

William N. Fraleigh Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 11/1966
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

William Norman Fraleigh was the Counselor on political affairs for the US Embassy in Madrid from 1957 to 1962 and Rome from 1962-1967. He was responsible for making a written recording of meetings during Kennedy's June 30 – July 2, 1963 visit to Italy. Fraleigh was a casual acquaintance of the Kennedy family in the post-war 1940's.

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By William N. FRALEIGH

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Oral History Interview

with

William N. Fraleigh

November, 1966
Rome, Italy

By Joseph E. O'Connor

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'CONNOR: Well, you can begin just about anywhere you'd like, but I wanted to ask you if you would mention the curious incident about your sailing with the President [John F. Kennedy]? I thought that would be an interesting spot to begin.

FRALEIGH: Oh, yes.

O'CONNOR: How it came about and so forth

FRALEIGH: I came back from abroad - I've forgotten what year it was, but it was right after the War - and my parents were living in Hyannis at the time. And I went up there to stay with them, and the Kennedys were living nearby. I met Eunice Kennedy [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] fairly soon. She was young and bright and gay and single as I was also. And before long I was invited over to the Kennedys' house and met the parents and some of the other children. I remember the Kennedys had a movie theater down in the basement of the house. The paterfamilias [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] used to get - he was very interested in Hollywood, and had an interest in film

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companies - he used to get films as soon as they were ready. I mean first run films, and he'd show them in the basement. So I was invited several times to see film shows. And then one day Jack Kennedy asked me if I'd like to go sailing with him.

O'CONNOR: Had you had any particular contact with him before that?

FRALEIGH: No, I'd never met him. I'd never met him before that particular home leave.

O'CONNOR: Yes, but I mean, you mentioned the name Eunice. I wondered if - it didn't seem that you were as close to Jack as you were to Eunice at that point. I was surprised that he should ask you to go sailing with him.

FRALEIGH: Well, he was very friendly. And, of course, as I say, I met the whole family and by that time I probably knew most of them. I don't remember the circumstances of how it came up, but he liked to go sailing almost every day. He asked me to come along with him, and we went out and had a very nice sail which, of course, is a very happy memory for me. Then my home leave ended and I didn't see him or Eunice again for several years. The next time I saw Jack Kennedy he was a member of Congress. I saw him in Washington once, and again in Paris. But I didn't see him again with the family after that. Well, thinking about the visit of President Kennedy to Rome ...

O'CONNOR: Let me just [Break in tape] Okay, you can go on then with that meeting, the visit of President Kennedy to ...

FRALEIGH: Well, I remember particularly the circumstances surrounding it, and the background of the President's visit here which, by the way, was not a State visit. It was an official visit, part of his

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official tour of Europe. And it also would not have been appropriate that it be a State visit at that time because of the things that had been happening in Italy in the past two months before he arrived, against which the visit needs to be remembered.

O'CONNOR: You mean the confused domestic picture?

FRALEIGH: Yes, a very confused domestic situation, because there had been a rather disastrous election in late April of '63, just about two months before the President came. Disastrous for the democratic parties who, I believe, had lost a lot of votes to the Communists. The government had fallen as a result of those elections, and a new Prime Minister was being sought. One had finally been found, and had taken the oath of office only on the 23rd of June - I remember the President arrived on the 1st of July. He was Giovanni Leone, a prominent Demo-Christian from Naples. But he had not yet got a vote of confidence. He wasn't sure he was going to get one. So they had hastily done their best to try to have a government in office for the President's visit.

There was thus deep uncertainty about the Leone Cabinet when the President arrived. In addition to this, of course, there had been the death of Pope John, and the election of the new Pope, Pope Paul, who had been in office only a short time when the President arrived. These events had kept the Romans and the Italians pretty well stirred up. So that when the President came it was another very important event on top of so many. Besides, the President's visit to Rome was only for a day and a half.

He arrived from Milan early in the morning, and arrived at the airport - that's Fiumicino Airport [Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino] - by plane, (of course that big jet plane of his) and was met by President Segni [Antonio Segni], and the new Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Vice Premier, the Minister of Defense, and many other people. Quite a crowd of Romans. Especially interesting was a group of young people who had gathered on top of the airport building and cheered the President very roundly. They shouted and

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displayed homemade signs praising his Paulskirche speech [Address in the Assembly Hall at the Paulskirche, Frankfurt, 25 June 1963] in Germany favoring a United Europe, which was something young people in Italy were and still are very much interested in. I wasn't there to see that, but I heard about it afterwards.

