FOREWORD

As I write early in 1981, the political climate seems unfavorable to major progress in nuclear arms control. This does not alter the conclusion I and others have reached that there must be such progress before very long if there is to be assurance of continued meaningful human life on earth. My experience tells me that the political climate in the world can change rapidly; no alliance or antagonism between nations should be assumed to be permanent. Under these circumstances, it is a great challenge of statesmanship to be able to perceive genuine opportunities for mutually advantageous arms control agreements at the moments, often fleeting, when such opportunities arise. It is a further challenge to be able to act on such perceptions and to bring agreements to fruition notwithstanding the congealed hostilities and rigid postures of opposition that may exist on both sides.

This is what President John F. Kennedy did in 1963 in negotiating the Limited Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union. He perceived enhanced opportunities for the long-sought agreement following the world's brush with catastrophe in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and in the Soviet Union's preoccupation with the mounting antagonism between itself and the People's Republic of China.

In negotiating the treaty, President Kennedy insisted on terms that protected the national interest as he perceived it and, just as important, as the U.S. Senate perceived it. At the same time, he was sensitive to the concerns of the negotiators on the other side, led by Nikita Khrushchev, and was skillful in contriving compromises that catered to these concerns without giving way on matters essential to us.

Having reached agreement with the Soviets, President Kennedy then mounted a most effective campaign to explain the treaty to the American people and to persuade them and their congressional representatives of its merits. The result was a treaty that has been universally acclaimed as a great achievement in international relations, and one that still stands as a solid basis for further strides toward a peaceful world when conditions are again ripe.

It is important that the story of the Limited Test Ban Treaty be told, not only for its value as history but also for the guidance this experience can provide for the conduct of future East-West relations. Many Americans seem to regard negotiations with the Soviet Union as a baffling exercise in which we are bound to come out second best. President Kennedy had the good sense to realize that, by negotiating with patience, firmness, and sensitivity, it was possible to reach mutually advantageous agreements. At the base of this policy was the president's perception that not everything that is in the interest of the Soviet Union is necessarily disadvantageous to us. As he so eloquently expressed it: "We all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

It is fortunate that one of the participants in the processes that led to the Limited Test Ban Treaty has elected to share his recollections and his further research with us. His account is the more vivid because during the ten years (1961–71) when he was chairman of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, Dr. Seaborg kept a detailed daily journal in which he recorded the ebb and flow of discussions and events. I can testify that my part in the final negotiations leading to the treaty has been most faithfully recorded in these pages, as are other aspects of the story with which I am personally familiar.

W. Averell Harriman

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