beginning.

As the autumn advanced and this thing came to

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a head, it worked out in a most unfortunate way. In the first place, when I saw all these legislators in July, I was told by the Department of the State that "You can talk about aid yourself, but leave the most favored nation issue alone because we think we're going to get a quiet understanding that this will be removed if we don't make a public issue of it." So I didn't press this any further then and went back to my post. To my horror in September on the eighteenth we got news...

MR. FISCHER: That's what year?

MR. KENNAN: '62. All this was in the summer and fall of '62. We got news that the House Appropriations Subcommittee had taken affirmative action on this most favored nations clause and...

MR. FISCHER: Affirmative action aimed against you...

MR. KENNAN: Yes, they wanted to embody this in the bill: the clause denying most favored nation treatment to Yugoslavia. And on September 27 this whole thing came to a head. Contrary to the

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assurances we had had in Belgrade from the Department of State, the conferees of the two houses agreed to vote on this amendment; they agreed to accept it. We had hoped that the Senate would throw it out, but they didn't. Led by Representative Mills [Wilbur Mills] of the House Ways and Means Committee, to whom I had explained this when I was back in Washington, the conferees, nevertheless accepted the clause.

MR. FISCHER: Did you see Mills at the suggestion of the President?

MR. KENNAN: I can't remember whether it was specifically at his suggestion or not, but it was in the line of calls that he wanted me to make down there. The conferees accepted this amendment which meant it was bound to go through. This worked out in the worst possible way because what happened that day... This was the day, anyway, we got the news that they had accepted it—the 27<sup>th</sup> of September. We got the news in the morning. I had the unpleasant duty of going right down to the Foreign Office to

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tell the Yugoslavs of this because I knew it would be a serious blow to our relations. It came to them as an absolutely gratuitous act of hostility, a slap in the face, and one that I couldn't

explain to them in any way. It put me in a very difficult position. That afternoon I received a call from Fred Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton], who was Assistance Secretary of State in charge of Congressional Relations. It was a call that came over the open long distance telephone so that the Yugoslavs were, of course, listening. Dutton said, in effect, "George, we're all terribly distressed about what has occurred here, and there's only one thing that could stop it at this point, or do any good. And that would be if you would appeal personally by telephone directly to the President." Now I point out that this statement, coming over the long distance telephone with the Yugoslavs listening, left me holding the bag for the entire most favored nation treatment problem, and I had no choice, then,

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but to call the President. So I did call him that evening and said to him, "Mr. President, this is going to be....(In effect, I can't remember the exact words, of course.) This is most unfortunate and is going to have a most destructive effect on our relations with these people. I have to tell you that this places in jeopardy my success and my whole mission out there." The President said, "Mr. Ambassador, I think you ought to talk to Mr. Mills, and, if you don't mind, I'm going to transfer this call to him."

MR. FISCHER:                   That was all the conversation? You began by stating your point of view, and he gave you no other reply?

MR. KENNAN:                   That is right. He gave me no other reply and said he would have the call transferred to Mr. Mills. I got Mr. Mills. Anticipating something of this sort, I had written out what I wanted to say to him. Afterwards I called the Department of State on the telephone, repeated this statement to the Department of

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State, asked them to give it in writing to Mr. Mills in addition to the oral expression of it I had given. The statement was as follows, and I lay considerable weight on this because it was all that I could do in the circumstances. I said the following to Mr. Mills: "I understand that the House-Senate conferees are considering the adoption in the trade bill of an amendment that would deny most favored nation treatment to Yugoslavia. Speaking in my official capacity as Ambassador in Belgrade and against the background of thirty-five years of experience with the affairs of Eastern Europe, I must give it as my considered judgment that such an amendment coming at the present time and in the present circumstances would be unnecessary, uncalled for, and injurious to United States interests. It would be taken, not only in Yugoslavia but throughout this part of the world, as evidence of a petty and vindictive spirit unworthy of a country of our stature and

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responsibility. This judgment has the concurrence of every officer in this mission. If the amendment is adopted, it will be in disregard of the most earnest and serious advice we are capable of giving.” This, too, of course, was heard by the Yugoslavs.

MR. FISCHER: Representative Mills knew that the President had transferred the call?

MR. KENNAN: He knew that the President had transferred the call. He didn't reply definitely to this except that “I think it's too late to make any change,” and I never heard from him again; the amendment went through. This wasn't all. We were informed, and the Yugoslavs were given the impression, that, when the President signed the bill, he would voice his own discontent at least with this amendment. I learned two or three days later in a message from Bundy that, when the President signed the bill, he failed to voice any discontent with the amendment. On the other hand he did express his admiration for Mr. Mills as a

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statesman and his appreciation for the work that Mr. Mills had done on this bill. This, of course, added to the sting so far as the Yugoslavs were concerned.

MR. FISCHER: George, I get the impression, therefore, that you're rather critical of the President for his failure to support you on this matter.

MR. KENNAN: You know, I think it's a sign of the President's great human qualities that I never actually felt bitter against him for this. I felt bitter about the situation. I felt completely let down, and I felt that my own personal usefulness in Belgrade was destroyed by this: my helplessness had been documented to the Yugoslavs, and it couldn't have been made cleared to them that the utmost that I could, that my entire personal influence—everything I stood for, everything I represented, all the years of experience I had had in this field—didn't carry that much with the decisive forces in the Congress of the United States. I sat down a day or two later and

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drafted a letter to Mac Bundy which I never sent, but which would give you an idea from certain passages in it how I felt, and how I felt with regard to the President here.

MR. FISCHER: Could you read those passages please, George?

MR. KENNAN: I referred to his message in which he explained the circumstances surrounding the signing of the bill by the President, and I said, “I have read it with appreciation for your courtesy and frankness in letting me know of these circumstances and with sympathy for the

President in what has obviously been for him an extremely difficult situation. I have no desire to belittle the difficulty of the choice with which he has been confronted. Nevertheless, the fact remains that his choice fell as it did on this crucial occasion. The Yugoslav reaction has been as predicted. We were warned that this would affect our relations adversely. And I am afraid that I have to ask myself all over again what implications this bears for my own personal

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position and whether, in particular, I could and should attempt to remain here as the exponent of a line of conduct on the part of our government which did not, to be sure, flow from any initiative of the executive branch, but in which, for internal political reason, it has found it necessary to acquiesce, and of which I myself am known to disapprove profoundly.” This was the situation, and I offered to submit my resignation then and urged the President to accept it but to ask me to remain temporarily at my post as a custodian until he could make...

MR. FISCHER: Did you write to the President?

MR. KENNAN: I wired.

MR. FISCHER: You wired the President?

MR. KENNAN: But the President didn't want to do this.

MR. FISCHER: How do you know this? Did he write to you?

MR. KENNAN: I don't have the correspondence here, but I know that I wired offering to resign at that time. I had some sort of reply saying that the President didn't want me to do this—

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that he wanted me to reconsider. I can remember taking a long, long walk all by myself on the Sunday morning after that week, fighting with myself as to whether to resign or not. My wife [Annelise Sorenson Kennan], with good sense, persuaded me not to and said it would seem abrupt, and it would seem a demonstration against the President, and you don't want to do that. So I didn't. But, when I came home in January of 1963, about three months later, I told both the President and the Secretary of State that I would hope to resume my academic work the following fall. That meant that I left the government service about nine or ten months after this episode, at a time when the public had largely forgotten about it and didn't take it as a demonstration against the President. Since you asked me whether this caused me any bitterness against the President, I'd like to read to you one or two other communications that passed between us. In the first place on July 7, 1963, about ten

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days before I finally left Yugoslavia, the President wrote me as follows: "Dear Mr. Ambassador: It is with deep regret that I accept your resignation as Ambassador to Yugoslavia on a date to be determined. Your departure from the service of the government will be a great loss, but I understand your desire to return to your work at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton. Your insights and advice have at all times proved of value to us in shaping our foreign policy, and I have profited, as well, from your analyses and interpretations of events. The United States has been fortunate in having you as its Ambassador to Yugoslavia, and I am sincerely grateful that you were willing to respond to my request that you undertake this mission. As you return to academic life, you have my warm thanks and best wishes for the future." So much for the letter. I had the impression that the President completely understood what he did to me, and I, on the other hand, completely understood why he had to do it. It was quite

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clear to me that Yugoslavia was not worth a conflict between him and the Congress which might have gummed up his whole civil rights program and other great undertakings here of domestic legislation. This was a tragic situation, and I think both of us came out of it entirely without bitterness. On October 22, 1963, two or three months after I returned to this country and after I had laid down my functions as Ambassador, I wrote the President a hand-written note which I sent to him through Bundy. I didn't even have it typed. It read as follows: "Dear Mr. President: You get many brickbats, and of those who say approving and encouraging things not all are pure of motive. I am not fully retired and a candidate for neither elective nor appointive office. I think, therefore, that my sincerity may be credited if I take this means to speak a word of encouragement. I am full of admiration, both as a historian and as a person with diplomatic experience, for the manner in

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which you have addressed yourself to the problems of foreign policy with which I am familiar. I don't think we have seen a better standard of statesmanship in the White House in the present century. I hope you will continue to be of good heart and allow yourself to be discouraged neither by the appalling pressures of your office nor by the obtuseness and obstruction you encounter in another branch of government. Please know that I and many others are deeply grateful for the courage and patience and perception with which you carry on. Very sincerely yours..." I had a reply from him dated October 28, 1963, which I think was very shortly...

MR. FISCHER:                   Just a month before he was...

MR. MORRISSEY:               October the 22 was exactly a month before the assassination.

MR. KENNAN:                   Well, this was October 28, saying, "Dear George, (This is the first time he had addressed me in this way.) Your handwritten



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note of October 22 is a letter I will keep nearby for reference and reinforcement on hard days. It is a great encouragement to have support of a diplomat and historian of your quality, and it was uncommonly thoughtful for you to write me in this personal way.” He also referred here to a note I had written him about the Tito visit which I won’t....We can go into that separately; that was another episode.

