

## A THOUSAND DAYS

## Kennedy Developed

Though Kennedy was deeply concerned with the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, he did not consider that conflict the source of all mankind's troubles.

In 1961 this was still rather a novel viewpoint for an American President. The tendency in the years after the Second World War had been to see the planet as tidily polarized between America and Russia. In the 1950s John Foster Dulles had transmuted this from an assumption into a dogma.

The Dulles world rested on unitary conceptions of the opposing blocs: on the one hand, the "free world," capaciously defined to include such places as Spain, Paraguay, Batista's Cuba and Mississippi, and, on the other, the "Communist camp," a monolithic conspiracy with headquarters in Moscow, enslaving captive peoples and orchestrating global crises according to a comprehensive master plan. Countries which did not fit into one category or the other were regarded as

*Thirteenth in a series condensed from the book, "A Thousand Days."*

anomalies; Dulles excommunicated neutral nations as "immoral."

As senator, Kennedy had come to object to the Dulles doctrine as morally self-righteous and as politically self-defeating. He felt in particular that the third world had now become the critical battleground between democracy and communism and that the practi-

## 'Diversity' Concept

cal effect of Dulles's bell, book and candle against neutralism could only be to prejudice the American case and drive the developing nations toward Moscow and Peking. The doctrine of the "two blocs" simply did not express the realities of contemporary life.

The "free world" rhetoric continued to dominate the pronouncements of the Department of State. But the President, always restless with clichés, sought constantly for a more exact statement of our issue with communism. In the summer of 1961 he talked of drafting a document designed to counter the myth of inevitable Communist victory by providing an affirmative description of the world the United States sought and the reasons why we believed that the pluralistic world would win out over the monistic world.

## World of Diversity

Nothing came of this project. But every day the President's concept of a world of diversity received vindication from the movement of events themselves—in the end, paradoxically, by events in the Communist world as in our own. For by the spring of 1962 the reality of the quarrel between the Soviet Union and China was beginning to become clear to everyone (except the aficionados of the "Sino-Soviet bloc" in the Department of State).

The forces of diversity were operating on our side of the fence too. Pluralism

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was splitting both blocs apart and blurring the old, tidy divisions of the cold war. One could almost say that the process of competitive coexistence has turned into one of competitive disintegration.

Still, one basic difference remained, and a difference everlastingly to our advantage. Pluralism was incompatible with the Communist system; but it was wholly compatible with—indeed, should be the basis of—our system.

The pluralist world, indeed, was inherent in the standstill thesis he had set forth to Khrushchev in Vienna—a thesis which implied that nations should be free to seek their own roads to salvation without upsetting the balance between the superpowers. It also fitted in with the conviction he had been expressing in recent months that the power of the United States to prescribe the arrangements of mankind was strictly limited.

## 'Face The Facts'

"We must face the fact," he had told an audience at the University of Washington the previous November, "that the United States is neither omnipotent nor omniscient—that we are only 6% of the world's population—that we cannot impose our will upon the other 94% of mankind—that we cannot right every wrong

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or reverse each adversity—and that therefore there cannot be an American solution to every world problem."

No great power could run the world: variety was the stubborn and irreducible reality. The policy of the two blocs was played out. And, if the monolithic vision was against the grain of history, the pluralist universe was of its essence.



Dulles

Kennedy felt more than ever that the time was coming to crystallize a new view of the world. Soon after my return, he remarked that he had to give the Charter Day address at the University of California later in the month.

"I am tired," he said, "of the headlines. All they describe is crisis, and they give the impression that we have our backs against the wall everywhere in the world. But this is an optical illusion. Look at it from Khrushchev's viewpoint. He has China, Albania, agriculture, the intellectuals, Eastern Europe" — ticking them off on his fingers—"and I'll bet he feels just as harried as we do—probably more so. The fact is that the world has changed a lot in the last decade, and most of the change has been in our fa-

vor — national independence and all that. I want to talk about these things."

"It is the profound tendencies of history," he soon said at Berkeley, "and not the passing excitements that will shape our future . . . The long view shows us that the revolution of national independence is a fundamental fact of our era. This revolution will not be stopped. As new nations emerge from the oblivion of centuries, their first aspiration is to affirm their national identity. Their deepest hope is for a world where, within a framework of international cooperation, every country can solve its own problems according to its own traditions and ideals."

Above all, "this emerging world is incompatible with the Communist world order," for the Communists rested everything on the idea of a monolithic world, "where all knowledge has a single pattern, all societies move toward a single mod-

el, and all problems and roads have a single solution and a single destination."

The monolith, he suggested, was doomed by the tides of history. "No one who examines the modern world can doubt that the great currents of history are carrying the world away from the monolithic toward the pluralist idea—away from communism and toward national independence and freedom . . . Beyond the drumfire of daily crisis, therefore, there is arising the outlines of a robust and vital world community, founded on nations secure in their own independence, and united by allegiance to world peace."

#### A Common Cause

Where the unitary American dogma of the 50s had dismayed our allies and excommunicated the unaligned nations, Kennedy's doctrine of diversity now offered a common cause which even carried its appeal far beyond the Iron Curtain itself. As no one since Roosevelt, he was identifying the United States with the movement toward national independence and popular democracy and, perhaps even more than Roosevelt, with the hopes and aspirations of distant peoples. He made their longing for bread and schools and dignity his own.

In his vision of a world of diversity united by allegiance to peace, Kennedy established the basis for a wise and strong American policy—a basis from which he could move with equal ease toward conciliation or confrontation with the Soviet Union. Whichever way circumstances compelled him to move, he could act with the deep conviction he set forth at Berkeley: "No one can doubt that the wave of the future is not the conquest of the world by a single dogmatic creed but the liberation of nations and free men."

The next installment will appear in Monday's Times on Page 6, Part 2.

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