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JOHN F. KENNEDY

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JULY 30–AUGUST 1962

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Wednesday, August 8, 1962

On August 8, President Kennedy devoted the bulk of the morning to the problems of organized labor. George Meany, the president of the AFL-CIO, came to the White House for half the day. In the morning, the President spoke in the Rose Garden to a group of labor leaders from the Caribbean, Central America, and Surinam, assembled by the AFL-CIO. Later the President was to meet with his labor secretary, Arthur Goldberg; the new HEW secretary Anthony Celebrezze, who had replaced Abraham Ribicoff the week before; and Lee White to discuss, in part, the possible creation of a presidential emergency board to avert a nationwide rail strike. Finally, there was a luncheon planned with the AFL-CIO's Executive Council.

Sandwiched in the morning's program was a 36-minute conversation with Llewelyn Thompson who had just returned to Washington after leaving his post as U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union. A holdover from the last administration, Thompson had gained the respect of the President through his measured cables. Thompson seemed to understand the mercurial Nikita Khrushchev better than any of the administration's Kremlin hands. Thompson and another veteran diplomat, Charles "Chip" Bohlen, were the men President Kennedy would rely on for appraisals of the Soviet leadership. Thompson's cables in late July alerted the President to the fact that Khrushchev was once again gearing up for a showdown over allied rights in West Berlin.

10:36–11:12 A.M.

Do you think that the Cuba thing and the fact that we hadn't gone into Laos might have given him the impression that we were going to give way in Berlin?

Meeting with Llewellyn Thompson on Khrushchev[1]

Llewellyn "Tommy" Thompson had served two presidents as U.S. ambassador to Moscow. In that time, he had become a recognized student of Nikita Khrushchev, having witnessed Khrushchev's emergence as the undisputed head of the Soviet government in 1957. Thompson spoke Russian and traveled around the United States with Khrushchev when the Soviet leader made his unprecedented 23-day visit in the late summer of 1959. He resigned his post in late July to return to the State Department.

At his last meeting with Khrushchev, on July 25, Thompson detected the start of a new Berlin crisis. In the course of cabling Washington three times over the next few days, Thompson stressed that he did not think Khrushchev was prepared to go to war over Berlin, but he cautioned that the wily Soviet leader was about to launch a new campaign for world opinion before signing a peace treaty.[2]

President Kennedy did not know Thompson personally. He kept him on as ambassador because of his reputation. Recently returned from Moscow, Thompson was in a position to give Kennedy the briefings he would need to make sense out of his adversary in the Kremlin and the latest Soviet bid for Berlin. It is likely that Thompson knew little if anything about the President's use of a back channel to assess Khrushchev's intentions regarding Berlin. He certainly did not know of the President's meeting a week earlier with Soviet intelligence officer Georgi Bolshakov. At that meeting Kennedy had asked for a Soviet commitment to put the Berlin issue on ice for a while in return for a U.S. promise to suspend overhead reconnaissance of Soviet shipping to Cuba by U.S. pilots.[3]

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1. President Kennedy and Llewellyn Thompson. Tape 8, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection.
2. See Thompson cables of 25, 26, and 28 July 1962, *FRUS*, 15: 252–55.
3. See Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *"One Hell of a Gamble": Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964* (New York: Norton, 1997), pp. 193–94, for an account of this Oval Office meeting (which included Attorney General Robert Kennedy) based on Russian sources.

The meeting opened with Thompson's reviewing briefly Khrushchev's meeting with Eisenhower at Camp David in 1959 and the abortive 1960 summit in Paris, which broke up when Khrushchev demanded that the United States apologize for the violations of Soviet airspace by U.S. U-2 spy planes.

Llewellyn Thompson: . . . [*unclear*] to see whether or not, if he could have, withdraw it and [*unclear*]?

President Kennedy: The Germans?

Thompson: Yeah. And [President Dwight D.] Eisenhower had said no. He said, "This shows that he was, that he had some knightly qualities," he said—

President Kennedy: Khrushchev said that?

Thompson: Yeah.

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: I told this to Eisenhower, and he said, "Well," he said, "when you write him, which you will have to do to thank him for his farewell gifts and so on, why," he said, "couldn't you?—You might put in something about, that I had spoken of him, and the great impression he'd made on me or something like that." I don't know if that's useful to do or not. But he . . . you can think about it.

