

GEORGE F. KENNAN

The School of Historical Studies has voted unanimously to propose George F. Kennan as a candidate for a professorship in the Institute for Advanced Study. Mr. Kennan has been a member of the Institute since 1950 except for an interval during which he served as Ambassador of the United States to the U.S.S.R. He is consequently well known to the members of our faculty, and it is unnecessary to dwell upon the personal qualities which have made Mr. Kennan an inestimable asset to our academic community.

Mr. Kennan was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on February 16th, 1904. He took his A.B. at Princeton University and immediately thereafter entered the foreign service of the United States. Between 1927 and 1950 he served continuously in various positions of trust in Germany, Austria, Lithuania, Czecho-Slovakia, Russia, and Portugal, in the State Department in Washington, and at the National War College. Early in his diplomatic career he became deeply interested in the Slavic languages, history, and literature. In 1929 he was a member of the Oriental Seminary at the University of Berlin and a regular student at the Hochschule für Politik from which he received the certificate of interpreter in Russian and German; and he soon made himself a recognized expert in the diplomatic and political history of Central and Eastern Europe.

When he came to the Institute as a temporary member it was with the desire to devote himself to the historical studies that he had long been eager to cultivate. He had not had the professional post-graduate training of the academic professor of history; but his zeal for research, his rigorous self-discipline, his linguistic ability, and his long experience of history in the making with which he combined a strong theoretical interest and unusual acumen and emotional detachment have more than made up for this lack of the ordinary kind of scholarly training.

During his residence at the Institute he has been engaged primarily in making an elaborate study of the relations between the United States and the Soviet Government from 1917 to 1919. The first volume of this work has now been finished in manuscript and the second is in progress. It promises to be a work of high scholarly merit and of unusual historical importance. While working at this imposing piece of research and composition Mr. Kennan has found the time to write three important series of lectures all of which have been published and in their published form have evoked universal attention and an unusual measure of scholarly approval. The first of these was American Diplomacy, 1900-1950, delivered on the Charles R. Walgreen Foundation at the University of Chicago; to these lectures, published by the University of

Chicago Press in 1951, were appended two articles, already famous, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" and "America and the Russian Future". In 1954 was published Realities of American Foreign Policy, which had been delivered as the Stafford Little Lectures at Princeton University. In the summer of 1954 at the invitation of the Institute for Political Sciences at the University of Frankfurt Mr. Kennan delivered a series of four German lectures later published under the title, Das Amerikanisch - Russische Verhältnis. The impression which these lectures made upon the unusually large academic audience was unprecedented. The nature of this impression is strikingly described by Professor von Borch, one of the editors of the Zeitschrift für Internationalen Fragen: "These lectures which had an entirely unprecedented academic success produced their effect not only by means of their intellectual content but also because of the tragic seriousness of the lecturer who, being under no illusion concerning the inexorable strife of historical processes, still believes in the superiority of transcendental forces, because of the strictly scientific balancing of causes and the renunciation of the terrifying simplification characteristic of our times." Professor von Borch expressed the opinion that "Mr. Kennan's withdrawal from diplomatic activity has proved to be the great good fortune of American historiography."

The esteem in which Mr. Kennan is held abroad is further testified to by his recent invitation to the Eastman Professorship at Oxford, while at home Yale, Dartmouth, Colgate, and Notre Dame have bestowed upon him the honorary degree of LL.D. This international opinion is fully confirmed by our own knowledge of him. He combines in singular fashion the mature experience of public affairs with the devotion of a scholar to creative contemplation, and we are convinced that his appointment to a professorship would be a unique enrichment of the life and work of the Institute.

Read by Professor Harold Cherniss
at a meeting of the School of Historical Studies
on March 7, 1955

All Souls College
Oxford.
14th March, 1955

Dear Eka,

Thank you very much for your letter of March 7. I am greatly honoured and indeed embarrassed, by your enquiry as to my views about the qualities of my friend George Kennan. As you know, we have invited him to hold the Eastman Professorship for the coming year - and are disappointed by the fact that he will not be able to come until later - when it is hoped that it will be possible to make arrangements to invite him again. I can add confidentially that not only were the electors to the Chair unanimous in their choice, but in the replies to the enquiries stimulated both by the Vice Chancellor and by Aydelotte - and we had half a dozen such - George Kennan's name always came up, and was indeed the sole name to be mentioned by everyone who was consulted.

I met him first in Moscow in 1945, when he was American Minister there and thought him one of the most interesting and attractive human beings I had ever met. I was greatly struck by the fact that beyond the specialised knowledge of an American Soviet expert, such as some of his other colleagues in the relevant section of the State Department possess, Kennan seemed to me to possess a knowledge of Russian literature and recent history, and, for a foreigner, extraordinary sympathy with anything and everything to do with the character and institutions of European Russia. My other friend, Charles Bohlen, the present United States Ambassador to Moscow, possessed equally sensitive antennae to every move and tremor in the Russian political organism, but he was mainly occupied with the day to day affairs, and the practice and theory of Communism. In contrast with him Kennan lived within a much wider horizon, both in time and in space; possessed a patient, scrupulous, scholarly capacity for accumulating and weighting facts connected with Russian development not immediately relevant to the political problems with which he was dealing, and possessed in every way a richer and more academical mind. With the exception of Professor Karpovich of Harvard, I have never myself met anyone with wider knowledge or more original ideas about the history of Russia and the character of its political and social evolution during the last half century. No doubt this is partly inherited from his famous namesake and relative, but it springs at least as much from a temperament and interests, which are by nature scholarly, although naturally modified by many years of professional diplomatic activity. I am not an American historian and cannot therefore judge with any competence the value of his recent studies of United States foreign policy, but they seem to me to contain more ideas per page, and more freshness and directness of vision - the absence of obstacles between the student and his object - than are to be found in

