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Kennedy's Eager Latin Aide Stirs Controversy

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WASHINGTON — Among the bright and eager new frontiersmen who have burst on the Washington scene with the Kennedy Administration, Richard Nathan Goodwin has cut the widest swath. Outside the irrepressible Kennedy family, he has stirred the most capital discussion.

At 30, he is called the fastest rising young man in Washington, and, it is said, admittedly with exaggeration but some justification, that he guides the destiny of a hemisphere.

Who, then, is the enfant terrible who sits at the hand of

the President of the United States?

In his short span of fame, he has become almost a mystery man in gray-flannel suit and button-down collar. The public view of him is generally that of a presidential emissary from Washington to the capitals of Latin America.

Outside a small circle of top government figures and a few correspondents specializing in Latin America, he is little known personally. Many of his critics hardly know him except by his reputation as an upstart.

Opinions on him range from one U.S. senator who refers to him by an unprintable name to that of President

Kennedy who professes implicit faith in him.

Recently, the senator angrily declared: "The President calls me about many things, but when I start to talk about Latin America and Goodwin, he won't listen to me."

Goodwin, a deputy assistant secretary of state, accepts criticism and accolades with equal aplomb.

In appearance and manners he looks more like a graduate student in physics than a confidante of presidents. Born in Boston, he was graduated from Tufts College and Harvard Law School. He later



Richard N. Goodwin
... enfant terrible

worked for Congressional investigating committees where

he caught the eye of the Kennedy brothers. During John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign, he became a member of the inner clique of advisers, working mainly on Latin American affairs, West Virginia economic problems and medical care for the aged.

He has black hair, and a swarthy pallor. He alternately chews gum and smokes cigars.

He is a man of many parts: Intellectual brilliance, crass self-confidence, humor which provokes smiles rather than laughter, indefatigable stamina and courage to experiment with new ideas.

It is not unnatural that a

man of 30 should exult in being included in the spotlight focused on the President. Goodwin makes no concessions to false modesty when speaking of his closeness with the President. Neither does he boast of it.

"Only two people were willing for the President to take the trip to Venezuela and Colombia," he stated. "Kennedy and me. I told the President he would get the greatest reception since Franklin D. Roosevelt.

"I admit to some trepidation when he landed at Caracas Airport, but that was all. The only alternative would be that the president of the U.S. can't go to Latin America. And that would be outrageous."

Two of the most-often voiced criticisms of Goodwin is that he speaks little Spanish and is inexperienced in Latin American affairs. When asked about this, he coolly replied:

"Both criticisms are true. But I'm taking Spanish lessons and I have picked up some of the language.

"As for my lack of experience in Latin American affairs, I have had a layman's interest in the area, including a year and a half of study and writing speeches on it during the campaign. And, of course, I've worked in the area since then.

"But I would never quarrel with my critics about that. I would like to be evaluated in the light of what I have accomplished and not in the light of my inexperience."

Reports persist that Goodwin was transferred as a Kennedy aide to the State Department to act as a White House conduit.

One high-ranking State Department official agreed that Goodwin did see the President often. "But so does Martin," he added, referring to Edward Martin, recently named Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, and Goodwin's nominal boss.

Speculation over why Robert Woodward, predecessor to Martin, was removed and given another post still rages. The frequently heard story is that Woodward, an able Latin veteran, was unable to keep Goodwin in check and Kennedy was persuaded to appoint a more forceful overseer of the precocious young diplomat.

Yet, there are many observers here who doubt his high-flying career can be restrained now that it is in orbit.

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