President Kennedy: No, I think that—

Thompson: I think he . . . See, he was so let down by this build up. He kept saying this business: "Eisenhower called me friend," and he kept saying that publicly. Here was this Russian peasant who—[*He chuckles.*]

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: —in a country that had always been a pariah and then, you see this, this idea, well, I think this might be useful to encourage this idea that this is—

President Kennedy: Yes.

Thompson: —still a genuine feeling that we, both parties, have for the Russians: we are prepared to be friends with them in order to solve the problems.

President Kennedy: What is your judgment about the U-2? Did he want Eisenhower to just . . . did he want to get out of it, or was he really attempting to sort of bait a trap?[4]

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4. On 1 May 1960, a U.S. U-2 reconnaissance plane flown by Francis Gary Powers was shot down over the Soviet Union. Denials by the United States that the plane was on a spy mission

Thompson: I've always been convinced that he didn't want an excuse. I think they had a meeting of the Presidium,[5] just before he went there and said "Look, this German thing is too dangerous. If you don't get an agreement on it, you bring it to a head, you've got to move. This we can't do now and you've got to break it up.[6]

Because before he saw Eisenhower, he saw de Gaulle, and gave him in writing this rather offensive demand for an apology and if Eisenhower had gone ahead and apologized—a Frenchman had this thing leaked out—he must have known this. I mean, the way he handled it, I'm sure he wanted to break it up. I felt so sure of this that—you know, [you] remember he left there and went to Berlin, East Berlin—

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: And everybody thought he was going to announce the signature of the treaty.[7] And I was so afraid we'd make some statement that would make it necessary for him to do that, that I sent a telegram to Paris saying I was convinced he would not do this in which . . . simply on the basis that I was sure that the whole play was to prevent the issue coming to a head.[8]

President Kennedy: Well, what would they have done if there hadn't been a U-2, do you think? They just would have had the meeting and wouldn't have gotten an agreement?

Thompson: Yeah. But in those circumstances, I think that he might have worked out a modus vivendi of some sort.

The thing that I never could understand was why he surfaced the U-2.[9] They knew about it before, and maybe they were afraid now that Russia's

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collapsed when Khrushchev revealed that the pilot had survived and could tell his story. Khrushchev, who had been invited to a meeting in Paris with Western heads of state—Eisenhower, Harold Macmillan of Great Britain, and Charles de Gaulle of France—used the U-2 affair to break up the summit on 16 May 1960. Thompson, the longtime U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, was in Paris at the time and Kennedy, the historian, was asking for his insights into why Khrushchev sacrificed the summit.

5. The Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party was the main decision-making body of the Soviet Union. Under Stalin and again after Khrushchev's dismissal, it was known as the Politburo.

6. Thompson is referring to the Berlin Crisis started by Khrushchev in November 1958 when he threatened to sign a peace treaty with East Germany in six months if the Western powers did not accede to his demand for a demilitarized West Berlin. Although Khrushchev allowed the first deadline to lapse by early 1960, he was agitating again for a resolution, something which, according to Thompson, his colleagues in the Kremlin thought highly unlikely.

7. A peace treaty with East Germany that would terminate the Allied occupation rights in all territory claimed by East Germany, that is, all of Berlin.

8. Thompson remained in Moscow during the Paris summit.

9. To *surface* in this case means to "reveal something that is secret."

become so open that it would become known. There were too many military [officers] who knew it, [and] there were too many civilians, but he could have sat on that just as the way he sat on [*the President murmurs agreement*] this business of these fireguards who never, ever appeared.

President Kennedy: We got any explanation of that? You think it was just that they were shot?

Thompson: Hmm.

President Kennedy: Or they were imprisoned, or what, shot or . . . ?

Thompson: I think they were probably shot. But . . . maybe the local boys covered [*unclear*]. That's very possible.

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: It seemed that they were very excited [*unclear*] times.

President Kennedy: Right.

Thompson: It's quite possible.[10]

President Kennedy: But, why would he have become so—Do you think that the whole Camp David business was a propaganda from his point of view, the "spirit of Camp David," or do you think he really felt this?

Thompson: Well, I—I think he felt a lot of this. Of course, I think the Chinese angle was very prominent in his mind.