This was pretty much the story with regard to Yugoslavia. It was, as I say, a tragic situation. These people in Congress could not have been more wrong; this was stupid. It had the effect of pushing the Yugoslavs back into the arms of the bloc. I must say that I resented very deeply, and the President knew this, the pressures that were brought to bear in this direction on the part of the Congress, and I felt very strongly about it. The Yugoslavs had one of the three strongest armies in Europe not under

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Soviet control. For fifteen years they had nothing to do with the Red Army; they had not even bought military equipment from Russia; they had no Soviet military missions in Yugoslavia; and the temper of the Yugoslav armed forces was strongly pro-American. This was a situation which was of benefit to us, of benefit to stability in that area of the Balkans and the Adriatic, and important to the maintenance of the peace of Europe. As a result of this situation, the Russians, who ten or fifteen years earlier had had a military presence along eight hundred miles of the Adriatic coast—all the way from the Trieste down to the southern border of Albania—were now present nowhere on the Adriatic coast. The Italians had benefited enormously by this as a NATO country; so had the Greeks. Relations between Italy and Yugoslavia were better than they had ever been in history. This was, as I say, a situation of greatest value to NATO. To take the position, as men

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in Congress now did; “Aw, tell them we don’t care what happens to ‘em. They can go back to Moscow. They’re a lot of damned Communists, aren’t they?”—this was the sort of talk I got—was simply so irresponsible and so childish that I felt very strongly about the impropriety of it, and I was perfectly willing to go out and leave my job over this issue. I am not sure to this day that the President was right not to make this an issue. I only say that I understood the cruelty of his choice. I thought that, if he failed in those years when I was associated with him in this way—if he failed anywhere in his approach to foreign policy—it was in the fact that he did not do enough to try to teach the American public the basic facts about the world. He did give the one speech of June, I think, 1963 at American University in Washington which was important and was constructive. I thought this was fine, but one speech is not enough. I think he should

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have done more. On the other hand I was always very much aware that I was not in a good position to judge his internal political problems and that, therefore, I ought to reserve judgment about this.

MR. FISCHER: George, in view of this criticism, what prompted you to write that article of praise for his conduct of international affairs in general?

MR. KENNAN: Do you mean this letter?

MR. FISCHER: Yes, the letter, your letter.

MR. KENNAN: I thought that in what he did in the White House, to the extent he was permitted to do it by Congress, that this was the best, as I said, that I could think of.

MR. FISCHER: What specifically? For instance, the Cuban Missile Crisis?

MR. KENNAN: The way in which he handled that. The test ban agreement. In general, his handling of foreign statesmen, his handling of himself on visits to Europe—his willingness to listen, above all, his willingness to seek

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advice, to find out about things—all of this seemed to me to be first rate, and I was much impressed by his handling of Tito.

MR. FISCHER: Would you tell us about that, and what was that date?

MR. KENNAN: After I returned to Princeton here, given up my work as Ambassador and returned to my life and work here in Princeton, I received one day—I can tell you just when that was, I think—a request by telephone from the White House or from the State Department, I can't remember which, saying that the President would like Mrs. Kennan and myself to go down to Williamsburg to greet the Tito party when they came to this country because nobody else had yet been appointed as Ambassador to Yugoslavia, and we knew Tito and his wife well. The President wanted me to do this as a favor to him, so I immediately assented. Mrs. Kennan and I did go down there to Williamsburg. We met President Tito. We escorted him up to Washington and were present

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at the luncheon that the President gave for him. I was, however, not present at Tito's interview with the President because I was no longer formally the Ambassador. I wrote the

President afterwards giving him some of my impressions of what Tito had thought of the visit, of his reactions to it. In this same letter of October 28, in which he acknowledged my handwritten note of encouragement to him, he added a paragraph saying, "I also have your note about the Tito visit. I must say I think it went very well, and we are all grateful to you for your help in getting the tone right and in handling the Princeton leg of the visit." Tito, I may say, later came up here to Princeton, and here, too, I participated as I think you did. Didn't you?

MR. FISCHER:                   No, I wasn't here.

MR. KENNAN:                   You weren't here. I participated in greeting him here, again. He was rather amused that I popped up both in the official world and

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in the academic world as one of his hosts. He had a very pleasant day in Princeton, and the President appreciated that. The President, I may say, was wonderful on that occasion of the Tito visit. The Tito visit was a most difficult thing to arrange. The anti-Yugoslav forces in this country were determined to make every conceivable trouble for the visit, to do everything they could do. And believe me, they did! It was all right at Williamsburg, and we had no difficulty there because things were controlled down there. But we had to bring Tito up by helicopter from Williamsburg to the White House lawn in order to keep him from going through the Washington streets. Even then there were crowds of people stationed as near as they could get to the White House lawn, and you could hear them jeering and screaming. There were people in Nazi uniforms demonstrating right across the street from the White House, and to his dying day Tito will never understand why people in

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Nazi uniforms should have been permitted to demonstrate against him, an allied chief of state from the war-time period, across the street from the White House. But this was nothing compared to what happened in New York, which was absolutely shameful! He and his party were put up in the Waldorf Astoria Towers. It was worse than picketing; the building was surrounded day and night by people in a high state of physical fury—most, I think, not even citizens of our country. Nobody knows. They were obviously Croatians, Serbs. They camped in the coffee shop there. The women of the Yugoslav delegation included some very fine and proud women who had been in the partisan movement themselves—wives of some of these officials—could not go down in the coffee shop without having these people get up on their chairs and hiss at them and call them prostitutes. Three of the Yugoslavs were beaten up trying to leave the building. The New York police

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obviously sympathized with the demonstrators, and these people were simply prisoners up there in this tower and miserably unhappy. It was a very disturbing thing and left me with the impression that it's high time this country took measures to assure polite, decent, courteous treatment of foreign heads of state when they visit the country. But this was simply the atmosphere of the visit.

The President, himself, talked to me the day before. (On my way down there I called on him.) He asked me to draw up for him a text of something he could say in the way of a public toast at the luncheon for Tito. I did draw up a statement; he used it—he drew on it, but he edited it, threw in some things of his own, and I thought he had improved perceptibly, with his own deft and oblique touch, on what I had written.

[END OF SIDE TWO]

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[TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE]

MR. FISCHER: Can you say specifically what modifications he made?

MR. KENNAN: No. I can't remember that, but I remember that I was full of admiration and felt that he had improved greatly on what I had written.

MR. FISCHER: Well, that's quite an achievement.

MR. KENNAN: I'm not so easily convinced of this sort of thing, but I felt that he had given it his inimitable touch. He carried the whole luncheon off beautifully without saying too much, without saying fulsome things that could be used against him, but at the same time without ever being anything else than courteous and hospitable toward his guest.

MR. FISCHER: That was the last time you saw him?

MR. KENNAN: That was the last time I saw him. I didn't have a chance to talk to him personally that day at the luncheon for any length of time. When I saw him the day before, that was the last time I talked to him personally. As far as I can recall, the last thing he said to me was, "George, I hope you'll keep on

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talking." This is one of the reasons why, since his assassination, I have tried to speak occasionally, publicly, on public problems, even though it has caused difficulty with my academic work here.

MR. FISCHER: Have you any assessment of his evolution—development—during the presidency?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. I felt that he grew greatly in his job, and that the man that I saw, for instance, on the occasion of this Tito visit and when I returned from Yugoslavia, was a man who was already considerably greater in stature, more mature, more measured in his judgments, more seasoned than the man I had seen initially.

MR. FISCHER: When you flew down from New York to Washington?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. I felt that he was getting a grasp of his tasks; that things might have been quite different in his second term; that, had he been elected with a larger majority and had he had better support in Congress, he would have gone on, then, to a more constructive

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phase of his own foreign policy. For example, I was very disappointed when I read the account, which was permitted to do, of his Vienna meeting and discussion with Khrushchev. I was shown the verbatim account of that.

MR. FISCHER: That was very early—in June, 1961.

MR. KENNAN: In June 1961, just after I had gone to Yugoslavia. I was actually telegraphed from Washington and told to go to Paris; the President, I think, wanted me to see the text of this. I felt that he had not acquitted himself well on this occasion and that he had permitted Khrushchev to say many things which should have been challenged right there on the spot. But he, feeling his way, preferred to let Khrushchev talk and not to rebut any of this. I think this was a mistake. I think it definitely misled Khrushchev; I think Khrushchev failed to realize on that occasion what a man he was up against and, also, thought that he'd gotten away with many of these talking points; that he had placed President Kennedy in a state of

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confusion where he had nothing to say in return.

MR. FISCHER: That was June 1961. Do you think this might have had some influence on Khrushchev's attitude towards Cuba and placement of the missiles there?

MR. KENNAN: Yes, I do, although I have never personally been satisfied that we can be sure that it was Khrushchev who wanted most to do this. I think there is a possibility that in this action of the Soviet

government Khrushchev was pressed by military circles in the Soviet Union and others, and that it went beyond what he, himself, might have approved.

MR. FISCHER: But whoever it was—the military or others—would have known about Khrushchev’s impression of Kennedy from that first interview in Vienna.

MR. KENNAN: That’s correct. I did feel that this was...

MR. FISCHER: Would have encouraged an aggressive spirit on the part of the Soviets.

MR. KENNAN: I think so. I think they thought that this is a tongue-tied young man who’s not forceful

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and who doesn’t have ideas of his own; they felt that they could get away with something.

MR. FISCHER: Don’t you think he made up for it in his conduct of the Cuban Missile Crisis?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. I thought this was masterful. And I think they realized, too, how well this was handled.

MR. FISCHER: In other words in effect, although not deliberately, Kennedy trapped them.