I was due to meet the President first at the Quirinale Palace, where he arrived from the airport with President Segni for the talks that were to be held immediately. As you can imagine, it was a very colorful procession which I viewed from the Quirinale windows. The cuirassiers were out in their full uniforms—these tall magnificently uniformed guards of the Quirinale Palace. There were about 30,000 people in the square. This was one of the places where the Romans turned out in great numbers, as they also did at the Colosseum when the President came by there. And finally, after half or three-quarters of an hour of private conversation with President Segni, President Kennedy and Segni came into the room in the Quirinale where others who were to take part in the official talks had gathered. There were in all seven Americans and seven Italians. On the Italian side there was President Segni, of course; Prime Minister Leone [Giovanni Leone]; and the Foreign Minister, Piccioni [Attilio Piccioni]. These were the principal Italians.

O'CONNOR: Would you spell the name of the Foreign Minister?

FRALEIGH: P-i-c-c-i-o-n-i. It means pigeons in Italian. There are lots of jokes about this, of course. And he, by the way, and Segni are both long time Demo-Christian, or "Catholic," political leaders. Their political prominence goes back to before fascism. Both are also rather elderly men, in their seventies. Leone, on the other hand, the Prime Minister, is only in his fifties. He is a vigorous, dynamic criminal lawyer, one of Italy's best criminal lawyers, from Naples.

I must say that, as President Kennedy and Secretary Rusk [Dean Rusk] and Assistant Secretary Bill Tyler [William R. Tyler, Jr.] and McGeorge Bundy sat on the opposite side of the table from the Italian leaders, it struck me that there was quite a difference in age between the American and Italian leaders. Here was the New World, personified,

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coming to consult with the Old World, also very well personified, it seemed to me, in these personalities.

Our leading representative of the Embassy there, by the way, was the charge d'affaires, Francis T. Williamson. Our ambassador was then in a hospital in Germany, under treatment for ulcers. Mr. Williamson was also not well, and did not live much longer, unfortunately. But he was well enough to serve ably as the principal representative from the Embassy. My main function, as political counselor, was to make the official U.S. record of the talks.

Well, Segni opened the talks in a very friendly way, speaking about the strong ties

between our two countries. He recalled that America had been discovered by an Italian, and how many Italians live in the United States and enjoy the United States, and how we both had had struggles for independence - Italy later than we had, but they had also achieved their freedom and had to defend it again against fascism- and how they had particularly admired how America had managed to become so prosperous and such a world leader without sacrificing freedom, which is a quality the Italians particularly admired. In the course of these remarks President Segni referred to the number of presidents - very early on he referred to the number of American presidents that he had known, starting out with Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] and coming through Truman [Harry S. Truman] and Eisenhower, [Dwight D. Eisenhower] and now Jack Kennedy. But, as he started out naming the presidents he had known, he had a slip of the tongue and said President Rockefeller [Rockefeller, John Davison] instead of President Roosevelt. This produced great merriment all around the table, especially with President Kennedy because this was the time when Rockefeller was very prominently in the running. And it helped very much to break the ice and get things moving, although Segni was very abashed and it didn't contribute to an early easing of his nervousness. He was a little nervous at the time, but he got over it. He has a good sense of humor, too. Then they went on to talk about some of the problems that were engaging the attention of the world at the time. And the President, President Kennedy, had a good deal to say about the importance of Western solidarity, and was very