I remember when he came back, the Swedish ambassador, who was the oldest fellow there—he's been there about 13 years. He said to me this, "There's something strange about the way Khrushchev is playing this Camp David business, putting up posters around on the streets, advertising in a film about it." He said, "They are playing this up for some reason." And he said, "I think it must be the Chinese." Well, I think it was a large part of that. This was showing that there was some mileage in his—

President Kennedy: Yes.

Thompson: —in his policy of trying to build relations with America.

President Kennedy: Why?

Thompson: Because at this time in their own councils the Chinese were saying this was for the birds—[*unclear*]. [*Chuckles.*]

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: [*Unclear.*]

President Kennedy: That's right.

Thompson: That made the U-2 all the more difficult for him. But . . . He kept, it was always on his mind, he brought it up about three times [*unclear*] . . . talking about the secrecy of this thing. He kept saying, "Well, here [*unclear*] the U-2 and your people just insist on knowing

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10. It is not clear what "fireguards" Thompson and Kennedy were discussing.

everything; you'd never be satisfied." But I also think that, for this reason, that they won't agree to any on-site inspection.[11]

President Kennedy: Right. True.

Thompson: It's slightly possible that they think now, we've got more of a chance of a breakthrough than they do. Because we can make a much bigger effort than they can afford to make now and for that reason they might want to do it for that. They are just simply against . . . they figure our military is spotting these missile sites.

President Kennedy: I think that we might get the atmospheric, don't you think?[12] If they don't make any significant breakthrough on this thing, then we can put that forward.[13]

Thompson: Yeah, I think that could go, and I think very possibly this nondiffusion might go, because that doesn't involve inspection.[14]

President Kennedy: Has that . . . the conversation which the Secretary is going to have with Ambassador [Anatoly] Dobrynin on that,[15] is that to be gone through with the British and the Germans and the French on that?[16]

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11. Thompson was referring to the negotiations on a nuclear test ban. Due to the number of hard-to-explain seismic events in the Soviet Union, the United States had insisted on a certain number of inspections per year to ensure Soviet compliance with a test ban.

12. Get the atmospheric test ban. It would not require on-site inspection because atmospheric testing creates air particles that can be detected from outside the Soviet Union.

13. Here *breakthrough* likely refers to a change in the Soviet position on on-site inspections.

14. An agreement on the nondiffusion, or nonproliferation, of nuclear weapons. Gromyko and Rusk had discussed this at a private dinner in Geneva on July 22. Both foreign ministers expressed their country's interest in a nonproliferation agreement. They disagreed, however, over the most likely causes of nuclear proliferation. Apparently Gromyko stressed his concern that the U.S. plan for a European multilateral force (MLF) was a ploy to give a national arsenal to West Germany. The Soviet Union wanted any nonproliferation agreement to outlaw multilateral nuclear sharing. A record of this conversation has not been found. However, its substance was discussed at a subsequent meeting of Rusk and Soviet ambassador Dobrynin (see Memcon, 8 August 1962, *FRUS*, 7: 541–47).

15. Rusk met Dobrynin that day at the State Department. He had invited Dobrynin to call in order to discuss the possibility of an agreement on the nondiffusion of nuclear weapons (see Memcon, 8 August 1962, *FRUS*, 7: 541–47). This discussion hit a snag. Whereas Rusk spoke in favor of a general nonproliferation agreement, Dobrynin made clear that his government was most concerned about the acquisition of nuclear weapons by either of the Germanies. Moscow either wanted a specific agreement prohibiting nuclear sharing with Germany or, at least, Germany was to be named in a general nondiffusion agreement. Dobrynin emphasized that the acquisition of nuclear weapons by West Germany was his government's "problem number one." Rusk assured Dobrynin that Germany had forsworn acquiring nuclear weapons in 1955 and this was a binding agreement. The United States, on the other hand, was concerned that China and Israel would get the bomb.

16. The President wanted to know whether Rusk would be clearing his statement on the nondiffusion of nuclear weapons with the Europeans before meeting Dobrynin.

Thompson: I don't know, the secretary—I think it's not because the Secretary showed me yesterday the draft of his statement, and it's basically saying "I will have to consult with the allies on this one."[17]

President Kennedy: Yeah. When you got to do that?

Thompson: Well, I didn't ask him any. . . .