the pages of academic historians of worth and reputation. In short, he seems to me to be a man of unique distinction of mind and remarkable, sometimes rather mysterious, intellectual processes, leading to original conclusions of an arresting kind in any subject matter to which he applies himself. Moreover, he has that rarest of all possessions - something to say. I feel about him as the late Lord Keynes felt about Hubert Henderson, lately Warden of All Souls, when he recommended him for election to that college: that a great service would be rendered merely by allowing the mind of this distinguished man to bear upon certain theoretical problems. This expression has always stuck in my mind as singularly appropriate to the case of which it was used; and I cannot help feeling that the same kind of service could be rendered by the Institute if they created a permanent possibility enabling this clever and dedicated man to deal with contemporary Russian or American history (for that is what I imagine he is mainly interested in at present). I myself would ask no greater privilege than that of being able to communicate with him about such matters for the rest of my natural life.

Yours ever,

/s/ Isaiah Berlin

P.S. I need not add that it is a wonderful thing to see so much integrity and passionate concern for the truth in the field of Soviet studies, which is to-day the most fertile breeding ground for journalists and charlatans of low calibre. The temptations, both moral and financial, before anyone who has the apparent qualifications to set up as a Soviet expert, are to-day uniquely large; to have kept one's head and resisted all invitations to adulterate one's wares even in a very slight and scarcely noticeable degree as George Kennan has done, argues the purest and most incorruptible intellectual morals. This joined with a rare capacity for discovering the truth and literary gifts, creates a most impressive constellation of qualities.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Department of History

March 18, 1955

Professor E. L. Woodward
Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton, New Jersey

Dear Woodward:

I think that it would be an excellent idea to give a professorship in the Institute to George Kennan. He is a man of great breadth of intelligence and understanding, and one from whom I learn a great deal every time I talk with him. He is clearly of the calibre that the country has come to expect of men at the Institute.

On the other hand, I would have the gravest of misgivings about any proposition to make Kennan a professor of history, or to call him a professor of history. He is not a historian, although he has taken to writing history, and his thinking is not the thinking of a professional historian. I am always struck in reading his work by the fact that he is so preoccupied with problems of the present that he at times distorts the events of the past in talking of them. Another characteristic of his historical work is his playing around with the historical optative; that is, he is always arguing that if such and such a thing had only been true then everything would have been richer and better. I do not say that there are no historians who suffer from these failings, but I would insist that we do not describe such historians as distinguished historians. If the Institute is going to appoint a man as a historian, I think the country has the right to expect that he will be a distinguished historian. One of my colleagues said to me the other day that when he read Kennan's book, he just did not think of it as history. This is the way I feel myself. The historical essays in his first book I do not regard as sound, and my opinion is shared by those of my colleagues who work in American diplomatic history.

Thus, while I would be enthusiastic about seeing Kennan made a professor at the Institute, I would be distinctly unhappy, if I may be permitted to say so, if his appointment should prevent the Institute from going ahead and hiring a distinguished historian, for, as an outsider who has nevertheless had close relations with the Institute, I feel the need of someone like Ed Earle, who not only did good historical work but also maintained relations with the historical profession and brought good men to Princeton. I do not think it is impossible to find such a man. Offhand I would mention two: Richard Hofstadter of Columbia and Franklin L. Baumer of Yale. It is, of course, none of my business to be recommending people to you. Nevertheless, if you are interested in any suggestions from the History Department I shall see that you get them.

Yours very sincerely,

/s/ Gordon A. Craig

16 October 1955

Dear Woodward:

I was sorry that I didn't have more time to talk to you on Friday about George Kennan's book, but I guess cocktail parties are not the best occasions for that kind of discussion anyway.

Herb Bailey sent the manuscript to me for my opinion as to whether the University Press should publish it or not. I had no hesitation about replying that they should certainly do so. I am not, of course, an "expert" on Russian history--or American, for that matter--but, as far as I could judge, the scholarship was sound, and I was impressed by the tremendous amount of work which George had done in basic source materials before sitting down to write. The story of the confusion in American circles in Petersburg is excellently done and, as a study of the difficulties which can arise from the proliferation of quasi-diplomatic agencies without clear definition of function and competence, the book is fascinating. In addition, of course, it is beautifully written and a joy to read. I should judge that this is a book which will receive considerable attention--and deserved attention--when it appears.

Even so, as I said on Friday, the doubts which I expressed in my earlier letter to you about the possibility of appointing George as professor of history at the Institute have not been removed. He has a long way to go before he will be a historian in the sense that you and Kantorowicz are historians. Even in the present manuscript he is apt on occasion to stop being the objective historian and to slip into the role of the polemicist, arguing the case of 1950 from the circumstances of 1917. In addition, I still feel that, if the Institute is going to appoint a historian, it should be a man who is recognized by the historical profession as a distinguished historian. If you asked ten historians what they thought of George I am sure they would all speak highly of his work. But if you asked them to draw up a list of distinguished American historians, I doubt whether they would include him.