MR. KENNAN: Yes. He was, I felt, strangely tongue-tied in this interview with Khrushchev, and numbers of these typical, characteristic Communist exaggerations and false accusations were simply let pass, you see, instead of being replied to—being rebutted.

MR. FISCHER: It was because he was young in office.

MR. KENNAN: Yes. He was feeling his way. I didn’t feel, you know, that he was initially firm in his ideas of what he wanted to do about the Communist problem. I think he was always bothered by the strong anti-Communist sentiment in Congress; so were some of his advisors. The terrible difficulty here was

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that it seemed in those years as though there was a certain political dividend always to be reaped here at home, in terms of internal policies, by a strong and flamboyant anti-Communist demonstrative posture. People on the legislative side of the government were constantly taking advantage of this. While the President did not do this himself, it was just forceful enough to make him unwilling to get pressed onto the other side of such a posture. In other words, he didn't want other people to be able to say that he was in favor of Communism.

I would like to emphasize again if I might, although this reverts to what I've said before about relations with Yugoslavia, the difficulty that this made for us in Yugoslavia. These strong anti-Communist pressures—Communist pressures that dated from the days of Senator McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] and all that—they interfered very greatly with our relations with Yugoslavia. You must remember that we had in this country, living peacefully

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in California, the man who had been the Minister of the Interior in the Nazi Croatian government—the Pavelić government—which had declared war on us together with the Nazis in 1941, which had destroyed its own Jews at Hitler's instructions, and which had carried out appalling atrocities together with the Nazis against the Serbs and the Moslem inhabitants of the Nazi Croatia at that time. Now, the man who was directly responsible for all these atrocities, a man by the name of Artuković [Andrija Artuković], had entered this country illegally under a false name. Nevertheless, he had never been deported, and he was still, as I say, comfortably living out there in California and commanding, apparently, a good deal of political influence in the Congress. The Yugoslavs resented this intensely and, I must say, with a great deal of justification. This was absolutely wrong. The man had been able to remain in this country simply due to political pull. You see how these pressures interfere with our

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relations with these people. It wasn't that the Yugoslav position was perfect; it wasn't that they were always right; it wasn't that we didn't have arguments with them—we did. But our own position was weakened by the fact that we simply were unable to take a consistent position toward Yugoslavia due to the fact that the legislative branch was so amenable—so vulnerable—to this sort of internal political pressure.

MR. FISCHER: George, one final question about a purely technical, or administrative, aspect of your diplomacy: Does it seem to you that the President had his own little State Department in the White House; that he was his own Secretary of State to some extent?

MR. KENNAN: I thought increasingly less so as he went along. You know, a very remarkable thing about my own mission in Yugoslavia was that I never had the impression that the Secretary of State was in any way interested in my problems or my affairs or entered into the exchanges I had

with Washington in any way. The same

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was true of Mr. Ball [George W. Ball]. I felt that Mr. Ball and the Secretary were interested in entirely different things; that they regarded this appointment as an appointment by Mr. Kennedy; they would not have selected me, and they were not interested in what happened to me. They, too, agreed that these Congressional actions were unfortunate. They opposed them publicly more than the President did, but very little, too. On the other hand, they didn't figure in the equation in any way, shape, or form. Nobody, as far as I could see, senior to Billy Tyler [William R. Tyler, Jr.], who was the head of the European Office in the State Department, was particularly interested in my problems there. I had my differences with the Department of State just on the opposite side; I wanted the Department of State to be tougher with the Yugoslavs about questions of aid than the Department was inclined to be. I had told them many times when I came home at the end of my stay in Yugoslavia that my position was made impossible

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there because the only way to deal with the Yugoslavs was through a combination of the carrot and the stick; the Congress wouldn't hear of the carrot, and the Department of State wouldn't hear of the stick. The Yugoslavs knew this and knew that neither could anything good be done for them, because of Congressional objections, nor could anything be done that would injure them, because the State Department would veto it. So the Ambassador was paralyzed.

MR. FISCHER:                    You have every right to be bitter towards the Kennedy administration, and, yet, I sense that you have no animosity or hard feelings towards the President himself. Is there anything in his personality that would explain it?

MR. KENNAN:                    I think that there was, Louis. In the first place, here he was. He was relatively young. He was terribly alone with this loneliness that is known only to people in supreme position. I realized this. When I came home and saw him there in his room—that

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bedroom of his upstairs in the White House—and realized the pressures that were brought to bear against him, realized even what it meant to him to take an hour out to sit down in his rocking chair and talk with me, I always was aware that I must not look at his position from the standpoint of my problems. Great as they seemed to me, these were only a tiny portion of the problems that he had. His own decency toward me, his readiness to listen, convinced me that, if he was unable to support me, it was not for lack of desire on his part; it was because he thought that, on balance, this was the politically desirable thing to do; that to him, as to



every man in senior political position, politics was the art of the possible, and he could only do those things that seemed to him, on balance, correct. I had nothing but sympathy for him. I was sorry that it was myself whom he was obliged in a way to destroy, and it worked out very unfortunately. I must say, I blamed for this, almost more, the Congressional

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liaison people in the Department of State who time after time let us down and gave us no opportunity to state our views until the very last moment, when something catastrophic had already happened.

It was not only, I must say, these things that I told you about. There was another episode which was very unfortunate. Before I left for my post, I wrote a long letter. I can't remember whether it was to Tommie Thompson or to the Secretary or to Bundy or to whom it was, but it was a long letter, I think to Bundy, about the Captive Nations Resolution which was still on the books and which I considered to be very unfortunate from the standpoint of our relations with Russia and our relations with Yugoslavia. I begged that the President at least refrain in that year, which was 1961, from announcing Captive Nations Week. About a week before this time came, I got a telegram saying that the President was not going to announce Captive Nations Week. I

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learned later that this same thing was told orally to the Yugoslav Embassy in Washington. This was, as I recall it, in June 1961 just in the very early stages of his administration. This would have been taken by the Yugoslavs...

MR. FISCHER: Was that on the eve of his interview with Khrushchev in Vienna or do you know? It might have been in that connection.

MR. KENNAN: I can't remember whether it was just before or just after. I'm inclined to think it must have been just after.  
We were very much encouraged by this, and so were the Yugoslavs. We had been told again, the day before, that no such announcement would be made, and we were given suggestions as how to explain this to the press if they asked. On the day that the announcement was due, we received a telegram in the morning to the effect that they greatly regretted, but this decision had been reconsidered, and the President was going to announce this. Somebody had twisted his arm overnight in Congress. Now, this Captive

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Nations Resolution is a disgraceful thing. It commits us not only to the liberation of a great many peoples to whose liberation we ought not to be committed for various reasons but also to the liberation of two that have no existence in fact at all—something called Kazakhia, and something called Ude-Ural. A professor of Ukrainian origin at Marquette University in Milwaukee was publicly boasted that he wrote every word of the Captive Nations Resolution.

I felt that it was a shocking thing that our government should be committed to an absurd statement of this sort; one that didn't represent United States' interests at all, but the interests of certain exile groups over here. The fact that this was knocked out at the last moment was again difficult for me. I had said to the Yugoslavs—I had said before—"You watch. This year the President's not going to announce this." You can see what a position this left me in.

MR. FISCHER: George, did the U.S. government make any use

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of your vast Soviet background while you were in Yugoslavia in those years?

MR. KENNAN: Initially, the President did: in consulting me as we've already gone over in the early stages of his administration. The State Department did a bit, initially, but rather under my own encouragement. I pointed out, I think, myself to the Secretary of State that I had the opportunity of talking under four eyes, so to speak, without an interpreter or anybody else present, with my Soviet colleague in Belgrade.

MR. FISCHER: In Russian.

MR. KENNAN: In Russian, and without the world press knowing anything about our meetings. There was no American press to speak of in Belgrade those days, and they didn't shadow me or anything like that; so that it was perfectly easy for me to walk right over from my home to the Soviet Ambassador's home and sit down with him in his own living room, and the two of us talked together without any interference. I pointed out that this might be of value to

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the Department and that, if there were any subjects on which they would like me to draw him out or to express our point of view, I would be glad to know them and to conduct such discussions. Obviously, this had to be done very secretly. I was authorized to talk with him and got telegrams of instruction saying what to say to him on two subjects: on Laos and on Berlin. The conversations in Laos were a little difficult for me because I was never informed of the background, which is always a mistake. If you want a man to negotiate, you should give him the whole background. Nevertheless, these did appear to have a certain success, and I attribute the subsequent quietness of the Laotian situation, in part, to these discussions. I had a feeling that we made progress; that certain things were said on both sides which served to relieve the fears of the other side and that, in effect, both sides agreed to lay off if the other didn't agitate this problem too much. As you noticed, the

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Laotian thing didn't both us so much in the coming year.

So far as Berlin is concerned, we were just starting to get going with these discussions. We'd had two or three. It was perfectly evident that in his replies to me Yepishev [Aleksei Yepishev] was speaking directly for Khrushchev. I was confident that some of the things said would never have been said except in an absolutely private conversation like this. But as of June 1961, only a month or two after I arrived here, I ceased to get instructions; they didn't want me to see him anymore.

MR. FISCHER: This was at the beginning of your stay.

MR. KENNAN: Yes, and this channel as never used again. I attribute this decision, not to the President, but to the Secretary of State, who, I think, didn't like private conversations. Neither he nor Ball wanted me talking with anyone about Berlin; they were terrified of this because they thought that, if it ever came out, it would be, I think, objectionable

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to the Adenauer [Konrad Adenauer] government. Not only this, but I think, in a way, they didn't really want any agreement about Berlin. They didn't want an agreement; they wanted the Russians to simply desist and capitulate, but they didn't want to discuss it with them.