President Kennedy: What is your judgment as to the purpose of the Vienna meeting that we had and also why he took such a tough tone there and then why they called it [the threatened move against West Berlin] off?[18]

Thompson: I think again this Chinese thing was at a touchy, crucial stage with them that . . . very difficult. I think there must have been a lot of people in the Presidium who said, "This is getting . . . This split is too dangerous for us, and we've got to heal it."[19]

And the way the thing came out, it was on the very issue that they are fighting the Chinese about: this is whether or not they should go ahead vigorously to try to exploit every opportunity regardless of the risks, almost regardless of the risks and . . . Or whether it's better to have a more or less status quo and try to deal with their domestic problems and mark time.

And so, the situation with China, his relationship with China being what it was, to have done that could have caused very great internal pressure that [*unclear*], I think.

But personally I'm still glad you had the meeting. I think you—

President Kennedy: Oh, it was educational for me; but I don't know whether—it seemed . . . the fact of his, he was so sort of tough about Berlin . . .

Thompson: Ah, but he also was very impressed—

President Kennedy: Hmm.

Thompson: —with your determination—

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17. Rusk read the statement on the nondiffusion of nuclear weapons at the August 8 meeting with Dobrynin. He suggested that the United States and the Soviet Union move with Britain and France to propose a two-point agreement: (1) A commitment by existing nuclear powers not to transfer nuclear weapons to other nations and (2) A commitment by nonnuclear powers not to develop nuclear weapons. On the issue of the proposed MLF, the statement stressed that it was intended as "a means for preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons on a national basis." Rusk reminded the Soviets that under existing U.S. law and allied military arrangements, "United States nuclear warheads remain under all circumstances under United States custody and control" (see Memcon, 8 August 1962, *FRUS*, 7: 541–47).

18. The Vienna meeting was the Kennedy-Khrushchev summit of 3–4 June 1961. Kennedy is alluding to the fact that Khrushchev threatened at Vienna to force an immediate Berlin crisis, then did not do so.

19. The Sino-Soviet split.

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: —and this was important.

President Kennedy: Because otherwise after the Cuba thing—[20] Do you think that the Cuba thing and the fact that we hadn't gone into Laos might have given him the impression that we were going to give way in Berlin?

Thompson: I don't think so very much.

President Kennedy: Hmm.

Thompson: I really don't. I really don't. It could have had some bearing on that; but I don't . . . I think Khrushchev has always been . . . he's always felt he had us over a barrel in Berlin.

President Kennedy: Yeah. I think he does.

Thompson: [*Unclear.*] [*Laughs.*]

President Kennedy: [*Chuckles.*] He's always been right. Do you think it was useful calling up our troops?[21]

Thompson: I do. And he said, very—I didn't understand quite what he was driving at. I'm not sure what he's driving at, he said, "I understand the President on this."

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: I don't know what he . . . quite [*unclear*] he meant by that, I wasn't sure. But this has led to their [resumption of nuclear] testing and so on, these efforts at . . .[22] But at the same time, he said, "I understand the President on this and [*unclear*]."

These conversations with him bob back and forth, and I didn't get to follow up on that. I had wanted to say, well the important thing for us was they not misunderstand our intentions, but I didn't get a chance to get it in, particularly with all these ambassadors and . . .

President Kennedy: Hmm.

Thompson: Particularly when I am talking to him in Russian, the thing goes pretty fast, and I don't have too much time to think. But I think he still, he's got a lot of really serious internal problems. The agri-

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20. The Bay of Pigs fiasco in April 1961.

21. On 25 July 1961 President Kennedy announced his intention to request congressional standby authority to call up 150,000 reservists to meet the Soviet challenge over Berlin. The President had considered declaring a national emergency, which would have permitted him to call up one million reservists; but he worried that his European allies would consider this an overreaction. Thompson from Moscow had been one of those advising the President that the Soviets were likely to be persuaded by "substantial but quiet moves that did not panic our allies" [see Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 588–89].

22. In the fall of 1961, the Soviets broke the three-year moratorium during which neither superpower had detonated any nuclear test devices. The United States then resumed its own testing in the spring of 1962.

culture thing is lasting; it's going to be a long time before [*unclear*]. And I think their crop this year is going to be far worse than he lets on and our Agriculture boys think that.

President Kennedy: Hmm.

Thompson: And this makes a real problem for him.

President Kennedy: We ought to be thinking about what, if he goes to the U.N., what his proposal would be.[23] He obviously could propose that the U.N. assume the responsibility, and I wouldn't be surprised if it has a rather . . . it could have a good ring to it—[24]

Thompson: Yeah.