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appreciative of the role of Italy in NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], supporting our Western views in NATO and contributing to the unification of - the progressive steps towards unification of Europe and building up a kind of Atlantic community, which we all hoped would be consolidated. But even then a good deal of concern had been aroused by the attitude of General de Gaulle [Charles de Gaulle]. These matters were talked about, and the role of Germany. And somewhere along in the conversation I remember that someone said how much - it must have been Segni - how much they looked forward to a state visit that President Kennedy would be making to Italy the next year, accompanied, they hoped, by Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy]. Unfortunately, this was not to take place. After some remarks by Leone, too, then Piccioni, the Foreign Minister, began to talk about NATO. And he got very enthusiastic in his conversation. Of course he went on very long on some points, rather repetitively. And finally President Kennedy interrupted and said, "Well, it's way past lunch time. I think we better go to lunch." And the people were rather relieved that he did that, I think. Anyhow, we finally went off to lunch, which was a stag lunch for about twenty people that was given by the Prime Minister in the lovely Renaissance villa up above the Tiber, on the hills across the north side of the Tiber, called Villa Madama. It's said to have been built in Rafael's time, and perhaps he was the designer of it. The name, Madama, by the way, for whom it's named, was one of the natural daughters of Charles V. Anyhow, it's a beautiful place, and in the big main hall of the building the luncheon took place, without toasts, incidentally, which is unusual for a luncheon of that kind. This was by pre-design. And then afterwards everyone went out in the garden, at least the principal people did, out in the garden overlooking Rome - it was a beautiful sunny day - and sat down eventually around some tables there, and the discussions of the morning resumed. And again Piccioni picked up where he left off. I think a number of people were concerned that he might then talk at great length. But he must have thought it over a bit because he didn't talk very long, and after a while he turned the conversation over to someone else.

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Leone then drew the discussion around to the economic situation in which Europe and the United States found itself, and the problems such as the balance of payments and the outflow of gold. And since none of the top leaders on the Italian side were particularly well versed in this, Leone called on Egidio Ortona, who is one of the long term, professional diplomats on the Italian side; a very competent man who spent a great many years in Washington, by the way - eighteen years, I think he was there - and rose from a third secretary to be their Ambassador to the United Nations in that time. So, as you can see, he's quite an able person. And he presented the Italian views on some of these questions; pointing out, for one thing, that Italy had not, though she had a favorable balance of payments for some time, had not converted any of her assets into gold, buying up American gold, which we were appreciative of.

O'CONNOR: Yes, indeed.

FRALEIGH: On our side the President did most of the talking. He was very well informed on almost every subject. I don't remember that the Secretary said more than a few words, and that was about it. This was a very pleasant conversation, of course, out there in the garden, as well as a useful one. But the President had to get on to do other things. So about 4 o'clock the luncheon broke up, the post-luncheon discussion ended, and everybody got in cars and drove down in a sort of a procession. It was the first one of those that I had been in. And we drove along the Tiber. The President was heading for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where he was to lay wreaths. And this meant quite a bit of driving through Rome. In some places there were little knots of people on the street corners, and quite a few people on balconies along the way. But everyone noted, I think, that there was not a massive turnout of people to watch the President go by, as one might have thought. I think that one reason for this was the sort of exhaustion of the Romans with events of the last couple of months. They had been so many times, masses of them going to the Vatican for one thing or another in connection with the change of Popes.

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O'CONNOR: I had heard that in a similar situation connected with Charles de Gaulle's visit. That Charles de Gaulle was very upset by the lack of crowds. And I wondered if you saw any evidence that President Kennedy was upset or effected by this, or would consider this a kind of an insult.

FRALEIGH: I don't know that General de Gaulle had that experience. He hasn't been here since I've been here, although he has been in northern Italy. As far as President Kennedy being disturbed by the lack of crowds, I had no indication of that; although I imagine he must have noticed it, too, because he was accustomed to having large crowds turn out for him. In any case, there were crowds at the next two places where he was scheduled to appear; both at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which is down in the heart of Rome at the Victor Emmanuel Monument - a monument to the first king of united Italy - and then there was a smaller crowd at the next stop, which was on top of the Campidoglio - the Capitoline Hill, the old capitol of Rome, which is still the capitol of Rome - where he went to call on the mayor and exchange remarks

with him in the square. But the crowd there was rather limited because, after all, there's not so much space on top of the Campidoglio. I think there were probably about all the people there that could get there. Then, somehow or other, the President came back then with the Secretary to Villa Taverna, the residence of the Ambassador, where he was staying Ambassador Reinhardt's [G. Frederick Reinhardt] residence - and this was about 5:30 - and met the families and wives of the members of the Embassy staff in the gardens, very beautiful gardens there, around the Ambassador's house. And both he and the Secretary spoke to the Americans gathered around. Then he found some way - I don't know how he did it - and wedged in some time for a private talk with Goulart [Jaoi Belchior Marques Goulart] of Brazil, who turned up and wanted to see him badly.

O'CONNOR: You weren't present at that talk, were you?

