

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Gordon, Philip H <GordonPH@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, April 19, 2012 2:24 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: George Kennan, Michael McFaul and Their Paranoid Hosts (Tim Naftali in Foreign Affairs Online)

This is interesting.

From: Rubin, Eric S
Sent: Wednesday, April 18, 2012 02:37 PM
To: Gordon, Philip H; Kaidanow, Tina S; Russell, Daniel A
Cc: Sloat, Amanda L; Katsoulos, Athena; Hilton, Robert B; Logsdon, Kent D; 'Wells, Alice' [redacted]
Subject: FW: George Kennan, Michael McFaul and Their Paranoid Hosts (Tim Naftali in Foreign Affairs Online)

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<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137410/timothy-naftali/george-kennan-michael-mcfaul-and-their-paranoid-hosts?page=show>

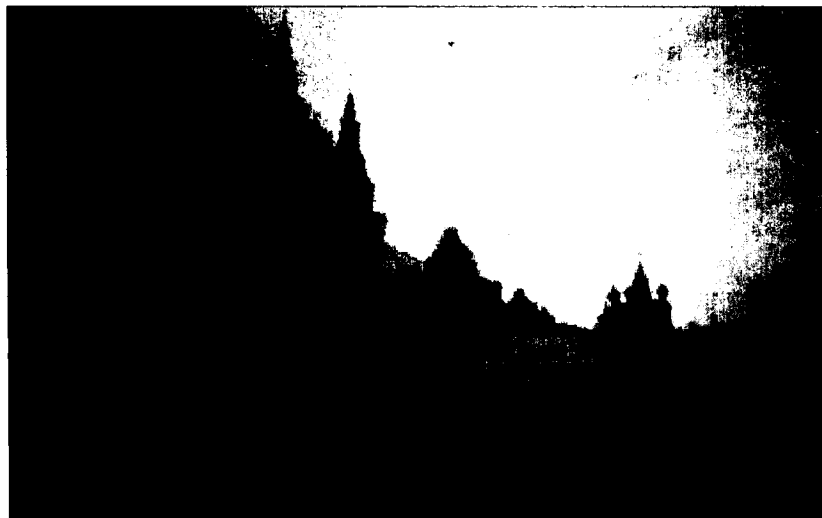
George Kennan, Michael McFaul, and Their Paranoid Hosts

The Perils of Serving as Ambassador to Russia

Timothy Naftali

April 17, 2012

Article Summary and Author Biography



5:08 PM: *Welceom [sic] to my life. Press has right to film me anywhere. But do they have a right to read my email and listen to my phone?*

5:14 PM: *When I asked these "reporters" how they knew my schedule, I got no answer. Heard the same silence when they met me after meeting w/[Anatoly] Chubais.*

1:15 AM: *Just watched NTV. I mispoke [sic] in bad Russian. Did not mean to say "wild country." Meant to say NTV actions "wild." I greatly respect Russia.*

- U.S. Ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul, **on Twitter**, March 29-30, 2012

It has never been easy to represent the United States in Moscow, but the job is especially difficult if you happen to be a public intellectual who speaks Russian well. Sixty years ago, U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union George Kennan requested -- and received -- suicide pills from the CIA out of fear that he might be arrested and tortured by Joseph Stalin's agents. There is no reason to be as concerned for Ambassador Michael McFaul's safety in Vladimir Putin's Russia today. Yet McFaul's lashing out last month, after the state-controlled television channel NTV started sending cameramen to dog his every move, suggests a few troubling similarities with Kennan's experiences in 1952 and may also signal a new worsening of Washington's relations with the Kremlin.

President Harry Truman, like President Barack Obama, dispatched the well-known architect of his Russia policy to Moscow as ambassador and hoped for the best. Kennan, who predicted that the Soviet system would eventually collapse, recommended a policy of containing the Kremlin's power until that collapse occurred. Writing pseudonymously as "X," **Kennan outlined his thinking in Foreign Affairs** in July 1947; by 1952, he had publicly acknowledged writing the article. Not one to cherish the give and take of intellectual discourse, Stalin probably did not consider the appointment of a public critic as a friendly act.

The choice of McFaul was just as risky. Like Kennan, McFaul became a star among his generation of Kremlin watchers. Although he has never publicly predicted the collapse of the current regime, his academic work criticized Putin for steering post-Yeltsin Russia away from democracy. As Obama's chief Russia adviser and a senior director on the National Security Council, McFaul crafted the "reset" of U.S.-Russian relations that produced the New START treaty and resulted in cooperation on Afghanistan, Iran, and Libya. But in addition to seeking areas of mutual interest with the Kremlin, he has continued to advocate democracy promotion. In his 2010 book, *Advancing Democracy Abroad*, he wrote that "American diplomats must practice dual track diplomacy of the sort practiced by [George] Shultz in dealing with the Soviet Union: engaging autocratic leaders in charge of the state and democratic leaders in society in parallel and at the same time." Putin, autocrat that he is, could not have welcomed the dispatch of this man to Moscow.

