

Letter by Manchester

115 High Street
Middletown, Conn.
March 9, 1964

The Attorney General
Mr. Robert F. Kennedy
Room 5115
Department of Justice
Washington, D. C.
Dear Mr. Kennedy,

Since our talk of February 26 I have been poring over accounts published during the last three months and I have drawn up a list of some 200 sources—people, scenes, documents.

The list, which is enclosed, is, of course, highly tentative. Sources may be added or withdrawn, depending on the scope of the inquiry. I have been thinking in terms of (A) a prologue—the Nov. 20 White House dinner for the Supreme Court; (B) the events of Nov. 21-25; (C) an epilogue. But you may have some thoughts about that.

The morning after our meeting Pierre indicated that a memorandum of understanding would be drawn up the following Sunday, that a draft of it would be mailed to me on Monday, and that I might then return to Washington for the signing and an announcement of the project.

Lacking word, I gather that the pressure of events has delayed those plans. As I wrote Pierre, I appreciate—indeed, I am awed by—the extraordinary demands on your time. And the postponement is of no consequence. It would be presumptuous of me to suggest that it is.

I would be most grateful, however, for some idea of what is expected of me: that is, when I should begin. It was my understanding that while this is to be a long-term project, Mrs. Kennedy is anxious that her interviews be soon. If that is her wish, I am ready to leave Wesleyan on a few hours notice and move into the University Club. My family can come down later,

at the end of the academic year.

As to the memorandum—I believe we are in absolute accord there. I agree that it is important that Mrs. Kennedy and you should review the manuscript. If you had not suggested this, I would have. I also agree that no film should ever be made from the book. That would be unthinkable.

That leaves (of the matters which have been raised with me) only the question of publication time. I suggest the memorandum stipulate that the book may now appear before three years have lapsed—say, before November 22, 1966. But that is only a suggestion. If you prefer five years, then five years it shall be. I have complete faith in your good judgment. My sole concern is that the book be right when it does appear; that it be a genuine contribution to history. Anything less simply would not do—for me, as for you.

An early announcement does seem desirable, if that is possible. I believe I have been circumspect; nevertheless, the prospect of premature disclosure worries me. I think you will agree that any statement to be made should be made in Washington. From me it would be impertinent.

I am enclosing a eulogy which I delivered on December 15 at an observance with Msgr. Terence P. Finnegan. The occasion was one of thousands being held all over the country that dark month—small, local services in churches, public halls, town squares. Everywhere men in small communities were struggling to find words for the nation's silent hymn of grief. This one, like all the others, was wholly inadequate. My only excuse for sending it is that I would like you to have it.

Faithfully,
William Manchester
CC: Mr. Pierre Salinger