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FRALEIGH: I was not. Nor do I know what was said. The next thing on the program was the dinner at the Quirinale Palace. And this was quite an event, as you can imagine. Of course this was the gala event of the visit, and there were about eighty or a hundred people at the dinner in fine dress and so forth. There were toasts on that occasion.

O'CONNOR: Why hadn't there been toasts at the previous occasion? Do you know why? You said that was by design.

FRALEIGH: Yes. I don't know why there weren't, except that perhaps they were holding back on the toasts for the President's dinner. It's the only thing I can think of. And also they were pressed for time. They wanted to have more serious talks. And it was sort of a working lunch, though it was a large one. I meant to say that there was one thing that the President said when he left the Campidoglio which I thought was very well put, and I think it made an impression. It was picked up and repeated in the press and television. He said that he believed strongly that the Atlantic Ocean should be to all of us, the east and west side of it, a *mare nostrum* and a common bond. It was a rather nice term for the Italian people, in an Italian phrase, *mare nostrum*. Well, I'm sure you have the record of the toasts that were said at that dinner that night.

O'CONNOR: I'm not sure. I suspect that they're available, but I ...

FRALEIGH: I might just read off a few lines of what Segni said because he spoke very well, it seemed to me. He said, "We are convinced that our survival as a free democratic nation is guaranteed by Italy's participation in the North Atlantic Alliance, and that the unity of the west is an indispensable requirement for stability, as well as for orderly progress and an increasing prosperity for all nations." He complemented

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President Kennedy on his June 10 American University speech in Washington when he said, "Your desire for peace is conceived not as a static phenomena, but as a dynamic and evolutionary one." He expressed ideas which are entirely shared by us. It was very well put.

Well, the most interesting part of the evening, though, was after dinner when about 10:15 everybody went downstairs into the gardens. It was a lovely night, as it had been a beautiful day, and the Quirinale gardens were all opened up to about 500 guests, amongst them some political leaders and members of Parliament from all shades of the political spectrum. And as the President strode across the - President Kennedy strode across the garden on these gravel paths, through the crowds, two people found their way to him quite quickly. One of them was Michelini [Arturo Michelini], the head of the Neo-Fascist Party, who wanted to be sure to say hello to him. And the other was Palmiro Togliatti, head of the Communist Party.

O'CONNOR: It would have been interesting if they had met the President at exactly the same spot in the hall.

FRALEIGH: Yes. [Laughter] They didn't though they could just as well have done so. But Togliatti came up to the President and exchanged a few words with him. And while he was doing so a photographer stepped out of the crowd and took their picture. Then as soon as the conversation was broken off, President Kennedy said he wanted to see the photographer. It was an Italian photographer, and he came up to the President. The President spoke to him and asked him for the film. And to my surprise, and I guess to the surprise of a good many other people, the photographer gave it to him. So there is no pictorial record - I don't know what the President did with the film, but I've never seen any pictorial record of that encounter. Incidentally, I might have ...

O'CONNOR: I'm really amazed that the photographer - I was very amazed that the photographer would give him the film.

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FRALEIGH: So am I. I thought I might have here, somewhere, a record of what Togliatti and the President said to each other.

O'CONNOR: That would be kind of interesting. Let me shut this off for you.

FRALEIGH: Then the President walked over to the far corners of the garden where there was a raised platform with a kind of a summer house with coffee tables around. And this became a sort of an opera in a way, in Italian style, because the President there was going to meet with and talk with some of the principal party leaders, Democratic Party leaders. Some people knew this was going to happen, and others, of course, were watching the President anyway. And soon there was kind of an audience gathered all around. They were watching this rather brightly lit corner of the garden. And, one after the other, the party secretaries were introduced to the President. The most interesting conversation, the longest at least, that the President had was with Nenni [Pietro Nenni], who had very recently brought his party into the democratic camp and, incidentally, on whose attitude, or on the attitude of whose party towards Leone much depended for whether or not he was able to get a vote of confidence. Nenni is a man who is in his seventies - was seventy-two then, I think - little wisps of white hair and short, and stood next to the President who is, of course, a very tall man and also looking very well that night. The only other person present was a young woman who was an interpreter, President Segni's personal interpreter. And they stood in the middle of this platform and talked and talked and talked.

The crowd began to buzz with interest in this. And some of the other democratic leaders, I think, began to get a little restless - they were out in the wings - from wondering whether they'd ever get to speak to the President, and especially whether they'd get to speak to the President for anything like as long as Nenni was.