I could, of course, be wrong about this. In any case I thought that I should tell you what I thought of his book.

Sincerely,

/s/ Gordon A. Craig

The Inn
Rancho Santa Fe
California

Dear Oppenheimer:

In reply to yours of March 7, I am not qualified to pass on Kennan as a professional scholar. My colleagues respect him greatly, while reserving, as they always do, the right to differ and criticize. However, I can assure you that they and I will be delighted to have him as a permanent resident of our community. Your appointment (which I hope he will accept--doubtless he has done so in advance) is an excellent solution of his problem and the University will cheer it, you can be sure.

Yours faithfully,

/s/ Harold Dodds

Theodor E. Mommsen
700 Stewart Avenue
Ithaca, N. Y.

March 17, 1955

Dear Eka:

Thank you for your letter of March 13, in which you told me that the School of Historical Studies has voted unanimously to propose to the Faculty of the Institute the appointment of George Kennan as Professor in the School of Historical Studies. I want to say at the very start that I was greatly pleased by this news.

Let me try to explain my reaction. It is only partially based on my evaluation of Kennan's books. I have read both of them and found them very informative and stimulating, especially the second book. Not being an expert myself in diplomatic history, I suppose that there exist other works which deal with American foreign policy in a technically more comprehensive fashion. But I also note that Kennan's next book will be a diplomatic history in the most specific sense of the word, based on archival research, as well as on his personal experiences in Russia. If I had to propose a man for a professorship in American diplomatic history at one of the major universities, I would certainly recommend Kennan wholeheartedly because I am convinced that he measures up to every possible standard in this respect.

But in regard to the question of Kennan's appointment to a permanent membership in the Institute, I am not thinking primarily of his undeniable qualities as an expert in the field of international policy and diplomatic relations. There are many good scholars and distinguished diplomats and men of affairs. Kennan's actual achievements in the past and the promises which he gives for the future, put him at the top of this class of people. But what really impressed me most deeply on the few occasions at which I met him socially, and what I sensed when I listened to his Princeton lectures and read his books and occasional articles, was the personality of the man himself. There are, in my opinion, not many people in this world of ours, who are as profoundly humane or, if you will allow me the use of the word, as truly "humanist", as Kennan is. From his wide knowledge of the facts and thoughts of the past, as well as from his practical experiences in the present, he has developed a deep sense of moral and civic responsibility. This has enabled him to fulfill a most important function in our society. In the last decade or so, public opinion in this country has become less and less articulate as far as the discussion of foreign policy is concerned. Kennan has remained articulate, setting forth ideas which command and receive respect both in this country and abroad because they bear witness to a spirit and mind nourished by the best of our western traditions.

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I find it most difficult to express myself succinctly. Therefore, take my comments simply as an expression of my immediate reaction to your news. In my estimation Kennan's appointment to the Institute would signify and would, I think, be generally considered a well-deserved recognition of his past merits and his present function in this country. It would also, in my opinion, do credit to the Institute itself.

As ever yours,

/s/ Theodor E. Mommsen

Professor Ernst Kantorowicz
Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton, New Jersey

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

The Russian Institute
431 West 117th Street

March 10, 1955

Professor E. L. Woodward
The Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton, New Jersey

Dear Professor Woodward:

Many thanks for your letter of March 7, inquiring about my opinion of Mr. George Kennan and his suitability for appointment to the Institute. Because I have worked closely with Mr. Kennan since 1943, and especially in recent years, and because I have a great admiration for him, my opinions are definitely prejudiced.

George F. Kennan is a person of remarkable political experience and judgment, of wide and discriminating reading and of delightful and effective expression. I believe he would bring great distinction to a position in the Institute. He has every intention of continuing his historical and political productivity and his work at the Institute will certainly bring wide public recognition to the particular and important function performed by the Institute for Advanced Study in this field.

Unlike the late Professor Earle, who brought a unique combination of qualities and experience to the work, Mr. Kennan is not a fully trained academic scholar and I am not sure to what extent he would apply traditional academic standards in the selection of people and projects. On the other hand, he has so many insights and such a wide range of active concern, that I feel the product would be extremely useful to our country and to the world. I have the highest regard for Mr. Kennan's mind and outlook, and I believe that this would be an appointment which would bring great distinction and cause universal satisfaction.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Philip E. Mosely
Director

23 März 1955
Grüneburgweg 143
Frankfurt/M.

Herrn Prof. Dr. Robert Oppenheimer
The Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton, New Jersey

Sehr verehrter Herr Oppenheimer,

Ernst Kantorowicz schreibt mir, dass es gut wäre, wenn auch eine Frankfurter Stimme dem 'Institute' gegenüber sich über George Kennan äusserte. Ich tue das etwas zögernd, da ich es unbescheiden fände, wenn ich mir anmasste, über einen Mann wie Kennan zu urteilen.

