

Steinbeck Whimsy Found in Kennedy Files

By ROBERT REINHOLD
Special to The New York Times

WALTHAM, Mass., Jan. 24 — It was manifestly a matter of patronage, but Adlai E. Stevenson felt compelled to pass the request along to President Kennedy because it contained a "promising" new foreign policy initiative. John Steinbeck, the author, was interested in a diplomatic post.

"I want to be ambassador to Oz," Mr. Steinbeck wrote. "I don't know whether I could bring Oz into NATO right away but at least the U.N. might benefit by its membership. You will remember also that the Wicked Witch melted and ran down over herself. If I could get that secret, we could handle quite a few people who would be better melted down. Then, too, we could dye different countries different colors so that we would be able to know whether we hated them or not."

Files Opened

"And perhaps I might, by a Katanga approach, get the Winkies to fighting the Munchkins which would open



United Press International

John Steinbeck
Ambassador to Oz?

up whole new market for our obsolete weapons."

Mr. Steinbeck's ambassadorship never materialized, but his letter found its way into John F. Kennedy's personal White House files, most of which were opened today at the Kennedy Libra-

ry's temporary quarters at the Federal Record Center here.

Although they do not seem to contain many revelations about weighty matters of state, the files offer a glimpse into the day-to-day working details of the Oval Office during the brief Kennedy years. A potpourri of letters, memos, telegrams and speeches, it is largely dull reading, but from much of the wit, style and substance of the Kennedy Administration emerges.

Also in the files was a reference to one of the milestones of the Kennedy years. This was a letter, dated Oct. 25, 1962, to Orvil E. Dryfoos, the late publisher of The New York Times, stating that "an important service to the national interest was performed by your agreement to withhold information that was available to you on Sunday afternoon."

The letter did not elaborate, but it was apparently a reference to The Times's agreement to withhold for 24 hours a report that Russian missiles had been placed in Cuba, so that the Administration could respond in secrecy. The incident had been disclosed on June 1, 1966 by Clifton Daniel, then the Times's managing editor, in a speech to the World Press Institute in St. Paul, but this is the first time the President's letter to the publisher has emerged.

The files were those kept just outside the Oval Office by Mr. Kennedy's secretary, Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln, who seems to have filed everything including the debris

from Cabinet meetings. She even kept folders to answer queries about Mr. Kennedy's favorite song ("Green-sleeves"), favorite poem ("Ulysses" by Tennyson), and favorite quotation ("The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for a good man to do nothing."—Edmund Burke).

Out of Context

The files were separate from the central White House files and still classified national security files. They appeared to consist mainly of "whatever Evelyn Lincoln happened to keep hold of," in the words of a library staff member. As a result they give a rather disjointed and out-of-context picture of the Kennedy Government. Further, of the 191 boxes (which contain about 150,000 documents and fill 79.1 feet of shelf space), 33 remain closed for security or other reasons. The open ones are available only to bona fide scholars and journalists.

The bulk of the material consists of correspondence with or about prominent figures, speeches, legislative reports, staff memos, files on the various departments and agencies and highly sensitive folders, most of which are still closed, on foreign countries.

The correspondence files disclose that the President often heard from or about such personages as Bernard Baruch, Dean Acheson, Winston Churchill, Adlai Stevenson, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Eleanor Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Henry R. Luce, Pope Paul and many others.