President Kennedy: —as far as the committee of the . . . the Indians and so on. Whether we ought to have a counterproposal such as the willingness to submit this to a plebiscite of the people, whether they want the U.N. or the continuation of the Communists, whether that should be our counter.[25] But obviously we have got to have some counter.

Thompson: This could, of course, be a way for him trying to get off the hook.

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: Because he mentioned something about having a commission of jurists, or something of this kind, look at this thing. Well, on that we'd be on very strong ground.

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: But I think it would be wise for us, if we just, if we get to the point where it looks like it's going to happen to get at [Jawaharlal] Nehru, and [Gamal Abdul] Nasser and maybe [Josip Broz] Tito and just lay it on the line that he has brought up, he has made this a problem by the attempts to focus on [*unclear*].[26]

To us, this is whether or not you're thrown out of Europe or not and

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23. As Thompson was making his way home from Moscow, he cabled from Copenhagen, "I believe Khrushchev is likely to bring Berlin problem before the United Nations and probably will present Soviet case. Suggest we should be thinking about how to prevent neutrals from proposing compromise solutions unacceptable to us and from giving him impression he can proceed with his plans with strong support from world opinion" (see Telegram to Secretary of State, 28 July 1962, *FRUS*, 15: 255).

24. Kennedy is referring to a possible Soviet proposal that U.N. troops assume allied responsibility for the security of West Berlin.

25. Presumably Kennedy is discussing here the possibility of a referendum in East Germany. The United States had previously discussed the possibility of a referendum in West Berlin on the future of that enclave.

26. The prime minister of India, the president of the United Arab Republic, and the president of Yugoslavia, respectively—then the three most powerful figures in the nonaligned movement.

we can't have this. We've got to keep our troops there now in these circumstances and that any compromise which threatened this could mean that these people would be responsible for bringing on a conflict. And [we tell them] that they had better not put up any compromise proposals without thorough consultation with us to make sure that we're not put in this position. Because this, they don't want a conflict and. . . . But it has to be driven home to them because of the temptation to be the—

President Kennedy: [*Unclear.*]

Thompson: —guy who pulled off the thing—

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: —is very great.

President Kennedy: But I think the part where they could regard us as being unreasonable would not be on our staying in Berlin, and so on, particularly if we say we'll put it to a judgment of the people there; but the fact that we refuse to recognize East Germany.

I think the Yugoslavs . . . I am sure the Indians . . . everyone . . . I think there would be a general agreement in a lot a part of the world that that is an unrealistic position, in general.

Thompson: Certainly on the frontier thing; I think there's one [where] I think they're right. It probably is a bit. If that were the issue [*unclear*] . . .

President Kennedy: You mean the Oder—

Thompson: Oder-Neisse.

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: Precisely. [*Unclear.*]

President Kennedy: But the recognition of East Germany: I can see where they would think that . . . they would consider that our failure to acknowledge that after 17 years, at least as a de facto situation . . . we do really, as a de facto, but even—that is where, I think, you will have the most difficulty.

Thompson: I think there, I thought that the Secretary did a good job at Geneva in laying out the case this last time.[27]

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: He spelled it out in that . . . On that he said that, he made quite clear we weren't going to take any action which would show that they weren't a sovereign state in effect. We weren't demanding any [*unclear*], just that they not interfere with us, with our communications with our troops [in West Berlin]. And . . .

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27. Ambassador Thompson is referring to Secretary of State Rusk's handling of the July meetings with Soviet foreign minister Gromyko in Geneva.

President Kennedy: Was . . . he was very formal with you, was he?

Thompson: Yes, he always is. And I told him, I had tried to prepare a way for [Thompson's replacement] Foy [Kohler] and he said, he was very cagey on that [*unclear*] at one of these conferences. I can make no judgment [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: But he said, "We'll welcome him. We will try to work with him." And . . .

President Kennedy: Did he say anything about Dobrynin?

Thompson: No, he didn't bring that up. [*Unclear.*] First of all, it was just purely social.

President Kennedy: Hmm.

Thompson: His wife was there.[28] And she was . . . she and Jane got on very well.[29]

President Kennedy: Right.