Wohl aber will ich gerne - und das ist es wohl auch, was ich soll - über den Eindruck berichten, den sein Auftreten hier in Frankfurt gemacht hat; denn ich habe seine, seither veröffentlichten Vorträge über die russisch-amerikanischen Beziehungen gehört und an seiner seminarartigen Diskussion mit den Studenten teilgenommen, ich hatte die Freude, an Stelle des verhinderten Carlo Schmid ihm abschliessend unseren Dank auszudrücken, ihn wiederholt in kleinerem Kreise zu sprechen und die Unterhaltung mit ihm noch brieflich fortzusetzen; ich kann nur bezeugen: Kennans Erfolg in Frankfurt war beispiellos, ich habe in meinem Leben noch nie an einer Universität so etwas erlebt.

Der Grund für diesen alle überraschenden Anklang und für die ganz ungewöhnliche Wirkung ist wohl darin zu suchen, dass man an Stelle des erwarteten blossen Kenners und Fachmanns einem Menschen begegnet war. Als Fachmann hat Kennan selbstverständlich auch gesprochen und gewirkter weder als den 'reinen' Diplomaten und Praktiker, noch als den 'reinen' Historiker und Theoretiker möchte ich ihn bezeichnen, sondern als dieser beider äusserst glückliche Verbindung und lebendige Einheit.

Ich habe nur sehr selten den Wert der praktischen Erfahrung für die geschichtliche Erkenntnis so überzeugend beobachten können wie in diesen Vorträgen, und umgekehrt den Wert der zuchtvollen, strengen theoretischen Klärung für die praktische Aufgabe. Nicht weniger selten auch habe ich, gleich den übrigen Hörern, so stark den Eindruck der Persönlichkeit erfahren.

Wenn hier weniger von der Wissenschaft, mehr vom Charakter die Rede ist, so deshalb, weil ich glaube, dass in solchen Fällen die Wissenschaft an sich sich von selbst versteht, das Wichtigste aber am Wissenschaftler der Mensch ist.

Gestatten Sie mir noch ein Wort der Erklärung darüber, dass ich Deutsch und nicht Englisch schreibe. Ich höre nämlich, dass ich zwischen beiden Sprachen die Wahl habe. Auf Deutsch aber bin ich ganz sicher, dass ich genau nur das sage, was ich sagen will.

Mit den besten Empfehlungen

/s/ Otto Vossler

Supplementary Statement of the School of
Historical Studies

At a meeting of the Faculty held on March 8, 1955, the School of Historical Studies reported that it had voted unanimously to propose the election of Mr. George F. Kennan to a professorship in the Institute, and in support of this proposal laid before the Faculty at that time a statement concerning Mr. Kennan's career, character, and achievements. The Faculty having decided to defer a decision on this proposal to a meeting to be held during the present term and there having been in the interim the opportunity for further inquiry, thought, and discussion concerning the merits of the proposal, the School wishes now to make a statement by way of supplement to its earlier document of nomination.

We recognize that consideration of the proposal involves answers to two questions: first, whether the Institute should continue to support the study of recent political history, and second, if it should support such study, whether Mr. Kennan is not merely a suitable candidate for a professorship in this field of study but an eminent one and the best available.

With regard to the first question we call the attention of the Faculty to the facts that immediately after the death of Professor Earle the Director expressed the hope that the pursuit of studies in Modern History would be maintained and extended and that this expression was recorded in the minutes of the Faculty Meeting of September 30, 1954, which were unanimously approved. We have no doubts about the rightness of this decision. Indeed we regard it as a matter of public importance that in the present critical state of the world an Institute such as ours should set an example in the application of critical methods to the analysis of recent and contemporary political phenomena, and

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particularly, the analysis of the relations between independent sovereign states--the gravest danger-point in our contemporary society. We are agreed then to continue our academic interest in this field.

After considering possible candidates from this country and elsewhere the School of Historical Studies is more than ever convinced that Mr. Kennan has to an outstanding degree the qualifications for a professorial appointment at the Institute in the field of twentieth-century international relations.

Our judgment in this matter has been questioned on the grounds that Mr. Kennan is not a "professional" scholar; that the greater part of his career has been directed to practical affairs, and that it is too late for him to acquire the "background" necessary for historical work.

Apart from the fact that a great deal of Mr. Kennan's official work has been concerned with the critical examination and evaluation of the foreign policy of States, and that in this work he has acquired much of the technical training which the professional historian learns in other ways, we regard Mr. Kennan's experience as in itself of the greatest value. This practical knowledge of affairs--in which many academic historians are notably deficient--is of special value in dealing with all historical material concerned with the relations between governments. We may point out that many of the greatest political historians in the field of recent or contemporary history have been men who have turned to historical writing after gaining practical experience of affairs. It would be embarrassing to Mr. Kennan to quote the examples of Thucydides or Clarendon or Guizot, but---to take a modern English parallel--we might cite John Morley.

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In our view, therefore, the question is not whether Mr. Kennan's previous career is in itself a disadvantage--we regard it as an advantage. What we have had to ask ourselves is whether Mr. Kennan possesses the positive abilities, critical judgment, patience, capacity for handling large masses of material, skill in writing, and above all detachment, which are necessary for a historian in any field, and not least in the field of the political relations between sovereign states. Since our last Faculty meeting we have had the opportunity of reading the first volume of Mr. Kennan's projected work on the political relations between the United States and the USSR. Our opinion of this work is extremely favorable. We regard it as conclusive evidence that Mr. Kennan does possess and can exercise all the abilities we have named, and that, in addition, his practical experience gives his historical work a firmness of outline and a distinction which put it in the first rank. We give to the volume the highest praise open to the historian when we say that the work will not have to be done again.