I always felt that it was a great shame that this channel was allowed to die, because they will not have found a better one. You see, if you have other people doing this, in the first place, if it's done in the big capitals, there's always the danger the press gets a hold of it, and, secondly, if they're people who don't know Russian, you have to have interpreters present, and that already ruins the complete privacy of it. The Ambassador in Moscow cannot do it—I can assure you of this—because the moment he goes down to the Foreign Office the room is wired, and everything is written down. This becomes a formal approach. So you can't try out anything that way. It was a disappointment to me—a double disappointment—because

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Yepishev (my Soviet colleague, initially, there) was obviously an influential man.

MR. FISCHER: He's now even more influential.

MR. KENNAN: Yes, he's now the Director of the Political Administration of the Red Army. He was very close to Khrushchev, and he and I had a personal liking and confidence in each other. So this would have been a very good way, without responsibility on either side, to communicate frankly with the Soviet government, and I felt that the administration missed a chance. I never appealed to the President in this because I didn't like to go over the head of the Secretary of State. I didn't think that was proper and didn't do it.

MR. FISCHER: Another question, George. How did the Yugoslavs—the leaders and the people—take the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962?

MR. KENNAN: I was not there at the moment it happened. I was in Milan on a short holiday. We had the Embassy Cadillac up there with our Moslem chauffeur, and he made the 700 miles back from Milan to Belgrade, as I remember

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it, in eleven hours. If you know Yugoslav roads.... [Laughter]

MR. FISCHER: Yes, that's a record.

MR. KENNAN: A real record getting me back there. They, I think, understood our position on the removal of the missiles and disapproved of the stationing of the missiles there. Not only this, but the Yugoslavs did not have happy relations with Castro [Fidel Castro]. They didn't like him. They had found a number of points of bitter disagreement and argument in their own attempts to handle their own relations with Castro so that they were not, perhaps, as moved as much by sympathy for the Cubans as they might otherwise have been. This was a matter of utmost delicacy and could, again, have wrecked our relations because they felt very strongly that it was their right to send their ships to any other country they wanted to send them to. Not only this, but then we had trouble because at that time the American Maritime Union here began to refuse to load

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or unload any Yugoslav ship in our ports. We had a lot of difficulty over that. This was where...

MR. FISCHER: When you say "they," could you state whether you had any conversation with somebody in the Foreign Office?

MR. KENNAN: Yes, I discussed this with them on many occasions, and they...

MR. FISCHER: No, I mean their response to the Cuban Missile Crisis. Did you talk to any minister or....

MR. KENNAN: No. Not that I can specifically recall. I only remember that their attitude toward the actual conflict between the Russians and ourselves over these missiles was very reserved. They didn't want to get into this.

MR. FISCHER: Did anybody appreciate the skill with which Kennedy had handled this?

MR. KENNAN: Yes, they did. They appreciated the fact that he gave the Russians a way out before he pressed them. They respected this. It was the pressured engendered, again in the legislative branch, over Cuba that caused them difficulty rather than what the

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President did. But they always warned me that, if we were to provoke a real armed conflict with the Cubans, they would have to come down on the Cuban side.

MR. FISCHER: But you can't remember that you had any conversation with a Yugoslav official who gave you an appreciation of the President's conduct of that Cuban Missile Crisis?

MR. KENNAN: No. I can't.

MR. FISCHER: What did the press say? Do you remember?

MR. KENNAN: The press were, I think, rather hostile to us, but also did not approve of the Soviet action in putting missiles there. They didn't approve of our blockade, but they didn't approve of putting the missiles there. I may say that I had many arguments with the Yugoslav press and even wrote letters protesting against some of the things they said about world affairs. But there was this great difference between my situation in this respect and the situation of chiefs of missions in the regular bloc countries—in the Soviet

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Union and the satellite countries—namely that, when I had protested about something they wrote about Vietnam, somebody called me up and said, "Wouldn't you like to sit down with some of the leading Yugoslav editors of an evening and talk about these things?" I said I'd be delighted. So I was asked by their Chief of Information to a dinner at a restaurant way up there on the hill one evening. I took two or three of the Serbo-Croatian speaking officers from our mission; we went up there, and we had a very pleasant evening and a lively, good, friendly—but sharp—discussion all evening over these things with no hard feelings, everybody speaking his mind openly. This would have been impossible in Moscow.

MR. FISCHER: Of course.

MR. KENNAN: So that even where we had these differences, I couldn't explain. I was so well treated, in fact, by these people that it was a double source of chagrin to me that I had to dish

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out such treatment to them in return.

MR. FISCHER: Did Tito ever talk to you about Castro?

MR. KENNAN: I believe—I can't remember definitely, Louis—that he did mention it to me once. He was reserved, again, because he didn't want to say much against Castro. But I did not fail to notice (and I wish the American press had noticed) that he did not visit Cuba when he came to this side of the water; he came to Washington, but he did not come to Cuba although the American press reported, utterly erroneously, that he was going there. But this was a sensitive issue, and we could have had—we still could have—a great deal of trouble with them over Cuba.

MR. FISCHER: Dr. Morrissey, did you have any questions?

MR. MORRISSEY: This question about did you have any intimation of Khrushchev's decreasing security in the Kremlin. Could you comment on that?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. The Yugoslavs told me on many occasions that Khrushchev was faced with a strong

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opposition within his own establishment. I have somewhere here the text of a message that I sent after a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador in which I think this was mentioned.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF—RESUMES]

MR. KENNAN: No. Actually, on looking it over I see that this did not come up in this particular talk. But both from Yepishev and from the Yugoslavs I repeatedly was given the assurance that there was a divisive situation in the high policy-making echelons of the Soviet government; that Khrushchev was faced with fairly strong opposition from hard-liners who were not completely sold on the Chinese line or anything like that, but who wanted to see a hard line taken toward us. The same, of course, was true within the Yugoslav government. There were differences of opinion there.

MR. FISCHER: George, I'm sure there was a difference of opinion in the Presidium of the Soviet

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Communist Party, and we know that in the final analysis Khrushchev was dismissed, but I wonder whether Tito and Yepishev were not talking to you knowing that you would report this to some authority in the United States with the view of moderating our pressures on Khrushchev and thereby strengthening his hand.

MR. KENNAN: I think this is quite possible, and I think this is probably what people felt in Washington. But I also think there was something to it.

MR. FISCHER: Oh yes! I'm not denying that there was something to it.

MR. KENNAN: One of the objections I had to our policy from the time of the U-2 on was that I felt that we did not dangle enough in the way of favorable prospects before the Soviet government to support Khrushchev in his co-existence line with us, and that we created a situation in which he had to scurry for cover by talking a very, very

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tough line toward us. This was visible right at the time of the U-2.

MR. FISCHER: George, it occurs to me that you haven't discussed one problem that was certainly faced by President Kennedy. And that was the German problem. How do you explain this shift in Tito's attitude towards Germany? At one time—certainly in 1952—when I talked with him (I had two interviews with him), he said that he had no objection to a strong, armed Germany. Later, of course, his attitude changed.

MR. KENNAN: Well, you know, by the end of the fifties he had no military fear of the Soviet Union anymore because the atmosphere was quite different; Khrushchev had taken a different attitude toward him. On the other hand, he was deeply worried by what we had done between 1952 and 1962 in the way of rearming western Germany. Not only this, but he and the other Yugoslavs were very sensitive to two things in their relations with

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Germany: One was the activities in Germany of the Yugoslav exiles which were very similar to those of the exiles in this country. In fact, while I was in Belgrade, on one Sunday, those exiles attacked the Yugoslav mission in Bonn, killed one of its employees, and attacked it in a way that threatened the safety of the children in the mission. The Yugoslavs were absolutely fit to be tied over this; that this should happen to them in Germany which was a defeated country. They'd been an allied mission, and they felt very strongly about this.

In addition to this, they couldn't get very far in their commercial talks with the Germans. They wanted to talk about the Common Market and their commercial problems; the Germans were very offish toward them—the Adenauer government—for reasons very similar to the reasons for the conduct and attitude of our Congress.

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The religious issue played a strong part with the Adenauer government, as you can imagine, and of course, also, the Hallstein Doctrine. I made one trip to Bonn to argue with the German Foreign Office a bit about this because the Yugoslavs had no representative there and couldn't talk to them. I did try to persuade them how useful it would be to encourage the Yugoslavs, who already had about 70 percent of their trade with the West, to feel that they were welcome in economic relations with the West. But I couldn't get very far with Bonn either. They were not very responsive. I would say the German problem was comparable to the hostility in our own Congress as among the factors persuading Tito and his associates that they had little to hope for in their relations with the West.

MR. MORRISSEY:            You mentioned early in the interview that you endorsed John Kennedy in the 1960 campaign.

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MR. KENNAN:            Yes. You know, I don't recall doing that. He mentions it, and since I think that he was probably quite accurate in his political responses, I have no doubt that I did. But I don't remember doing it. I didn't take any active part in the campaign. I had been...Let's see, when Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] ran the second time for presidency, I headed the Stevenson for President organization here in New Jersey. So I was on record at least as being a pro-Stevenson person, and I once did a register for election to the House of Representatives out in Pennsylvania on the Democratic ticket but was obliged to withdraw for personal financial reasons. I discovered that I couldn't get any more salary or support either from the Institute here or the Rockefeller Foundation if I became a candidate for public office, which I thought was profoundly wrong, really, because I think that it should be regarded as a normal duty of citizenship—to run

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if you're asked, as I was, for public office. You shouldn't be financially penalized for it. But these were the only contacts I had had with political life prior to that time, and I don't remember in what way I endorsed Mr. Kennedy's candidacy. I certainly, if asked, would have done it.

MR. MORRISSEY:            Early in the Kennedy administration a crisis desk was established in the State Department to deal with crises that arose pretty much on an ad hoc basis. Later, this crisis desk



was disbanded. Did you have any involvement in either the establishment or disbanding of it, or any comment about it?