McFaul's tenure has already been complicated by bad timing and unique missteps. The Russians can be traditionalists, and Obama ruffled some feathers in the Kremlin by bucking diplomatic protocol and informally announcing McFaul's appointment directly to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev at the G-8 summit last May. (Governments ordinarily seek a formal agreement from the host country to receive a diplomat before announcing a new ambassador.) The White House also selected McFaul before it was certain that Putin would succeed Medvedev. If Obama were given a second chance, knowing full well that Putin would return, it would be interesting to see whether he still would have appointed a prominent democracy advocate. Choosing a career diplomat with less of a public profile -- as all U.S. ambassadors to Russia have been since 1993 -- might have been a more pragmatic decision.

When McFaul finally did reach his official residence at Spaso House in January, Moscow was tense after a wave of antigovernment street protests. Washington then committed a classic bureaucratic blunder. It is customary for senior U.S. officials when visiting a major foreign capital to meet with members of the opposition. Some unthinking scheduler had McFaul's first day on the job coincide with Deputy Secretary of State William Burns' visit to Moscow. So when McFaul sat

in on Burns' dutiful meeting with the opposition to the United Russia party, it appeared to the Kremlin that McFaul's first public act as ambassador was to greet Putin's adversaries.

None of this comes close to excusing the behavior of NTV last month or the harsh criticism directed at McFaul on April 4 by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who characterized the ambassador's comments about maintaining U.S. missile defense as "very arrogant." But the deftness of touch exhibited by much of the Obama administration's foreign policy has been less evident in this transition at Spaso House.

McFaul's treatment seems worse than what many U.S. ambassadors faced in the Soviet Union. Even during the Cold War, the superpowers observed certain protocols regarding the treatment of diplomats. The Soviet treatment of Kennan in 1952 was unusual and can best be understood as a product of Stalin's insecurity and paranoia in the last years of his life. This was the period of the Doctors' Plot, when Stalin launched a vicious anti-Semitic campaign alleging that his doctors, some of whom were Jewish, were trying to kill him. About two months after Kennan arrived, the Soviets sent a false defector into the embassy who offered to assassinate high-level Kremlin officials. Kennan wisely threw the man out; Soviet militiamen were waiting outside, probably hoping the ambassador had taken the bait.

Alarming, there is a much more recent precedent for Moscow's current treatment of McFaul. Five years ago, during Putin's first stint as president, U.K.-Russian relations soured following the murder of the Putin critic Alexander Litvinenko in London. The Kremlin allowed goons to harass British Ambassador Anthony Brenton and his family. They chanted at all hours outside the embassy and chased the ambassador when he went out shopping.

None of this is to say that today's Russia is a carbon copy of the late-Stalinist Soviet Union. But the similarities between the Kennan and McFaul cases suggest that Putin, like some Russian strongmen before him, not only does not like having prominent foreign critics in his court but will permit acts of crude intimidation to make his displeasure known. And there may be even more of a historical parallel. Kennan's tenure in Moscow was a failure largely because of the paranoia of an aging Kremlin leader who feared losing control. McFaul's current troubles may also stem from deep insecurity in the Kremlin, which just witnessed the biggest public protests since the 1990s. A decade ago, Professor McFaul argued that Russia underwent a broad-based democratic revolution in 1989-91 that remains unfinished. Despite his recent re-election, Putin may worry that Ambassador McFaul will now see this prediction come true.

In retrospect, it was probably a mistake to send Kennan to Moscow in 1952. As the historian John Lewis Gaddis shows in his **estimable biography**, Kennan was a nervous brooder, with ulcers and a weakness for self-pity. And Moscow in the twilight of the Stalin era was an especially inhospitable place for a sensitive soul. Not surprisingly, Kennan lasted only five months. After *The New York Times* reported that Kennan had made comments comparing his life in the Soviet Union unfavorably to what he had experienced when he was interned in Nazi Germany, the ambassador was declared *persona non grata* -- or PNG'd, as it is known in diplomacy -- and sent packing.

It is too early to tell whether the Kremlin is looking for a pretext to PNG McFaul, but the ambassador's tweets show that he is making Kennan's mistake of letting the Russian harassment get under his skin. The Brentons and the British government stuck it out the last time a Western diplomat was the target of an intimidation campaign and showed Russian bullies that their tactics fail. McFaul only opens himself up to more taunting by complaining via social media.

Finally, there is more at stake here than the fate of one U.S. diplomatic appointment. Even if the campaign against McFaul was not directly ordered by Medvedev or Putin, it is clear that it has high-level support among the Russian elite. After all, the same state media apparatus that sent its employees to spy on the ambassador greeted his arrival in Moscow with a biting television commentary that misrepresented an interview he gave to cast him as just an expert on democracy

promotion and not on Russia. Whether the goal of these actions is to force McFaul to go home or just to humiliate him, they do not portend well for U.S.-Russian relations. More than half a century ago, Kennan was not known to be close to Truman. Today, however, this ambassador is a trusted adviser to the president. Humiliating McFaul can only be taken as a direct affront to Obama himself.