It has been suggested that the scholarly reputation of the Institute will suffer if we elect to a professorship anyone without the usual academic qualifications. We should not incline to give much thought to outside criticism of this kind. In fact, however, we think that the reasons determining our judgment in the matter will be understood and approved, not only in this country, but in other countries--notably Great Britain and Germany--where Mr. Kennan's work is already widely known and appreciated. Incidentally, we would call attention to the fact that Mr. Kennan has been invited to hold the Eastman visiting professorship at Oxford, and that, to our knowledge, this invitation was given for the very reasons which have convinced us that we should do well to invite him to hold a professorship at the Institute.

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Finally, we should like to repeat our previous statement that we do not regard Mr. Kennan's appointment as a substitute for the appointment of a leading historian interested in some other field of Modern History. We have continued our search for a suitable candidate; hitherto we have not found anyone upon whose election we should be generally agreed. We may be able to make a recommendation in the near future, or we may be compelled to wait, possibly for a year or two, but this matter is not in itself related to Mr. Kennan's candidature. If we had a candidate in some other field of Modern History, we should nonetheless also put forward Mr. Kennan's name for election to a professorship.

C O P Y

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
Evanston, Illinois

C O P Y

The College of Liberal Arts
Department of History

October 5, 1955

Dear Deane:

Sorry to have delayed in answering your rather hectic note; it arrived as I was working my tail off to prepare testimony for a Senate committee on religious freedom; then at the last minute the hearings were called off.

Of course I have no objection to your using my letter as you see fit. If you do, however, it should be emphasized that I do not know George Kennan, and that all that I have to say about him is based on heresay. Too, there has been some talk of inviting him here for a term or more as a distinguished professor. Should that be the case, I would certainly not want him to know that anyone at Northwestern had spoken against him. I know that you are a careful and diplomatic person, and that such matters would be held in confidence.

I suppose that actually there are two counts against Kennan. One is his lack of reputation as a historian which I stressed. The other is the fact that, because he has not been active in scholarly circles over the course of the years, his knowledge of men in the field is limited. You need not only a scholar whose name is grand enough to add lustre to your list, but someone who attends meetings and has been in touch with the young men. Ed Earl served admirably in bringing in bright young scholars in history or politics on fellowships; that tradition should be continued. And Kennan does not seem the man for it.

Our love to Kay. And when are you two going to get out here to let us repay some of that magnificent hospitality.

Ever,

/s/ Ray

(Ray Billington)

[Prof. of History at Northwestern;
Harnsworth Prof. at Oxford 1953]

C O P Y

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

C O P Y

Princeton New Jersey

Department of History

June 7, 1955

Professor Deane Montgomery
Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton, New Jersey

Dear Montgomery:

I am somewhat troubled by your letter, since I have two rather contradictory impressions of George Kennan. On the one hand, he is one of the ablest public servants whom this country has had in the last twenty-five years. He was an outstanding member of the Foreign Service; he has worked hard to perfect his knowledge of the languages and institutions of Central and Eastern Europe; his knowledge of political and diplomatic history of the period since 1930 is probably unrivaled. On the other hand, he is not yet a scholar, although he is trying hard to become one. He would not be recognized by other historians as a full-fledged member of the guild and some of his writing has betrayed a lack of historical perspective which has made his books less effective than they should have been. I think that he is aware of these deficiencies and that he is trying to remedy them, but he is still learning his new trade.

In these circumstances, it seems to me that it would cause a certain amount of surprise and adverse comment if the Institute were to make Kennan a professor of history. He simply does not have the standing which he should have; no one, for example, would think of comparing him to Langer, who works in very much the same field. At the same time, he is a man of great ability who might well become a distinguished scholar and who deserves all the help which the Institute can give him. If I were a member of your faculty, I should try to create some special category for him, so that he could continue to do his work and complete the transition from diplomacy to scholarship. He should have every opportunity to go on with his work; it will be good and interesting work. But at the present moment, to make him a professor of history would put both the Institute and himself in a false position.

I realize that you may wish to show this letter to a few of your friends, but I hope that you will keep it as confidential as circumstances permit. I admire Kennan for many reasons; I only wish that I could recommend him for this position.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Joseph R. Strayer

JRS:ED

Joseph R. Strayer
(Chairman of the Department of History)

C O P Y

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

C O P Y

Evanston, Illinois

The College of Liberal Arts
Department of History

May 29, 1955

Dear Deane:

It was good hearing from you, even though the problem that you present is not an easy one. Before plunging into that let me say again how wonderful that evening with you and Kay was. We had a hell of a good time, regretting only that we had so little chance to just chat with you two nice people. Against that I must balance the magnificent crop of stories that I carried away. I have become one of the most popular social lights in Evanston through the "teffy-apple" story, which was told last night with huge success at a cocktail party. That was a resounding story session indeed that you provided. We thank you for it.

Now to the point. I do not know George Kennan personally, but I have read some of the things that he had written, and once heard him speak. I have also talked with other historians nearer his field of interest who have participated in conferences with him. Under these circumstances what I have to say can carry little authority. But for what it is worth, here it is.