MR. KENNAN: No, I didn't, and I know nothing about it really. I, fortunately, wasn't involved in any such crises.

MR. MORRISSEY: Out of curiosity, since your academic affiliation is with Princeton, did John Kennedy ever remark to you on the fact

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that he once chose to attend this university?

MR. KENNAN: He never did. I saw the references to it in Princeton publications here and pictures of him as an undergraduate, but he never mentioned it to me. As a matter of fact, we never discussed anything personal. We didn't know each other that well, and we met in circumstances where he was too busy, I think, to permit himself any such luxury. I was awfully sorry that I hadn't had any opportunity to know him better personally, but I had a feeling that wouldn't really have been so easy.

MR. FISCHER: Yes. I was just going to remark: I appreciate the brilliance and precision of his mind and the beautiful style, the beautiful figure and his great achievements as President, but I have the impression that he was cold. I wonder whether you have. I never saw him.

MR. KENNAN: Louis, not exactly cold. I didn't feel this. I felt that he had a certain real

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warmth, but that he was, in a sense, shy and somewhat set apart by his family background in the way that members of large and very solid families sometimes are. In other words, a man who has had such an over-powering family intimacy, as I felt he had had, I think often finds that almost enough in life, and it is not so easy for him to seek real friendships outside of this. This was my feeling: that no outsider like myself could ever enter into his intimate circle at this stage of his life.

MR. FISCHER: Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] was a member of the same large family. He's the only Kennedy I've talked with. I had a forty-minute talk with him in March 1964. I felt he was arm and outgoing. We talked about John Kennedy; we talked about Robert's children. I've had letters from him. There was a warmth that emanated from him which I suspect did not emanate from John F. Kennedy. It's

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only a suspicion because I didn't know John F. Kennedy.

MR. KENNAN: Well, I didn't have the impression of a cold person, but I had the impression of a person who guarded his inner self quite tightly from revealing. He had, of course, the sort of politician-actor's countenance. What Freud [Sigmund Freud] called the "persona," as distinct from the ego, that is, the outer personality, was highly developed with him. As in the case of most people who are on the political stage, he was acting his part in a way most of the time. But he always treated me, and others that I could see in his presence, kindly—in a kindly fashion—and not really cold. One didn't have the feeling that there was any underlying contempt or callousness or cruelty.

MR. FISCHER: Oh no, no, no. But he didn't let down his hair, so to speak.

MR. KENNAN: Certainly not in the personal sense. He

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didn't establish this kind of a personal bond. Mr. Truman was a more personal President than Jack Kennedy.

MR. FISCHER: Yes. And Eisenhower? You had no sympathy, I suppose.

MR. KENNAN: Well, Eisenhower, of course, was charming and disarming. You came away feeling frustrated (I always did, at any rate) from encounters with Ike. He was a good talker and much more intelligent than he was given credit for being. In the presence of his Cabinet, when he spoke, in my opinion he was head and shoulders above all of them except Foster [John Foster Dulles], and fully on a par with Foster in his understanding of foreign affairs. He was very good, but he, too, put you off with charm. I mean, in a way it was harder even to get nearer to Ike. You see, with Ike good fellowship was there to be had for the asking. I mean, if you'd offer to go and play gold and so forth, you could have

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gone out. But how close you would really have gotten, I don't know; because Ike had all the characteristic charm and evasiveness of royalty. It was just like talking to Queen Elizabeth. I mean, you came in, and you were well treated; he said interesting things; you went out, and you had beaten your head against a pillow. It wasn't this way with Jack Kennedy because he, of course, questioned you and listened very, very carefully to what you had to say and didn't put you off this way. On the other hand, this was impersonal in the sense that the subject matter was always confined to official life. Mind you, I'm sure he was kindly and nice and

considerate of people, and, had I appealed to him in any personal situation, I'm sure that he would have responded. I, of course, never did that. He had his burdens.

MR. MORRISSEY: Do you have any more questions? I don't, either. I think we can stop there. Thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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Jan. 4, 1960.

Dear Senator Kennedy:

I was much moved that you should have taken the trouble to write me about the piece in *The Listener*, for I know how tremendously burdened your time must be.

In a speech to the Women's National Democratic Club, in October, I spoke in a bit greater detail about the question of getting rid of the atomic weapon; and I enclose a copy of the speech for the event that you should wish to glance at the pertinent passages, beginning on page 7.

Let me just add this.

(a) I do not consider that there would be any great practical possibility of getting rid of the actual atomic explosives (i.e., the warheads) by international agreement. This would involve too many complications and difficulties. But I do think one might aim--as a long-term policy objective--at a controlled abolition of the long-range missiles, particularly if we were able to work out (as I think we should) a system of international collaboration with the Russians and others in the exploration of outer space.

(b) While I felt it was in order for me, as a private citizen, to urge the total abolition of atomic weapons, I recognize that anyone with senior political responsibility would have to approach this question much more cautiously. Here, I think the emphasis should be laid, for the present, on the strengthening of our conventional forces, in order to reduce our unhealthy dependence on the atom, and to lay the groundwork for a more hopeful and constructive approach to the problems of disarmament, generally.

With best regards and all good wishes,

Sincerely,

/s/

GEORGE KENNAN.



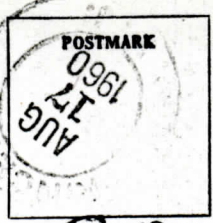
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From The Trust for Adv. Study  
Princeton NJ

To John F. Kennedy  
Wash DC

POD Form 3806  
Sept. 1955

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United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Handy-  
Tamarca

Dear Mr. Kennedy:

I had the opportunity  
belatedly, today, of reading your  
talk, reprinted in the October  
issue of the Listener. If you permit,  
I, as does every thing you say  
in the "It's des Janssen & good sense."  
I was especially interested in  
your thoughts on our "conscience"  
had more of a sense in testing -



but the abridgement of the  
war for itself. I wonder if we  
could expect to check the movement

of the Chinese with them  
and less armies with our own  
forces? In any case, we shall  
all be discussing this two or

three years after the moment of  
opportunity has passed.

I hope to see you when you  
are in London after the first  
of the year; good wishes for you for  
Xmas - and peace on earth -  
since (the time)



KENNEDY

19 February 1958

Dear Senator Kennedy,

It meant a great deal to me to have your kind letter of February 13th and to know that you were not among those who consider the Reith lectures to have been some sort of outrage against western policy. Circumstances made it necessary for me to write these lectures entirely alone, without consulting anyone. I am sure that they would have been better lectures if some of my friends could have had a chance to criticise them before they were given. In any case I certainly did not expect that they would meet agreement everywhere. But I was surprised at some of the indignation they raised and am very happy to learn that you did not feel this way about them.

I can well believe that I may have been wrong on one point or another but I don't think that there is any aspect of western policy which is too sacrosanct to stand re-examination at this moment, which seems to me a very dangerous and crucial one indeed; and I have been glad to hear that the discussion of these questions has become a good deal freer and franker at home in this recent period. I look forward to getting back next fall and to getting into closer touch with all that is happening there.

Many thanks again for your thoughtfulness in writing and for the kind words about the lectures.

I am,  
Very sincerely,

George Kennan

Hon. ~~Senator~~ John F. Kennedy,  
Senator from Massachusetts,  
United States Senate,  
Washington, D.C.

KENNEDY, John F.



United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

February 13, 1958

Honorable George F. Kennan  
7, Merton Street  
Oxford, England

Dear Mr. Kennan:

Having had an opportunity to read in full your Reith lectures, I should like to convey to you my respect for their brilliance and stimulation and to commend you for the service you have performed by delivering them.

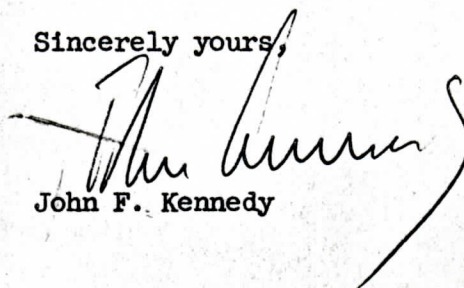
I have studied the lectures with care and find that their contents have become twisted and misrepresented in many of the criticisms made of them. Needless to say, there is nothing in these lectures or in your career of public service which justifies the personal criticisms that have been made.

I myself take a differing attitude toward several of the matters which you raised in these lectures--especially as regards the underdeveloped world--but it is most satisfying that there is at least one member of the "opposition" who is not only performing his critical duty but also providing a carefully formulated, comprehensive and brilliantly written set of alternative proposals and perspectives. You have directed our attention to the right questions and in a manner that allows us to test rigorously our current assumptions.

I am very pleased to learn that these lectures will soon be published in book form, almost simultaneously with the appearance of the second volume of your magistral study of U.S.-Soviet relations after World War I.

With kind regards and every good wish for your stay in Oxford,

Sincerely yours,



John F. Kennedy

JFK/md



## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D. C.

January 21, 1959

Hon. George F. Kennan  
Institute of Advanced Studies  
Princeton University  
Princeton, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Kennan:

I understand that there is a chance that you may be in Washington during the next weeks, perhaps to testify before the Foreign Relations Committee. At all events, I am most anxious to have the opportunity of talking with you when you are next here. If you would let me know just a little beforehand by letter or telephone, I would be most happy to have you for lunch or dinner--or even breakfast if that suits you best.

During the holidays I had the opportunity to read both your article in the current issue of Foreign Affairs and your earlier piece on "America's Administrative Response to its World Problems." Both of these articles raise issues which I would very much like to discuss with you. I think that you have made it unmistakably clear in the Foreign Affairs article what we must negotiate about if we hold talks with the Russians and I think you have disposed of the extreme rigidity of Mr. Acheson's position with great effectiveness and without the kind of ad hominem irrelevancies in which Mr. Acheson unfortunately indulged last year.

