

1/19/71, night

Dear Howard,

I've read the excerpts from Krock. They are interesting. They also have meaning about JFK other than you indicated, and they have to be evaluated in terms of the attitudes and beliefs of the pundit, who was, despite the complaints of the Neanderthals, an Establishmentarian.

~~334-5 labels JFK as a perceptive and intelligent~~

334-5 is more a measure of the strength JFK came to feel by 5/63 than of his growth or the change in his beliefs. In 1960 he was no less opportunistic than most such politicians. As Krock says, he was weaker than his party's platform. And what he came to say in 5/63 is really quite modest. It was a leadership statement and position to only the backward and was less advanced than the thinking and feeling of most decent people. Despite Krock, it was neither radical nor advanced. But remember, these are contemporaneous judgements, for Krock's writing dates to the events themselves.

374-5 is a portrait of JFK as opportunist and creature of forces he couldn't control. His early vision was clear, but he then wasn't President. I suggest his views hadn't changed, but that as President he could not do what as Congressman almost a decade earlier he had recognized as the necessary. This is said in another way by the passage you marked. It would have been good if, from his special knowledge, having such excellent sources, Krock had said why this would have been so difficult for the most powerful man in the world's most powerful country to do.

Krock is wrong in attributing the deepening involvement to "starry-eyed diplomacy". Father was Foster Dulles, who was anything but "starry-eyed". He spoke for the military, who are neither starry-eyed nor diplomats. The military-intelligence segment controlled policy, indeed, created it, as I shall be developing in TIGER.

376-7: That the CIA refused repeatedly to follow national policy is credible, for it has always considered itself the true conceiver of national policy and has been able to compel policy to be its policy.

The anonymous expert quoted on 377 spoke what was for that period a foresighted view. It was then probably accurate or close to it. But even then, in retrospect (denied Krock the day he wrote this), it is clear that the CIA might have pulled it off, but that is only part. The rest is controlling it after it is pulled off. I think my reformulation in COUP is the correct one: that there really is no basic conflict between the CIA and the other powerful military/industrial forces. They then had at least the beginnings of a unity and immediately after the JFK assassination it was visible. There have been open conflicts since, but this is petty, internecine bickering, as with the Army pulling the atrocities plug, which was its way of protesting CIA's pre-emption of the Army's function and policy and a sneaky way of making it seem that the inevitable disclosures of bestiality would be fixed in the public mind as the fault of the CIA rather than the Army. I'd be inclined to believe that relatively few of those after we had open military involvement in V were by the CIA.

You do not have to take my word for any of this. Such books are well worth reading, but you must be able to evaluate the preconceptions of the author, know what axes he grinds for whom, and remember always that it is subject to the limitations on what could be known of developments while they were still developing. As time goes on, these things have a way of getting limned and they tend to have their own perspective and to fit into a broader one. But rarely is this time contemporaneously.

I'll keep all of this stuff in a file with your name in my separate TIGER file.

Despite the foregoing, I think it is possible to interpret these Krock writings as a reflection of a kind of growth in JFK and a reflection of less than there was by 5/63. He had special problems, and it is in terms of these that he and his record have to be assessed. One of the problems of every leader is not to get too far in advance. Another, save in a totalitarian society, is to explain as he goes, which also means explaining to those who disagree. Hurriedly before bed, H