Kennan is, all agree, a brilliant person, with a fine mind and an excellent administrative touch. The speech that I heard was brilliantly conceived and executed. It was, however, in the field of practical diplomacy rather than history. My friends tell me that when he attended a conference of diplomatic historians he was naive and unsure of himself, as one would expect of a person just entering a new discipline.

You are right in saying that he has written nothing of significance in the field of history. He is currently working on a straight historical monograph -- one dealing with the diplomatic relations between the United States and Russia in the World War I era. But that will be his first venture into the field, and until it is published one cannot judge his success there. Knowing the excellence of his mind, I would expect this to be a very important book. Yet on the other hand men who excel in one area cannot necessarily transpose their brilliance to another. The proof of the pudding, etc.

Under these circumstances, I think that you are probably right in opposing his election. Your objections might possibly be based on the ground that the Institute should wait until his new book has been received before deciding if he is the man you want. Even then, however, I can think of other historians who command greater respect in the profession. Our old friend Merle Curti, for example, would stand head and shoulders above Kennan in the opinion of all of us. And he, incidentally, would be as stimulating a member of the Institute as could be found.

I would suggest one other thing before you decide. I think that I mentioned my colleague Arthur Link, who is currently with you. He is, I know, the sort of person you might want to consider for the appointment himself, and justly so. For our sake, we hope you do not. But he does know Kennan, and he is a young man of sound judgment. Why not ask him about it, saying that I suggested this.

Our love to Kay -- which Mabel sends in absentia, as she and Anne are having a wonderful time in California right now.

[Prof. of History at Northwestern;
Harnsworth Prof. at Oxford 1953]

/s/ Ray
(Ray Billington)

ALL SOULS COLLEGE,
OXFORD.

14th March, 1955.

Dear Eka,

Thank you very much for your letter of March 7 - I am greatly honoured and indeed embarrassed, by your enquiry as to my views about the qualities of my friend George Kennan. As you know, we have invited him to hold the Eastman Professorship for the coming year - and are ~~much~~ disappointed by the fact that he will not be able to come until later - when it is hoped that it will be possible to make arrangements to invite him again. I can add confidentially that not only were the electors to the Chair unanimous in their choice, but in the replies to the enquiries stimulated both by the Vice Chancellor and by Aydelotte - and we had half a dozen such - George Kennan's name always came up, and was indeed the sole name to be mentioned by everyone who was consulted.

I met him first in Moscow in 1945, when he was American Minister there and thought him one of the most interesting and attractive human beings I had ever met. I was greatly struck by the fact that beyond the specialised knowledge of an American Soviet expert, such as some of his other colleagues in the relevant section of the State Department possess, Kennan seemed to me to possess a knowledge of Russian literature and recent history, and, for a foreigner, extraordinary sympathy with anything and everything to do with the character and institutions of European Russia. My other friend, Charles Bohlen, the present United States Ambassador to Moscow, possessed ~~an~~ equally sensitive antennae to every move and tremor in the Russian political organism, but he was mainly occupied with the day to day affairs, and the practice and theory of Communism. In contrast with him Kennan lived ~~in~~ ^{with} a much wider horizon, both in time and in space; possessed a patient, ~~minute~~ ^{scrupulous} scholarly capacity for accumulating and weighing facts connected with Russian development not immediately relevant to the political problems with which he was dealing, and possessed in every way a ~~broader~~ ^{richer} and ~~richer~~ ^{more acute} mind. With the exception of Professor Karpovich of Harvard, I have never myself met anyone with wider knowledge or more original ideas ~~about~~ ^{an insight} about the history of Russia, and the character of its political and social evolution during the last half century. No doubt this is partly inherited from his famous namesake and relative,

ALL BOOKS OUTGOING
OCTOBER

but it springs at least as much from a temperament and interests, which are ~~rather~~ by nature scholarly, although naturally modified by many years of professional diplomatic activity. I am not an American historian and cannot therefore judge with any competence the value of his recent studies of United States foreign policy, but they seem to me to contain more ideas per page, ~~more~~ and more freshness and ~~and~~ ^{directness} ~~vision~~ of vision - the absence of obstacles between the student and his object - than are to be found in the pages of ~~any~~ academic historians of worth and reputation. In short, he seems to me to be a man of unique distinction of mind and remarkable, sometimes rather mysterious, ^{in the collection of processes} ~~with~~ ^{leading to} ~~originality~~ ^{original} ~~both of thought and of conception~~ likely to be arrived at in any subject matter to which ~~it~~ ^{he} ~~is~~ ^{applies} himself. Moreover, he has that rarest of all possessions - something to say. I feel about him as the late Lord Keynes felt about Hubert Henderson, lately Warden of All Souls, when he recommended him for election to that college: that a great service would be rendered by ^{allowing} ~~having~~ the mind of this distinguished man to bear upon certain theoretical problems. This expression has always stuck in my mind as singularly appropriate to the case of which it was used; and I cannot help feeling that the same kind of service could be rendered by the ^{most clever and dedicated man} ~~unfortunate~~ ^{to deal} with contemporary Russian or American history, (for that is what I imagine he is mainly interested in at present) I myself would ask no greater privilege than that of being able to communicate with him about such matters for the rest of my natural life.