With every good wish,

Sincerely,

  
John F. Kennedy

JFK/md



JOHN F. KENNEDY  
MASSACHUSETTS

COMMITTEES:  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE  
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

*Noted*  
*JFK*

January 26, 1960

Mr. George Kennan  
School of Historical Studies  
The Institute for Advanced Study  
Princeton, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Kennan:

Thank you very much for your kind personal letter elaborating on the article in the LISTENER. Meanwhile, I have also received a copy of your article in the current issue of FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

I think that your article is most effective and masterfully written. The tone and content of this article could hardly be better. I hope that there may be an opportunity of chatting with you again on one of your future visits to Washington.

With every good wish,

Sincerely,

  
John F. Kennedy

JFK/sm

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C.

*Noted*  
*GFK*

October 30, 1960

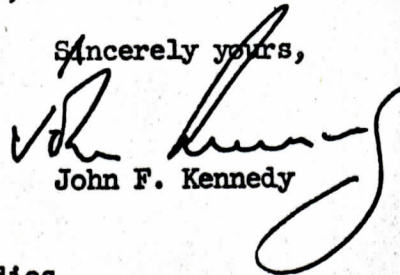
Dear Mr. Kennan:

I just want to let you know that I have profited greatly from the long letter which you were so kind to send me some weeks back, and I am especially conscious of some of the suggestions it made as we reach these last days of the campaign. I am very much in accord with the main thrust of your argument and with most of your particular recommendations. I hope, win or lose, that there may be an opportunity of seeing you after the election is over.

May I thank you also for your generous willingness to support me publicly in this campaign.

With every good wish,

Sincerely yours,



John F. Kennedy

Honorable George F. Kennan  
Institute for Advanced Studies  
Princeton, New Jersey



August 17, 1960

Dear Senator Kennedy:

It is with much reluctance that I set out to make the claim on your time which this letter implies. I know how burdened that time must be. I realize that advice which comes in this way is seldom useful. It is, in fact, the first time I can recall volunteering advice in this way, and I hope it will be the last. But I have a strong feeling that if my thoughts on the problems in question could conceivably be of any value to you, it would probably be right now, before you commit yourself further in campaign statements and before you become overwhelmed with pressures and suggestions from other sources.

The points I wish to make are few, and I shall try to be brief.

1. The present world situation is considerably more dangerous than our press and public opinion seem to realize. The Russian and Chinese Communists are obviously determined to bring about, before a new administration can take over and get into the swing, an extensive and decisive undermining of our world position, with a view to isolating us politically and militarily and to eliminating us as a major factor of resistance to their ambitions and undertakings. With this in view, the Russians have shown themselves, since the U-2 incident and the summit breakdown, prepared to play much closer than before to the edge of military conflict. The Chinese have, of course, wanted all along to provoke a war between Russia and the United States, and have, accordingly, consistently urged sharp and reckless anti-American policies. Their attitude has thus undergone no change. The U-2 incident simply undermined Khrushchev's personal position, increased Chinese influence within the bloc, and tipped the scales of Soviet policy-making, for the moment, in the direction of acquiescence in standing Chinese demands.

This effort on the part of the Russians and Chinese holds two great dangers. The first, which is not inconsiderable, is that it may get out of hand and produce a real shooting war. In this case, everything will be changed, and the remainder of this letter has no relevance. The second is that it will be successful short of war, in the sense of producing, during the period between now and next winter, further serious inroads on our prestige, our

KENNEDY, JOHN F.



Senator John F. Kennedy

August 17, 1960

military base structure, and our system of alliances. For this, given especially the complacency and paralysis of the present administration, the chances seem to me to be good. The inroads already made have been greater than people here seem to realize (Japan and Cuba would alone be enough to illustrate this, and they are not the only examples); and these things, as you know, tend to have a cumulative, dynamic effect. Beyond this, our friends in Moscow and Peking have not yet exhausted their bag of tricks. There is, in other words, a serious possibility that the international situation prevailing at the time a new administration takes office may be as calamitous and menacing as was our internal situation at the time when F.D.R. assumed the reins of government.

2. It is a common-place to say that we need to regain the initiative; but it is nevertheless profoundly true. What the present administration seems never to have understood is that you cannot exercise adequate control over a given international situation unless you act constantly on it--unless you yourself provide the impetus to change, instead of leaving it to others or to chance. What is needed now is not just a single, tentative action, well advertised in advance by the usual leaks in Washington: what is needed is a succession of carefully-calculated steps, timed in such a way as not only to throw the adversary off balance but to keep him off it, and prepared with sufficient privacy so that the advantage of surprise can be retained. Despite a widespread assumption to the contrary, this is not beyond the capacity of our government.

The period immediately following the assumption of office by a new administration offers a uniquely favorable time--perhaps the only possible time--for such an offensive. If the new President waits until things have settled down, until his cabinet are entirely in the groove, and until the cumbersome bureaucracy of State Department and Pentagon has got the policy-making process firmly back into its tentacles, not only will the situation have deteriorated still further in the interval, and not only will the outside world have gained the impression that what may be expected is just more of the same, but the edge of hope and enthusiasm will have worn off within Washington itself, and anything done will then have to fight the dead hand of internal routine as well as the external opposition.

For these reasons I feel that a new President, if he hopes to regain control of our international situation, must be prepared to act smartly and incisively immediately after taking office, keeping the privacy of his own counsels, not tipping his hand in advance, surprising and electrifying the sleepy echelons of the Washington bureaucracy no less than the governments and peoples of the outside world.



Senator John F. Kennedy

August 17, 1960

3. One of the most dangerous elements in our present world position is that we are greatly over-extended in our commitments, political and military. I have felt this for years; so, I believe, has Lippmann. This provides our adversaries with one opportunity after another for badgering us and thrusting us onto the defensive. To get ourselves back into a sound position, there should be a careful appraisal of our existing commitments and a ruthless elimination of those which are unsound, super-annuated, or beyond our strength to support.

This, obviously, is something that must be handled with greatest circumspection, if we are not to contribute further to the weakening of our own prestige. But we can, if we wish, make a virtue out of this necessity. By having the courage to pull in our own lines in good time and with good grace, we can portray this action as a contribution to the reduction of tensions, and we can deprive the Communists of propaganda issues which they would love to exploit. This is another thing the present administration seems not to have understood: that when you have to retract, it is always better to do it deliberately and voluntarily, choosing your own timing, and giving it the aspect of a measured and calculated act of policy, than to wait until others begin to demand it and then, when it can no longer be avoided, appear to be yielding to hostile pressure.

I cannot say to you, in this letter, which of our positions can and should be yielded--which of our commitments curtailed or abandoned. Only a competent staff, with facilities for proper study, could do this. I can only say: if, for example, Quemoy and Matsu have no real military value (as was frequently said when the heat was on, two or three years ago), and if to hold them is an uneconomic undertaking in military terms, let us for goodness' sake divest ourselves of them deliberately and voluntarily, at a time when the heat is not on, portraying our action as a generous contribution to the peace of the area. If, similarly, it is true that this or that military base has, with recent developments in weaponry, lost its original rationale, let us take the initiative in giving it up, instead of waiting for people to demand it of us. If some of our treaties are super-annuated and unsuitable, let us be the people to advance the idea of their modification. If, as I suspect to be the case, the idea of putting medium-range missiles on the territory of a number of our NATO allies has proved not to be a very hopeful and constructive one and is weakening the unity of NATO, let us take the lead in changing this policy, portraying our action as a contribution to disarmament and to the peace of the Continent, instead of letting the Russians continue to make hay out of the issue. In this way we can, if we are skillful, work a sort of jiu-jitsu on our adversaries.



August 17, 1960

This list of suggestions as to points where our existing policies might usefully be modified is intended only to be illustrative, and it is far from complete. It is my own personal view that our military policies generally are in need of re-thinking, and with them, our approach to NATO strategy. I am also far from satisfied that there is no room for improvement or initiative in our policies with respect to Germany, to Japan, to Formosa, and to Iran. But I do not mean to press these policy issues here; I merely wish to emphasize that to the extent we recognize our over-commitment and the unsoundness of many of our present positions, opportunities open up for new action, which can in turn be exploited as a means of regaining initiative and field for manoeuvre.

Again, let me emphasize that a new President, in the first weeks of his incumbency, before he is extensively committed by discussions with Allies, by involvement in the internal procedures of our own government, or by past actions of his own, and before he is himself thrust onto the defensive by the march of events, is in a peculiarly favorable position to do these things.

4. Together with a stream-lining of our commitments, and partly as a means of counter-balancing any tendency such a stream-lining might have to affect adversely our prestige, there should go a quiet but unmistakable strengthening of our own armed forces: particularly the conventional ones. This--let me emphasize--is not just a question of money. Much more can be done, I am sure, within the limits of funds now available, or with relatively slight increases, if the Pentagon can be persuaded to do it. I have in mind particularly the state of alertness and mobilization of such forces as we have. A strong effect could be exerted on world opinion, I believe, by such measures as a prompt strengthening of the Marine Corps, a strengthening of airlift capabilities, and above all a curtailment of the dependent population at overseas bases and the conversion of these bases into business-like military establishments in a high state of military readiness. More than anything I can think of, such measures would impress the Russians with the fact that we recognize the seriousness of the situation; that we do not propose to be pushed around anywhere; that we will find means to handle our military problems without provoking an all-out atomic war, unless others force this latter upon us; and that a curtailment of superfluous commitments means no lessening, but rather a heightening, of our will and ability to support the ones we now have.

