

# He'll plan our fight against Russia from an office in Moscow

*George Kennan is our top authority on the Reds*



**George F. Kennan.** *Will the Russians pay any attention what he has to say?*

**George F. Kennan** once wrote that a foreign representative cannot hope that his words will make any impression on the Russians.

Just the same, Kennan is slated to be our Ambassador to Moscow. And the Russians, although they have poured out their wrath upon Kennan, have agreed to accept him.

Kennan is the chief architect of our Russian policy—"firm containment" of the Soviet Union by meeting its pressure against the West with "unalterable counterforce" at whatever "constantly shifting geographical and political points" that pressure may be applied. Containment may have to go on for a long time, in his view, because "the Russians look forward to a duel of infinite duration."

**Author Unknown.** These ideas were blueprinted in the quarterly *Foreign Affairs* in July 1947. Kennan's article was signed merely "X," but the style, the thinking and the man were soon identified.

"Mr. X" saw the Russian people as already weary, physically and spiritually. He anticipated the possibility that in a transfer of Soviet power—presumably upon the death of Stalin—disunity might arise in the Communist Party and chaos ensue. Then, Kennan thought—and hoped—Soviet Russia "might be changed overnight from one of the strongest to one of the weakest and most pitiable of national societies."

In the meantime it would be up to the United States to show by unity at home and leadership abroad the superiority of its system over that of Russia.

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*Who is this man who speaks with such confidence and authority on matters so vast and complex, and who exerts such great influence upon our foreign policy?*

George Frost Kennan is a tall, thin man from Milwaukee, just short of 48. He has little hair and lots of strong jaw. His blue eyes may warm—or chill. His bearing is dignified, his dress plain and neat, his language precise. His intelligence is “overpowering,” says one who knows him well.

He drinks little, eats moderately, never smokes. He walks much, works week ends on his farm in Adams County, Pa., plays the guitar. He is married and has two daughters.

He went to Princeton University after reading F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *This Side of Paradise*, majored in history and entered the consular service. He held posts in Switzerland, Germany, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, then studied Russian language and culture at the University of Berlin.

Kennan went to Moscow with Ambassador William C. Bullitt in 1933 and added much during the next four years to his knowledge of Russia.

**Earlier Despots.** His absorbing interest in that country came perhaps from a great uncle, George Kennan, who braved the Siberian wilds and winters in the 1880s to build a telegraph system and who won fame by exposing the cruelties in Czarist prison camps.

In 1939 diplomat Kennan saw Hitler’s march into Prague, then, in Berlin for two years observed the working of the Nazi dictatorship. In 1941 he was in-



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**Iron-curtained.** Spasso House is the U.S. Ambassador’s residence in Moscow.

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terned for five months.

In 1944 he returned to Moscow as minister-counselor. He wrote analyses that have been called "classics." They so impressed Secretary of State George C. Marshall that he sent for Kennan, later named him chairman of the important Policy Planning Committee. That post made Kennan "America's global planner." Afterwards, he became Counselor of the Department. Today he is regarded in most quarters as the nation's outstanding authority on Russia. At present associated with the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton and a consultant for the Ford Foundation, Kennan does not believe that war in itself will bring about the sort of Russia we would like to see. He considers war "a form of bankruptcy for us all."

Many do not subscribe to Kennan's views. Critics see Stalin as pleased with a program that gives him time to build up and compels his antagonists to exhaust their resources on military machines. In a review of Kennan's book, *American Diplomacy 1900-1950*, anti-Communist writer Freda Utley pointed out that he had no policy to suggest if his hopes of a change within Russia do not materialize.

Nevertheless, key officialdom follows Kennan's views. It is sending him to Moscow as the foreign representative whose mere words may mean little, but whose words (as Kennan himself says), "when they have the ring of reflecting, or being backed up by, facts of unchallengeable validity," may mean much.

# Pathfinder

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