Thompson: Jane had found in London one of these little drinking cups that has a false bottom—

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Thompson: —and she gave it to him. And Mrs. Khrushchev came over and kissed her. [*He laughs.*] She tries to hold his drinking down.[30]

President Kennedy: Yeah. [*Mumbles something.*]

Thompson: He cursed at me, [*unclear*] an old handicap because he . . . drinking out of this little glass—[*Thompson laughs again*]—like drinking with his fingers. And . . .

President Kennedy: He was very nice to [Pierre] Salinger, wasn't he [when Salinger visited Moscow in May 1962]?

Thompson: Yes. [*Unclear.*] Of course all this is . . . it's like dealing with a bunch of bootleggers or gangsters. There's a kind of hypocrisy that—

President Kennedy: [*Unclear.*]

Thompson: That's a little hard to take. But . . . oh, we talked a lot about agriculture and his crops and that stuff, that sort of thing. But he is a fascinating character.

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28. Nina Petrovna Khrushchev (?–1984).

29. Jane Thompson, wife of the ambassador, understood Russian and Mrs. Khrushchev knew some English. See Jane Thompson's colorful memorandum on their time together during the Soviet leader's visit to the United States in September 1959, Record Group 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of Soviet Affairs, Box 4, National Archives.

30. Ibid. Nikita's drinking had been a subject of light conversation between Jane Thompson and Nina Petrovna for some time. Apparently Khrushchev liked to tease his wife that she refused to drink anything at all, even cognac for formal toasts.

President Kennedy: Yeah. Well, listen, Tommy, I will—[*President Kennedy rises from his chair.*]—perhaps we could, perhaps you could just get . . . before you [*unclear*].

Thompson: I'll do that tomorrow.

President Kennedy: Somebody, before you go, can just get on that buzzer [*Thompson agrees*] and [*unclear*] want to be like because we did have the [Paul] Nitze meeting [*unclear*] know more about it than anybody. But he asked me whether we ought to see if we can change our procedures and then perhaps you could work out a memorandum for me [*unclear*] . . .[31]

Thompson: Fine. Then, this would be my following request. The first one, [*unclear*] here, I thought if you had no objections, I might say something about how much I appreciated the close cooperation [*unclear*] close contact [*unclear*] had with Cuba in the time before Khrushchev [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: All right. That would very nice [*unclear*].

Thompson: [*Unclear*] give him a specific [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: Yeah. All right. We'll see [*unclear*].

They left the Oval Office together—talked in the hall for awhile, with the occasional word intelligible. Kennedy is heard discussing his concerns about the allies and his hope for a basis for resolving the Berlin crisis satisfactorily. Once Thompson had left the West Wing, Kennedy returned to the Oval Office. Just before shutting off the tape machine, Kennedy said, "[*unclear*] with Thompson."

The President did not tape any of the labor-related conversations of the day. He also did not record a conversation with his budget director, David Bell. He did, however, choose to make a recording of his next foreign policy discussion, a focused discussion of initiatives in two problem areas, China and the Congo.

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31. The President may be referring to the 19 July 1962 meeting of State-DOD-JCS and White House staff representatives with him to consider the approval of Berlin contingency plans and those maritime contingency plans concerning Berlin (see Memcon, 19 July 1962, *FRUS*, 15: 230–32).

5:30–6:12 P.M.

Your next exasperation now, Mr. President . . .

Meeting on China and the Congo[32]

The Soviet Union was not the only major Communist power threatening United States interests. After spending part of the morning of August 8, 1962, discussing Kremlin-generated problems, Kennedy turned that afternoon to the general threat posed by the Mao Zedong regime in the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.).

Despite initial hopes of improving U.S. relations with the People's Republic of China, President Kennedy remained trapped in the rigid nonrecognition policy of his predecessors. Mao's policies themselves had much to do with the administration's unyielding position. Chinese Communist denunciations of "peaceful coexistence" between the East and West, China's pursuit of a nuclear weapons program, and Beijing's support of the North Vietnamese and Laotian Communists—all reinforced the Kennedy administration's nonrecognition policy.

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist government in Taiwan, backed by a supposedly powerful U.S. China lobby, also inhibited the Kennedy administration's flexibility regarding China. For over a year, the Nationalists had pressed the administration for military support of a mainland invasion, which Chiang believed would inspire an uprising against Mao's regime. In mid-1961, Kennedy approved the preparation for six intelligence drops of 20-man teams over South China. Claiming the groups were too small, Chiang never carried out the drops. During the spring of 1962, the Nationalists stepped up demands and requested 16 B-57 bombers, additional C-123 aircraft for intelligence-gathering drops, and approximately 35 ships capable of carrying a platoon of tanks or an infantry company. Those demands were the subject of discussion when the President, McGeorge Bundy, Desmond FitzGerald, Michael Forrestal, Averell Harriman, and John McCone met in the Cabinet Room.