5. As to our relations with the Russians: they are of course now royally fouled up, and the way back will not be easy or short. Nevertheless, we should make the effort. Nothing is



Senator John F. Kennedy

August 17, 1960

more important to us, in this coming period, than to assure a divergence of outlook and policy as between the Russians and the Chinese. The best way to do this is to offer opportunities to the Russians, in the way of a relationship with the West, which provide them with an alternative to an exclusive intimacy with, and dependence on, the Chinese. The desire to maintain such an alternative has for years constituted a mainspring of Khrushchev's behavior as a statesman. One of the most serious mistakes of the present administration, in my opinion, has lain in its seeming inability to recognize this, in its resultant failure to give Khrushchev sufficient support to enable him to hold his own against contrary opinion within the bloc and within his own entourage in Russia, in its thoughtless sacrifice--for the sake of such things as solidarity with brother Adenauer, or such military information as the U-2 flights could produce--of the favorable possibilities which Khrushchev's attitude did, after all, provide.

I am unable, to-day, to assess the extent of the damage that has been done. I believe that Khrushchev's position has been seriously shaken, but not finally destroyed. The line of talk he is now following would not encourage anyone to hope that he would again be amenable to serious suggestions for the improvement of the Soviet-American relationship. But he is a great opportunist, and it is dangerous to underrate the ease with which such people can change their tune when they want to. There are signs of considerable vacillation and indecision in the present Kremlin line--signs which encourage me to believe that nothing has yet been irrevocably decided, that no doors have been finally closed, that there is at least a possibility, for a new administration, of repairing the damage.

Khrushchev is no friend of this country. He is still in many ways the Communist fanatic. But he does not want a world war. He has consented, more than any Soviet statesman before him, to recognize the world around him as a complex rather than a simple one. He does not want to be left at the exclusive mercy of his Chinese friends. He knows that they will exploit the isolation of a friend no less mercilessly than that of an enemy. All these qualities mean that he is much better, from our point of view, than the Chinese Communists, whose attitude towards us is implacably hostile and who are still dizzy and undependable under the influence of their own recent political success. We should, therefore, without deceiving ourselves about Khrushchev's political personality and without nurturing any unreal hopes, be concerned to keep him politically in the running and to encourage the survival in Moscow of the tendencies he personifies.



August 17, 1960

6. There are two things this does not mean. It does not mean that there is any need to get involved in anything like a summit meeting again, at an early date. It would be well for a new President to take the position that a great deal of damage would have to be repaired, a very considerable improvement produced in the general atmosphere of international relations, and prospects for useful, tangible agreement far advanced, before anything of this sort could again be considered.

Secondly, an effort to improve relations between the Russians and ourselves does not imply a quest for formal agreements of any sort between the two governments. My experience with Soviet-American relations, both as Foreign Service officer and as a historian, now goes back over thirty-two years. I have become increasingly persuaded, over this time, that none of the great issues dividing us from the Russians, including disarmament, are ones which are likely to be suitably disposed of by the conclusions of formal contractual agreements between the two governments. If we are to make headway in these problems, it is much more likely to come through a series of reciprocal but unilateral actions on both sides. Treaties and agreements involve a host of ulterior problems: questions of prestige, of relations with Allies, of approval and ratification within governments. The moment one begins to talk about formal agreements, one gets the lawyers involved; and I have particularly little confidence in any effort to bind the Russians by any of the niceties of legal phraseology. A Chief Executive in our country can do with impunity, on the strength of his constitutional authority to conduct foreign relations and in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, many things which it would be either impossible or far more difficult for him to do if he were to attempt to cast them in terms of contractual agreements with a foreign government. He can, in other words, simply go ahead and act more easily than he can promise, or commit the country to act. For these reasons I think that an American president will be well advised, in shaping policy toward Russia, to do various things looking toward an improvement of the relationship, but not to attempt to contract in the name of this government to do them. The principle should be to act flexibly, retaining the full ability to retract concessions just as freely as one extends them, and to act within the framework of a series of reciprocal moves on both sides. The Russians, I believe, would understand this; and I see no reason why it could not be discussed by them informally at the proper time and in the proper place.

It is true that strict privacy and the greatest conceivable discretion are necessary in this respect. These things are difficult, but they are not, I reiterate, impossible; and if private



Senator John F. Kennedy

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discussions of this sort happen to provide the only favorable possibilities (as they did actually in the case of the liquidation of the Berlin blockade and the Korean war) then we cannot afford to spurn them. Let us remember that a series of conciliatory moves on the part of our government, which would be quite unsuitable if they were to be made without corresponding action on the other side, might well be acceptable if they were to be matched, and geared-in with, a similar series of concessions on the other side. Neither party would have to assume any obligation to the other in this respect, but there is no reason in principle why one should not keep in touch informally with people on the Soviet side, with a view to making such a process of settling issues by unilateral actions as painless and productive as possible.

7. Let me then summarize.

We may, by January, be faced with an extremely disturbing, if not calamitous situation; it will in any case be an unfavorable one, and in urgent need of improvement. Such a situation could be brought under control only if we could regain the initiative. To do this, a new administration should move quickly and boldly, in the initial stages of its incumbency, before it becomes enmeshed in the procedural tangles of Washington and before it is itself placed on the defensive by the movement of events. The needed curtailment of our world commitments gives opportunities for initiative; but it should be balanced by a strengthening of our defense posture, particularly in the conventional weapons. The main target of our diplomacy should be to heighten the divisive tendencies within the Soviet bloc. The best means to do this lies in the improvement in our relations with Moscow. An effort along these lines is essential to any sound policy. But this should not lead us into any new involvements concerning summit meetings, nor should it be assumed that it necessitates the extensive negotiation of formal agreements.

\* \* \*

These are the things I wanted to say to you. To the extent they meet with your understanding and approval, they ought to be borne in mind in the shaping of campaign statements and in the requirements you might wish to place on those who are advising you more regularly in matters of foreign policy.

May I just add that I think you were entirely right in stating the opinion (I hope I have read the press reports correctly) that President Eisenhower should have made an expression of regret in connection with the U-2 incident. There has been much misunderstanding about this. Spies are spies, and those



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who go individually onto the territory of a foreign country take their chances and can be disavowed by the government that sends them. What a government may not do is to insist on the right to send manned governmental aircraft at will, and without prior agreement, into the air space of another country. I am sure we would ourselves not be willing to permit anything of this sort to be done regularly over our own country. However you look at it, to send this plane over Russia constituted an international impropriety--an act from which the President should have kept the authority of his office disengaged. I know that your statement has been criticized; but you are on sound ground, and ground to which, if you become President, you will have to cling. I hope, therefore, that you will not allow yourself to be bullied out of it.

Please forgive this intrusion on your time, and believe that it is occasioned only by the deepest sort of concern for the security of our country in this coming period. I am enclosing copies of this letter, in case you wish to send them to any of your regular advisers. But I hope, for obvious reasons, that the letter may remain strictly confidential within your own intimate entourage.

Very sincerely yours,

George F. Kennan

Hon. John F. Kennedy  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C.

P.S.: In writing the above, I found myself reminded of the day, in May 1947, when General Marshall called me over from the War College and told me that he wanted me to enter immediately on my duties as Director of Policy Planning Staff. He went on to say in effect this:

"Europe is in a dangerous sort of a mess, and it is not getting any better. Something has to be done. If I do not come up at once with some sound initiative, other people are going to start coming at me with various cockeyed proposals and I shall be thrust on the defensive and forced to spend my time arguing why this or that should not be done. You have ten days to consider this problem and to tell me what I ought to do. I have only one bit of advice for you: avoid trivia."

This was the principal origin of the Marshall Plan. While I have no personal desire to be again the fellow to whom such a task is tossed, (and I hope you will believe that this letter is not intended as a suggestion in that direction), I think the moral of this episode is applicable today.

GFK



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 17, 1963

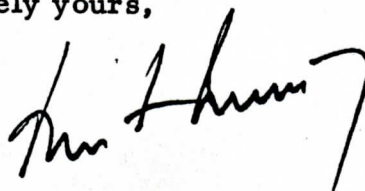
Dear Mr. Ambassador:

It is with deep regret that I accept your resignation as Ambassador to Yugoslavia on a date to be determined. Your departure from the service of the government will be a great loss, but I understand your desire to return to your work at the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton.

Your insights and advice have at all times proved of value to us in shaping our foreign policy, and I have profited as well from your analyses and interpretations of events. The United States has been fortunate in having you as its Ambassador to Yugoslavia, and I am sincerely grateful that you were willing to respond to my request that you undertake this mission.

As you return to academic life, you have my warm thanks and best wishes for the future.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Geo. Kennan", written in a cursive style.

The Honorable George F. Kennan  
American Ambassador  
Belgrade

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 28, 1963

Dear George:

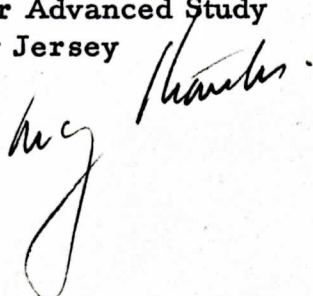
Your handwritten note of October 22 is a letter I will keep nearby for reference and reinforcement on hard days. It is a great encouragement to have the support of a diplomat and historian of your quality, and it was uncommonly thoughtful for you to write me in this personal way.

I also have your note about the Tito visit. I must say I think it went very well, and we are all grateful to you for your help in getting the tone right and in handling the Princeton leg of the visit.

Sincerely,



The Honorable George Kennan  
School of Historical Studies  
The Institute for Advanced Study  
Princeton, New Jersey





22 October 1963

Dear Mac:

The enclosed is purely spontaneous, and comes from the heart. If you think the President would appreciate it and would not find it presumptuous, would you be good to pass it on to him. It needs no answer.

Sincerely,

George Kennan

P. S. My boy, aged 13, has faithfully listed for me, in his letters, every one of the subjects which you treated in your recent talk there.

Mr. MacGeorge Bundy  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.