Well, eventually that ended. Nenni came off the platform absolutely enraptured and happy as he could be, and came over to his wife and put his arm around her and walked

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off mumbling things of - apparently very delighted, and also wiping his eyes. And afterwards Mrs. Nenni told us that her husband was simply delighted with the President and with his conversations. Well, I'd noticed that one of the other Democratic leaders in the wings was particularly anxious at his chances for seeing the President. He was Giovanni Malagodi, the head of the Liberal Party, which had been in coalition with the Catholic Party for a long time until the Socialists came along, and so he displaced them. His party was still offering a kind of alternative to the center-left solution - Socialist-Catholic coalition.

O'CONNOR: No wonder he was upset.

FRALEIGH: He was worried whether he'd get to see the President and talk to him. And I noticed a great sense of relief come over his features when someone came up to him and said, "Mr. Malagodi, would you like to speak with the President?" And he almost bounded up on the platform. His conversation was much shorter than Nenni's. But one factor that undoubtedly made it seem a lot shorter and be a lot shorter was that Malagodi speaks Oxford English. There was no need for any translation. It is also, I noticed, true that Malagodi did most of the talking in his conversation with the President, whereas when the President and Nenni were together, it was give and take. Other party secretaries who went into the limelight, at one point or another during this rather extraordinary show, were Oronzo Reale, who was the Secretary of the small Republican party, and Aldo Moro, the rather new, young Secretary of the Demo-Christian Party, who is now Prime Minister. Notable for his absence was Giuseppe Saragat, Secretary of the Social-Democratic Party, who was probably a little put out by the fact that he had not been invited to the dinner. And the reason, I'm sure, though I can't prove it, but I'm quite sure the reason he was not invited to the dinner was that President Segni did not want to ask all of the party secretaries because he would have had the problem of inviting Togliatti [Palmiro Togliatti] to the dinner, and Michellini. The President wouldn't enjoy that. And, at the same time, President Segni

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was not willing to invite only the democratic party secretaries because then that, in terms of Italian politics, wouldn't have been justifiable. The other parties would have been insulted by this. Anyhow, Giuseppe Saragat stayed away. And he never did see President Kennedy on that visit, in spite of the fact that he was, and is, a great admirer of President Kennedy, and had met him at the White House long before the President's visit back in 1962. Well, that's about all that happened on the first day, that I know of.

And then, of course, the second day was only a part day as far as Rome was concerned. The morning was almost entirely spent at the Vatican. And the President had an audience

with Pope Paul VI. I wasn't present and I don't know what took place. I do know, though, in the light of later events, it rather struck me that the Pope's principal gift to President Kennedy was a 450 pound marble replica of Michelangelo's "Pieta." Then at one o'clock there was a luncheon which the President gave at Villa Taverna, Ambassador Reinhardt's residence, for President Segni. This was his way of returning hospitality. If it had been a state visit he would have had to have a much more elaborate affair. And, as a matter of fact, for this luncheon it was intended that he would - or what he wanted to do was to have the five democratic party secretaries: Malagodi, Moro, Saragat, Reale, and - let's see, who's the - and Nenni. But the same problem arose there. The Italians felt strongly that he could not invite just the five Democratic secretaries, and this would be an offense to the other party secretaries who were not considered democratic. And the President was not going to have anything to do - he certainly was not going to invite to his luncheon Togliatti and Michelini, or even the eighth party secretary, the Secretary of the Monarchist Party because the Monarchists had an alliance with the Neo-Fascists. His name was Covelli [Alfredo Covelli]. So it turned out that instead of that there were just five people on each - five Americans and five Italians. The Italians present were Segni and Leone and Piccioni, Adreotti [Giulio Adreotti], Defense, and the Italian Ambassador to Washington, Sergio Fenoaltea. And the Americans were the President, Secretary Rusk, Minister Williamson, the charge d'affaires, McGeorge

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Bundy, and Bill Tyler. I was there, too. But I was just sitting at the table to take notes. I didn't get anything to eat.

O'CONNOR: You mean they had you there and didn't give you anything to eat?