The Kennedy administration's initial response to Nationalist pressure had been to temporize. Worried about provoking a Communist Chinese or Soviet military reaction, President Kennedy absolutely refused

32. Including President Kennedy, McGeorge Bundy, Desmond FitzGerald, Michael Forrestal, Averell Harriman, and John McCone. Tape 8, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection.

to send Chiang either ships or bombers without sure knowledge that the PRC would not respond with military action. His concern seemed to be justified when, during mid-June 1962, the People's Republic of China began to amass forces in the Fujian area across from Taiwan. Mao declared that they were for defensive purposes. To defuse the situation, the Kennedy administration assured Beijing that the United States was not backing a Nationalist invasion of the mainland.

The administration continued delay tactics with Chiang, partly out of fear that the generalissimo might proceed with invasion plans without U.S. support. President Kennedy did not want another Bay of Pigs, yet he was personally intrigued by guerrilla warfare tactics and searched for temporizing measures. He was therefore willing to consider amphibious landings and intelligence drops of 200-man teams.

On June 5, McCone visited Taiwan as part of a two-week trip to Southeast Asia. He informed Chiang that the United States was willing to prepare but not yet implement intelligence-gathering airdrops. Two C-123 aircraft were being equipped, and the President had approved the training of Nationalist aircrews. The administration promised to consider Chiang's requests for three additional C-123s.

McCone was uncertain whether any intelligence-gathering team could survive on the mainland. He also worried that a 200-man drop as opposed to a 20-man drop approximated the first phase of active military operations. The Director of Central Intelligence's doubts were reinforced by the newly appointed ambassador to Taiwan, Admiral Alan G. Kirk, who assumed his post at the beginning of July. Not coincidentally, Ambassador Kirk was a specialist in amphibious operations, an action also under consideration by the administration.

Kirk similarly swayed Mike Forrestal, the National Security Council officer for Asia, who was in Taipei on July 23, 1962. For several months Forrestal harbored doubts about the advisability of intelligence airdrops, especially 200-man teams. Now, in early August, he expressed firm opposition to Bundy: "I have thought a good deal about whether anything should be done, but I have not come up with any course of action to suggest. Unless you have other ideas, I would propose to let the matter drop without letting it go any further."[33]

Averell Harriman, the assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, had also consistently advised the President to resist Nationalist demands. He shared the concern that Chiang was using intelligence-

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33. Michael Forrestal to McGeorge Bundy, 7 August 1962, National Security Files, Meetings and Memoranda series, Staff Memoranda, Michael Forrestal, John F. Kennedy Library.

gathering schemes as a way of drawing the United States into support of a mainland invasion.

President Kennedy began taping as he opened discussion of a draft telegram to Ambassador Kirk about the timing, size, and overall merits of intelligence drops over mainland China.[34]

President Kennedy: Now that we've got those ships, it'll take at least three months to get those shipments in. Don't you think?

John McCone: October is the [C-]123s.

Michael Forrestal: Landing craft, sir, or the airplane?

President Kennedy: Landing craft.

Forrestal: Landing craft. Now that's a big operation.

Desmond FitzGerald: Operation.

McCone: They'd have to be moved forward by then.

Forrestal: Yeah.

McCone: Because—

Forrestal: It'll take six months, I was told out there by Admiral Kirk.[35]

McCone: When were you there, Mike?

Forrestal: Two weeks ago, sir.[36]

McCone: You came back [*unclear*]? [*Long pause.*]

President Kennedy: [*marking up text*] Dare we modify [the] present policy of the movement of C-123s to Taiwan, updating use as is necessary? That's how many C-123s?

McCone: Those are two of the five C-123s that we're going to keep in this country.

President Kennedy: They're the ones that we—

McGeorge Bundy: Well, the dropped aircraft—

McCone: Two hundred–man drop—

President Kennedy: [*reading while writing and scribbling out text*] "And therefore it suggests . . . [*reading very fast and mumbling*] the President . . . on the same basis . . . aircraft with all . . . the [*unclear*]. [*Unclear*] agree to modify policy in 1962 . . . brought out already in a different frame [*unclear*] . . . as long as it takes . . . be made . . . planes will be made available."

