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KISTIAKOWSKY, GEORGE B.: Transcript of diary, 1959-60

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Dr. George B. Kistiakowsky deposited the transcript of his diary in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in February 1977.

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| Linear feet: | -1 |
| Approximate number of pages: | 475 |
| Approximate number of items: | 1 |

Dr. Kistiakowsky signed an instrument of gift for the transcript on February 8, 1977. Under terms of the instrument of gift the transcript was to be sealed until his death, which occurred on December 7, 1982. Thereafter the transcript can be quoted only with the approval of his wife. Literary rights to the transcript are held by Mrs. Kistiakowsky until her death, which occurred in July 2001, and thereafter pass to the public.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Dr. George B. Kistiakowsky (1900-1982) was born in the Ukraine and received his Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Berlin in 1925. In 1926 he immigrated to the United States and spent four years at Princeton University. In 1930 he joined the faculty of Harvard University where he taught chemistry until 1971. During World War II he worked on the atomic bomb at Los Alamos, New Mexico, and later served as an advisor to the Department of Defense.

In 1957 Kistiakowsky was appointed to the President's Science Advisory Committee. This brought him into frequent contact with Dwight D. Eisenhower. In July 1959 he was selected to succeed James Killian as the President's Special Assistant for Science and Technology. Kistiakowsky served in this position until January 1961 when he returned to Harvard.

During most of his 18 months at the White House, Kistiakowsky kept a diary in which he recorded information about his significant activities. After the end of the Eisenhower administration Kistiakowsky put the diary into storage for about a dozen years. In the early 1970s he showed it to some friends who encouraged him to prepare the diary for publication. A few pages had disappeared over the years, but the diary was mostly complete. Kistiakowsky had the entries transcribed and Charles Maier, a historian at Harvard, edited the material for publication. The resulting book was published in 1976 by Harvard University Press under the title A Scientist at the White House.

This collection consists of the transcript of the diary prepared in the 1970s. The location of the original diary entries is not known. Comparison of the transcript with the published book shows that Kistiakowsky had included nearly all of the substantive entries from the diary. A few brief entries regarding intelligence matters and nuclear weapons were not published in the book for national security reasons. Kistiakowsky also deleted a few adverse comments about specific individuals, and routine comments on his social activities, such as details of the speeches he gave, the parties and receptions he attended, and his trips to Harvard to meet with his students. The published version of the diary contains a detailed index that can help historians locate entries on particular individuals and subjects.

CONTAINER LIST

Box No. Contents

1 July-August 1959

September 1959 [September 21 – Nike-Zeus missiles]

October 1959 [October 2 – Henry Loomis re Africa]

November 1959 [November 6 – Dick Leghorn re Western Union Co.]

December 1959

January 1960 [January 25 – meeting of Federal Council for Science and Technology re role of U.S. government and Dept of Commerce in support of scientific research]

February-March 1960 [March 10 – NSC meeting re Italian politics; Mar 16 – meeting re atomic energy laboratories]

April 1960 [April 4 – meeting with Mr. Slick re supporting research]

May 1960 [May 12 – science in Japan]

June 1960 [June 14-15 – DDE visit to Philippines]

July-September 1960 [August 4 – response to Lyndon Johnson letter]

October-November 1960 [October 5 – science in Netherlands]

END OF CONTAINER LIST