Conclusions of an interesting kind in

much

Yours ever,

Isaiah Berlin

P.S. I need not add that it is a wonderful thing to see such much integrity and passionate concern for truth in ~~the~~ ^{the} field ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~that~~ ^{the} Soviet studies, ~~which~~ ^{which} is to-day the most fertile breeding ground for journalists and charlatans of low calibre.

ALL SOULS COLLEGE,
OXFORD.

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P.S. continued.

The temptations, both moral and financial, before anyone who has the apparent qualifications to set up as a Soviet expert, are to-day uniquely large; to have kept one's head and resisted all invitations to adulterate one's wares even in a very slight and scarcely noticeable degree as George Kennan has done, argues the purest and most incorruptible intellectual morals. This ~~can~~ joined with a rare capacity for discovering the truth and a literary gift, creates a most impressive ~~whole~~ constellation of qualities.

Prof. Dr. O. Vossler
Grüneburgweg 143
Frankfurt/M.

23. März 1955

~~multiliter~~
~~Watt in file #7~~

Herrn Prof. Dr. Robert Oppenheimer
The Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton N.J.

Sehr verehrter Herr Oppenheimer,

Ernst Kantorowicz schreibt mir, dass es gut wäre, wenn auch eine Frankfurter Stimme dem 'Institute' gegenüber sich über George Kennan äusserte. Ich tue das etwas zögernd, da ich es unbescheiden fände, wenn ich mir anmasste, über einen Mann wie Kennan zu urteilen.

Wohl aber will ich gerne - und das ist es wohl auch, was ich soll - über den Eindruck berichten, den sein Auftreten hier in Frankfurt gemacht hat; denn ich habe seine, seither veröffentlichten Vorträge über die russisch-amerikanischen Beziehungen gehört und an seiner seminarartigen Diskussion mit den Studenten teilgenommen, ich hatte die Freude, an Stelle des verhinderten Carlo Schmid ihm abschliessend unseren Dank auszudrücken, ihn wiederholt in kleinerem Kreise zu sprechen und die Unterhaltung mit ihm noch brieflich fortzusetzen; ich kann nur bezeugen: Kennans Erfolg in Frankfurt war beispiellos, ich habe in meinem Leben noch nie an einer Universität so etwas erlebt.

Der Grund für diesen alle überraschenden Anklang und für die ganz ungewöhnliche Wirkung ist wohl darin zu suchen, dass man an Stelle des erwarteten blossen Kenners und Fachmanns einem Menschen begegnet war. Als Fachmann hat Kennan selbstverständlich auch gesprochen und gewirkt - aber weder als den 'reinen' Diplomaten und Praktiker, noch als den 'reinen' Historiker und Theoretiker möchte ich ihn bezeichnen, sondern als dieser beider äusserst glückliche Verbindung und lebendige Einheit.

Ich habe nur sehr selten den Wert der praktischen Erfahrung für die geschichtliche Erkenntnis so überzeugend beobachten können wie in diesen Vorträgen, und umgekehrt den Wert der zuchtvollen, strengen theoretischen Klärung für die praktische Aufgabe. Nicht weniger selten auch habe ich, gleich den übrigen Hörern, so stark den Eindruck der Persönlichkeit erfahren.

Wenn hier weniger von der Wissenschaft, mehr vom Charakter die Rede ist, so deshalb, weil ich glaube, dass in solchen Fällen die Wissenschaft an sich sich von selbst versteht, das Wichtigste aber am Wissenschaftler der Mensch ist.

Gestatten Sie mir noch ein Wort der Erklärung darüber, dass ich Deutsch und nicht Englisch schreibe. Ich höre nämlich, dass ich zwischen beiden Sprachen die Wahl habe. Auf Deutsch aber bin ich ganz sicher, dass ich genau nur das sage, was ich sagen will.

Mit den besten Empfehlungen

Sh

Otto Vossler

Columbia University
in the City of New York
[NEW YORK 27, N. Y.]

THE RUSSIAN INSTITUTE
431 WEST 117TH STREET

March 10, 1955

CONFIDENTIAL

Professor E. L. Woodward
The Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton, New Jersey

Dear Professor Woodward:

Many thanks for your letter of March 7, inquiring about my opinion of Mr. George Kennan and his suitability for appointment to the Institute. Because I have worked closely with Mr. Kennan since 1943, and especially in recent years, and because I have a great admiration for him, my opinions are definitely prejudiced.

George F. Kennan is a person of remarkable political experience and judgment, of wide and discriminating reading and of delightful and effective expression. I believe he would bring great distinction to a position in the Institute. He has every intention of continuing his historical and political productivity and his work at the Institute will certainly bring wide public recognition to the particular and important function performed by the Institute for Advanced Study in this field.

Unlike the late Professor Earle, who brought a unique combination of qualities and experience to the work, Mr. Kennan is not a fully trained academic scholar and I am not sure to what extent he would apply traditional academic standards in the selection of people and projects. On the other hand, he has so many insights and such a wide range of active concern, that I feel the product would be extremely useful to our country and to the world. I have the highest regard for Mr. Kennan's mind and outlook, and I believe that this would be an appointment which would bring great distinction and cause universal satisfaction.