**COPY OF HANDWRITTEN LETTER**

**22 October 1963**

**The Honorable  
John F. Kennedy  
President of the United States**

**Dear Mr. President:**

**You get many brickbats; and of those who say approving and encouraging things, not all are pure of motive.**

**I am now fully retired, and a candidate for neither elective nor appointive office. I think, therefore, that my sincerity may be credited if I take this means to speak a word of encouragement. I am full of admiration, both as a historian and as a person with diplomatic experience, for the manner in which you have addressed yourself to the problems of foreign policy with which I am familiar. I don't think we have seen a better standard of statesmanship in the White House in the present century. I hope you will continue to be of good heart and allow yourself to be discouraged neither by the appalling pressures of your office nor by the obtuseness and obstruction you encounter in another branch of the government. Please know that I and many others are deeply grateful for the courage and patience and perception with which you carry on.**

**Very sincerely yours,**

**George Kennan**

THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR  
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

Noted  
gfk

Dear Georse,

Thank you for the Foreign Affairs.  
I had just looked, with restriction  
& sorrow, & not for the last time,  
at your article when your note came.

Thank you also, on another plane,  
for 'your' Shub'.

with affection

Robert

12/19/63



## INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

AS-19  
Dirge

Birčaninova 28b  
Belgrade, Yugoslavia  
December 1, 1963

Mr. Richard H. Nolte  
Institute of Current World Affairs  
366 Madison Avenue, New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Nolte:

We learned of President Kennedy's murder at a private dinner at the U.S. Embassy in Prague. It was as good a place as any; for, while our immediate impulse was to rejoin our countrymen, this was perhaps the next best thing. The Embassy itself, a former Schonbrunn Palace, had been acquired for the United States by the late Charles Crane some time before he founded our Institute -- itself an embodiment of the "New Frontier" more than a generation before the phrase was coined. Moreover, most of the guests were Czech (some official, some non-official); and in some respects their grief and sense of loss were as great as ours. A Foreign Ministry official immediately recalled the Cuban crisis of October 1962: "When I think of what another man might have done in those days, I shudder." A young girl asked angrily: "Why doesn't anyone shoot Presidents in this part of the world, instead of in your country?" Her father spoke in another vein:

"After all those old men, with their liver troubles and prostate operations and stale old dogmas, at last we had some hopes. Here was a young man, a strong body and a fresh mind, a man who enjoyed himself, who had the spirit of life in him and not of death. Why should the lives of young people, the future of their children, be dictated by the same old men who have let the world go to ruin? We waited so long for someone new, for someone who cared about the future, who wasn't tired and disillusioned like the old ones. At last we had him, and people began to dream again. Now?"

One could go on recounting the evidences of Eastern Europe's special grief for Jack Kennedy -- the hundreds in Prague waiting in long queues to buy newspapers, the hundreds in Belgrade who brought flowers to the American reading room. The reaction was much deeper in these "Communist" countries than what I observed in Vienna or what our colleague Denny Rusinow encountered in Italy. It was more universal even than the sorrow felt at the death of Pope John (of which we also learned in Czechoslovakia) -- although I suspect that the reasons were in large measure identical. Yet the aptest comment, I think, came from a friend in Prague who had barely survived both the Nazi occupation and the Stalinist Slansky trials.

"I have been thinking of you all morning," he said when we met the day after the President's murder. "It is terrible for all of us, of course -- for the world, for Europe, for Eastern Europe, even for our little affairs here in Czechoslovakia. But it must be worst for



you, for you younger Americans who go out in the world and try to do something, give something, make something. He was your President, wasn't he, more than any of the others?"

He was -- and I wonder if our feelings about our country, our people, ourselves can ever be the same. Edmund Wilson once wrote: "The America I see in the pages of Life magazine is not my country, nor even the country I live in." The America Jack Kennedy tried to bring into being was our country, although (perhaps because) he, like Lincoln and Wilson, was a minority President. He was the first President since Roosevelt of whom we did not feel in some way ashamed. (When Allen Ginsberg wrote of the "best young men of my generation... hunting for a nigger fix," his despair was as much a commentary on the Eisenhower era as "The Wasteland" was on the Coolidge period.)

I recall watching a televised campaign speech by Mr. Nixon somewhere in the Southwest and asking a colleague afterwards: "How, in this day and age, can he be such an awful cornball?" My colleague's answer was cynical but serious. "My friend," he said, "America is a cornball country. It re-elected Truman, it elected Eisenhower twice, it buys the Reader's Digest and the Saturday Evening Post, and couldn't care less about what you and I consider civilization. Of course, Nixon knows better -- but he's also smart enough to know what Mama likes out in Oklahoma City. Those fancy Kennedy ways may appeal to us, but not to them, and they are America, whether we like it or not."

I felt at the time, and still do, that this was only half-true, that there was and is another America. For all our Gilded Ages, some men always remember that our country was uniquely founded by aristocratic intellectuals, men of the Enlightenment, and for the sake of its ideas. Our history is full of aberrations, betrayals of those ideas, and slavery was a cancer at the very start which we have yet to exorcise. Yet through all this, in the consciousness of at least some of the American people, in its oldest cities and institutions and in its literature, there has remained the tradition -- Jefferson, Adams, Madison. Repudiated, debased, twisted, buffeted at every turn by the selfish, the bigoted and the complacent, the tradition somehow rises again, to be deepened by Lincoln, broadened by Wilson and Roosevelt, invoked consciously by the youngest of Presidents, who (mira-bile dictu) not only knows the words for whose promise so many have died but believes in them and, with the unique talents of a Harvard-educated, war-wounded Irish politician, knows something about how to bring those promises to pass.

With the freedom (because of his great wealth) to be anything he wished, he chose to be a progressive politician in a democracy -- and that in itself was an affirmation. What he offered us was a sense of possibilities in life, a feeling that what we chose to do might have some larger point. I remember sneering when I first heard his call to the "New Frontier," yet over these three years I have begun to understand what, perhaps only vaguely then, he had in mind. It was a call to all of us, each in our way, to leave the warm burrows of middle-class mediocrity and embark on the "pursuit of excellence"-- which he himself, echoing the Greeks, later cited as his own definition of happiness.



It was a call we answered slowly, reluctantly, for the corrosion of our belief had been deep indeed. How often, in the Truman-Eisenhower days, had the decades' work of dedicated people, the anguished counsel of sage and blooded men, been brushed aside in a moment of transcendent moral idiocy? There were many such moments, but I recall two now with special horror: One was Eisenhower's press conference on June 17, 1953, when he baldly revealed that he knew nothing of the East German uprising which had begun that morning, and before which the divided Kremlin had hesitated many hours before deciding that Soviet tanks could crush it with impunity. Another such moment came on October 29, 1956, when John Foster Dulles in all his righteous blindness greeted the revolutionary wave in Poland and Hungary with the unnecessary, unsolicited and quite fatal assurance that "under no circumstance" would the United States see fit to intervene in Eastern Europe. In neither case, I think, could Jack Kennedy have behaved in such a manner; in both cases, I rather suspect, he would have risen to the occasion.

He was the first president since Wilson who read books, who did not subscribe to the philosophy that "history is bunk" or the even more corrosive faith that que sera, sera. The consolation this offered us was enormous. It was not merely that, if one chose to write something, to contribute some arcane bit of private knowledge, one felt that he might read it himself, instead of accepting the packaged conventional wisdom of a bureaucrat's briefing or memo. Rather, one had the sense that in our larger collective enterprise there was at the head a controlling intelligence -- a man who wished to read and know everything directly, without preconceived ideas, and with the courage and cool, cool judgment to act on his knowledge. We felt, in short, that whatever little work we might do for the causes of freedom, peace, internationalism (all the old, good causes -- cf. Charlie Wilson) was appreciated, that it was worth something, that it was part of a larger work to which the country's best spirits were committed, and that it could not, would not be undone so long as this vigorous, shrewd young man was at the helm. The answer to the question, "Who cares?" was -- for the first time since Roosevelt -- "the President," and this for a democracy (as both men realized) is absolutely indispensable.

Yet, if the Kennedy Presidency was in this sense a commitment, it was also, in another sense, a liberation. For, beyond the politics and the policies, there was the style of the man, so genuinely and refreshingly contemporary. Norman Mailer glimpsed this in his famous post-Convention piece in Esquire, where he saluted Kennedy for uniting in his person two long-divergent currents in American life: the current of traditional public life, with all its debilitating conventions, and the "underground" stream of the dream life hitherto confined to our books, music and movies. "The rich are different from you and me," said Scott Fitzgerald (another Ivy League Irishman), and in Kennedy's case it came happily true. He was a millionaire who cared not a whit for money, a war hero with no respect for generals (real or arm-chair), an intellectual with a contempt for pedantry, a political upstart who defied convention and reputation, a naturally gay man who realized that someone would have to be serious if the very possibility of joy were not to perish. "I looked



at the others," he said (explaining his decision to seek the Presidency), "and decided: Why not me?" Hatless, coatless, with a cigar in his hand unconcealed from the photographers (as were Truman's and Eisenhower's cigarettes), with his mug of a daughter cavorting on the White House lawn, with his loveliest of wives tramping among the ruins of Hellas, he resembled his predecessors less than he did a Renaissance prince -- Henry of Navarre perhaps, or the young Lorenzo de Medici portrayed in Macchiavelli's history. Magnifico he was, indeed, and the miracle was that he was our freely chosen leader in a democracy whose imperfections are so often all too evident.

As a President, he was (in Willy Brandt's simple phrase) our hope "for a just peace and a better life." As a man -- shining Jack, golden in aspect, silver in wit, the grace of God upon him -- he was our beau ideal. Long will our weeping continue; but we would be false to his work, I think, if we were now to assume that all is over, all is settled, that we must passively wait another five, ten or twenty years to find his like and raise him up.

As ever,

*Anatole Shub*

Anatole Shub

Received in New York December 2, 1963.