FRALEIGH: Yes. I thought it was outrageous, but that's what happened. Not very much really happened. Nothing much was said that was that particularly worth recording. But I remember two things. One was that - one must remember that Segni had been President of Italy for only a year, and he hadn't been to the United States yet. And so when the President turned to him very casually in the course of the conversation and said, "I hope you can come to America very soon," Segni just was so delighted he began to bubble a little bit. He'd been hoping something like that would come along. Another thing that happened was that there was an interruption when someone came in from the telephone and said that the Socialists had just announced that they would back the Leone government when it came up for its vote of confidence. And the President said to Mr. Leone, "Does that mean that you will get your vote of confidence?" And he said, "Yes, it does."

O'CONNOR: That's a very interesting thing after the meeting of the previous night the President had with Pietro Nenni.

FRALEIGH: Yes, isn't it? Well, then the President rushed upstairs, and not long after that I remember him calling in a loud voice to his naval aide, asking where something was that he needed from upstairs. And the naval aide bounded upstairs about eight steps at a time. And things were pretty hectic from then on because they had to catch planes. President Kennedy, as I recall, took a helicopter from a nearby field to

Naples, whereas Segni went and took a larger plane from an airport outside the city. And they met again, of course, at Naples.

Then that very triumphant tour began there with a

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stop at AFSOUTH [Allied Forces Southern Europe], and then the tour through the city of Naples. The President took off for the United States. I didn't see that. I only heard about it. But I was particularly pleased afterwards when I heard how large the crowds were because I'm sure if there was any thought in the back of the President's mind that the Italians hadn't been as warm as he'd hoped they would be, this was certainly dispelled by the performance in Naples, in which more than a million people apparently came out and just gave him a most rousing welcome. Looking back on the visit as a whole, one of the things I thought was particularly remarkable was that at no point, as far as I know - we never discovered any - had any hostile thing happened or any hostile poster appeared, or any other unpleasant sign or incident taken place. And when you consider that five per cent of the Italians vote Neo-Fascist and twenty five per cent of them vote Communist, this is a very remarkable fact. And I also remember the euphoria of many people, even people in very high places, who had met the President - Nenni for one, and a good many others - who felt a glow for some time after he had gone. And I, on my part, was particularly delighted when I got back to my office to find that somehow the President had found time to leave an autographed photograph for me, as he did for several other people who had been concerned with his visit.

O'CONNOR: That may have almost made up for the fact that you didn't get any food that night.

FRALEIGH: Yes. [Laughter] It more than did so.

O'CONNOR: I wanted to ask you, this meeting with Pietro Nenni is particularly interesting in view of all that has been said and written about American attitudes toward the developing center-left coalition in Italy. Did you get any impression of the President's views, either then or earlier, about this particular development in domestic politics?

FRALEIGH: Well, yes. At least once I heard him say how much he hoped that the new coalition govern-

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ment in Italy would be a success, and how much opportunity it seemed to offer for useful achievement. And actually, at the luncheon at Villa Taverna there was a little discussion about Latin America, in which the President said that he hoped that the Demo-Christian Party would take a livelier interest in Latin America and try to help the development of democracy in some of the countries of Latin America. And I feel sure that he had in mind, though I don't think he put it in those terms; that he felt that what was going on in Italy, from the attitude of mind of the Catholic and other leaders in Italy, would be helpful in forming more democratic government in Latin America.

O'CONNOR: Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] has painted this whole problem of the American attitude toward the center-left coalition in very black and white terms as a kind of struggle between certain members of the State Department and Kennedy Administration, particularly himself - and Robert Komer [Robert W. Komer] he mentions, and President Kennedy he would put on their side against, in effect, the other personnel in the State Department and the Embassy here in Rome. He felt, he paints it in his book as though he were suggesting that the Americans should show a greater sympathy toward the center-left coalition, and that there was resistance to this policy here at the Embassy. Would you agree with this, or would you care to comment on this?

FRALEIGH: Yes, I'd like to make a comment on it. I think that what Schlesinger refers to as resistance at the Embassy is probably based on the fact that there were people at the Embassy, and I'm sure there must have been also in the State Department, who were very concerned about the effect the Socialists joining the government might have upon Italian foreign policy. But, apart from whether or not useful things might be achieved (in terms of the development of democracy and the necessary reforms and their need to be carried out in Italy) by the Socialists joining the government - this seemed quite likely to occur - the problem of foreign policy was a very important one because, after all, in our objectives in Europe, and that would include Italy, we've been aiming