Sincerely yours,

Philip E. Mosely
Philip E. Mosely
Director

March 7, 1955

Confidential

Dear Professor Mosely:

The School of Historical Studies at this Institute is considering the possibility of inviting Mr. George Kennan to become a professor in the Institute. It is our custom, before deciding upon such invitations, to get outside opinions on the candidates. We would, therefore, be most grateful if you would be willing to tell us whether in your opinion Mr. Kennan would be a suitable candidate for our consideration.

Yours sincerely,

E. L. Woodward
Executive Officer

Professor Philip E. Mosely
29 Claremont Avenue
New York, N. Y.

March 11, 1955

Dear Professor Mosely:

Thank you very much for your letter.

You have given us just the kind of appraisal we wanted.

Yours sincerely,

E. L. Woodward

Professor Philip E. Mosely
The Russian Institute
Columbia University
431 West 117 Street
New York 27, N. Y.

Supplementary Statement of the School of
Historical Studies

At a meeting of the Faculty held on March 8, 1955, the School of Historical Studies reported that it had voted unanimously to propose the election of Mr. George F. Kennan to a professorship in the Institute, and in support of this proposal laid before the Faculty at that time a statement concerning Mr. Kennan's career, character, and achievements. The Faculty having decided to defer a decision on this proposal to a meeting to be held during the present term and there having been in the interim the opportunity for further inquiry, thought, and discussion concerning the merits of the proposal, the School wishes now to make a statement by way of supplement to its earlier document of nomination.

We recognize that consideration of the proposal involves answers to two questions: first, whether the Institute should continue to support the study of recent political history, and second, if it should support such study, whether Mr. Kennan is not merely a suitable candidate for a professorship in this field of study but an eminent one and the best available.

With regard to the first question we call the attention of the Faculty to the facts that immediately after the death of Professor Earle the Director expressed the hope that the pursuit of studies in Modern History would be maintained and extended and that this expression was recorded in the minutes of the Faculty Meeting of September 30, 1954, which were unanimously approved. We have no doubts about the rightness of this decision. Indeed we regard it as a matter of public importance that in the present critical state of the world an Institute such as ours should set an example in the application of critical methods to the analysis of recent and contemporary political phenomena, and

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particularly, the analysis of the relations between independent sovereign states--the gravest danger-point in our contemporary society. We are agreed then to continue our academic interest in this field.

After considering possible candidates from this country and elsewhere the School of Historical Studies is more than ever convinced that Mr. Kennan has to an outstanding degree the qualifications for a professorial appointment at the Institute in the field of twentieth-century international relations.

Our judgment in this matter has been questioned on the grounds that Mr. Kennan is not a "professional" scholar; that the greater part of his career has been directed to practical affairs, and that it is too late for him to acquire the "background" necessary for historical work.

Apart from the fact that a great deal of Mr. Kennan's official work has been concerned with the critical examination and evaluation of the foreign policy of States, and that in this work he has acquired much of the technical training which the professional historian learns in other ways, we regard Mr. Kennan's experience as in itself of the greatest value. This practical knowledge of affairs--in which many academic historians are notably deficient--is of special value in dealing with all historical material concerned with the relations between governments. We may point out that many of the greatest political historians in the field of recent or contemporary history have been men who have turned to historical writing after gaining practical experience of affairs. It would be embarrassing to Mr. Kennan to quote the examples of Thucydides or Clarendon or Guizot, but--to take a modern English parallel--we might cite John Morley.

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In our view, therefore, the question is not whether Mr. Kennan's previous career is in itself a disadvantage--we regard it as an advantage. What we have had to ask ourselves is whether Mr. Kennan possesses the positive abilities, critical judgment, patience, capacity for handling large masses of material, skill in writing, and above all detachment, which are necessary for a historian in any field, and not least in the field of the political relations between sovereign states. Since our last Faculty meeting we have had the opportunity of reading the first volume of Mr. Kennan's projected work on the political relations between the United States and the USSR. Our opinion of this work is extremely favorable. We regard it as conclusive evidence that Mr. Kennan does possess and can exercise all the abilities we have named, and that, in addition, his practical experience gives his historical work a firmness of outline and a distinction which put it in the first rank. We give to the volume the highest praise open to the historian when we say that the work will not have to be done again.

It has been suggested that the scholarly reputation of the Institute will suffer if we elect to a professorship anyone without the usual academic qualifications. We should not incline to give much thought to outside criticism of this kind. In fact, however, we think that the reasons determining our judgment in the matter will be understood and approved, not only in this country, but in other countries--notably Great Britain and Germany--where Mr. Kennan's work is already widely known and appreciated. Incidentally, we would call attention to the fact that Mr. Kennan has been invited to hold the Eastman visiting professorship at Oxford, and that, to our knowledge, this invitation was given for the very reasons which have convinced us that we should do well to invite him to hold a professorship at the Institute.

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Finally, we should like to repeat our previous statement that we do not regard Mr. Kennan's appointment as a substitute for the appointment of a leading historian interested in some other field of Modern History. We have continued our search for a suitable candidate; hitherto we have not found anyone upon whose election we should be generally agreed. We may be able to make a recommendation in the near future, or we may be compelled to wait, possibly for a year or two, but this matter is not in itself related to Mr. Kennan's candidature. If we had a candidate in some other field of Modern History, we should nonetheless also put forward Mr. Kennan's name for election to a professorship.