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at a strong NATO and at a development of European integration, both economic and political, and eventual partnership with the United States. And on both of these major points we had some doubts about what the Socialist attitude would be because the Socialists had opposed Italy's joining NATO and they were - not opposed to a united Europe - but they were somewhat neutralist. There's a strong undercurrent of neutralism in Italy, and it's particularly strong in the Socialist Party. So that there were people in the Embassy and in the State Department, I'm sure, who wanted to be as certain as they could, particularly about the timing of the joining of the Socialists in the government, that there'd been enough of an evolution in the Socialist attitude on these matters that there would not be any loss of support from Italy towards our, and other countries' interest in these basic objectives. That's one point. And if you'd stop there just a second, I'll see if I can recall

O'CONNOR: I was wondering what your own attitude was, or how it may have changed from the time you arrived here in Rome until the center-left coalition was an accomplished fact.

FRALEIGH: Well, I had some concern about how the center-left would actually work in terms of foreign policy, as others did. But I was, from the beginning, sympathetic to the experiment. And, as events succeeded each other, I was perhaps a little surprised at how well things went. I had thought that there would be more difficulty than there was, both with the Socialists and within the Demo-Christian Party because that was another thing that was very vital in this whole operation. There were a good many people in the Demo-Christian Party who were ready to bolt the Party if it went through this alliance with the Socialists. And one can well imagine what some of the reasons were, in matters of conscience as well as social beliefs, and so on. This was a major change in orientation for both parties; the Socialists having been in opposition, literally fighting Italian

government for seventy years, and the Socialists, after all, were still Marxists, and the Catholics were still Catholics. And

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though Pope John had done a good deal to change the direction of people's thoughts on some of these matters, and so had other events in the world - and they had changed not only Catholics' views, but also the attitude of Socialists towards Communism, for one thing - still there were such basic changes and modifications, evolution of people's thought, involved that one could be afraid that something could happen with very dire consequences if the operation were not carried out with the utmost care and with a certain degree of timing and consideration for various factors that came along the way. I think that this, perhaps, is what annoyed Mr. Schlesinger and some of the others in the White House who were eager to get on with things. They were men of action, so to speak. They had made up their minds that such and such was going to be good, and they couldn't tolerate the attitude of the diplomats who seemed to be keeping their foot on the brake instead of on the accelerator. But, I still think that, given the complexity of the maneuver, some braking was probably good, or at least natural for those who were trying to think about all the elements of policy that were involved. Another unfortunate fact was, it seems to me, that there wasn't enough exchange of views directly between Mr. Schlesinger and one or two others in the White House and those of us out here. On more than one occasion I think Mr. Schlesinger came to Italy and saw Italian leaders, without stopping at the Embassy. And this was unfortunate because I think he would have understood our views better, and I'm sure that we would have learned a good deal from him, if he'd been able to do this. There was a certain impatience, perhaps, with what was regarded as the protocolar attitude of - which was It wasn't that at all. Well, in any case, as far as my own position was concerned, I didn't need to be convinced; though I did feel a certain caution about the sequence of events. And it turned out that everything went more smoothly than I expected, although there were some close calls, such as when Scelba [Mario Scelba] wanted to break away from the Demo-Christian Party when the government formed in 1963. If he had done so that would have been a very dire thing to have happened to the Demo-Christians. It took a strong appeal by the Vatican to keep him in line -

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and it was done publicly.

[BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I]

O'CONNOR: I had one other question, at least, to ask you about this, and I wanted to flip that back before we came to the very end of the tape. I wondered if you were ever aware of any pressure emanating from the White House, particularly from Schlesinger or other names that he mentions, on the Embassy to show a more sympathetic attitude toward this center-left coalition. I should have thought that if he had wanted to exert pressure that he would have done so by visiting the Embassy on his visits here. I'm rather surprised that he didn't, but I hadn't known that.

FRALEIGH: No, I don't recall that there was any pressure on people here directly, though there was some indirect pressure, in that people did get indications

that he, and perhaps others, were not terribly happy about the attitude of the Embassy. But that was not pressure which we were terribly troubled about. Also, we became aware from time to time of the correspondence which was going on between Mr. Schlesinger and some of the Italian government leaders, political leaders, which they would mention to us, and we had not seen copies of. So that it wasn't perhaps, the best of ways to run a railroad.

O'CONNOR: I presume this correspondence was on White House stationery.

FRALEIGH: Yes.

O'CONNOR: Okay, we can wind this thing up, then, unless you have any other comments to make.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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