[*Unclear*] get Kirk out there.

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34. For a copy of the completed telegram that is being drafted and sent to Ambassador Kirk, see Message from Harriman to Kirk, 8 August 1962, *FRUS*, Northeast Asia, 22: 301.

35. Admiral Alan G. Kirk was U.S. ambassador to the Republic of China since July 1962.

36. Forrestal was in Taipei on 23 July 1962.

McCone: I agree. [*Scribbling out text.*] [*Long pause.*]

Averell Harriman: Now this says the telegram—I think it will be . . . [Let's] send it around. We could save time from running around on this memorandum.[37] [*Unclear*] memorandum, if you want to underline something. [*Unclear.*] [*Possible break in the tape recording.*]

President Kennedy: [*scribbling text as he speaks*] Well, do you think you ought to give him a . . . Is it best to give Ambassador Kirk an explanation of why to take [*unclear*] 100,000 tons of shipping [*unclear*] to be in service immediately be it for two-, three-, or four-months' period . . . from the time it began for service to take place, from the time of their arrival? This is not the kind of situation we want at all because [to] anyone it would seem illogical unless it was real. [*scribbling out text*] "Is it necessary for us to explain why we can't go with this 100,000 tons?" That . . .

McCone: I thought our reason for not giving it to them was so as to not give them the capability of doing something without our approval.

President Kennedy: Right.

McCone: And—

President Kennedy: Well, only because if we did give it to them without these three months' periods, obviously I would think [it] would encourage the Chinese Communists to launch an attack on Quemoy and Matsu and force them to build up their defenses. And world opinion would consider this an insane action.[38]

McCone: Sure, it would become known [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: In three months, for us to ship a hundred thousand tons . . .

Bundy: The trouble with that is that it gives them some incentive to try and figure out a quieter [*unclear*] way of doing it, and we just don't want to do it.

FitzGerald: And, also, to avoid any three months' delay that keeps us here.

Bundy: We'd have to emphasize the length of time that it takes but at this point [*unclear*]—

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37. According to a note in Harriman's personal papers, he took the following four documents with him to this meeting: FE No. 884 and attachment (message from Kirk); FCT-7903; memorandum for President from Harriman (original and copy) dated 8 August 1962; and the draft telegram for Kirk from Harriman (see "JFK 1961" folder, W. Averell Harriman papers, Box 479, Library of Congress). None of these items appear in his papers or in the holdings at the John F. Kennedy Library.

38. Since 1954 the People's Republic of China had intermittently threatened to seize these offshore island groups. A buildup of six divisions in Fujian Province that began in June 1962 renewed President Kennedy's concern that Beijing was planning to launch an invasion of the Quemoys and Matsus.

President Kennedy: How long is it now?

McCone: Really, [*unclear*] basically we did not think [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: Only two? [*Unclear.*] This . . . he always wanted two didn't he?

McCone: He wanted five.

Forrestal: Five total—[*Unclear exchange.*]

President Kennedy: Who says that?

Harriman: Admiral Kirk only wanted two.

President Kennedy: Oh, yeah. [*Unclear.*]

Forrestal: Why do we say, "One or two?" [*Several voices at once.*]

President Kennedy: Well, let's check that first.

McCone: But with two we cannot put it in 200-man drops. We need at least five, so—

Unidentified: We need five for a 200-man drop.

FitzGerald: We can take about 50 men apiece. [*Discussion about the text they are reading.*]

McCone: We'd like to remove the last sentence from that first page [*unclear*] message [*unclear*] and move it into here. [*Garbled voices—elliptical comments about rewording of the text.*]

Forrestal: Mr. President, in paragraph 4, I think Mr. McCone has made the point that he would just as soon we stopped the pressing about these drops. He suggested that we change the sentence in B in paragraph 4 at the very bottom: "Although we do not object to 20-man team drops, we do not want to press this—we do not wish to press any drop into the PRC" in view of that other telegram that you've got in front of you. The theory here being that [*unclear*] actually printed.

Twenty-six seconds excised as classified information.

McCone: For two months, they've had no drops although they had the troops there all the time—a secret deploy[ment] of over a thousand men. And I think they've had two amphibious landings, as well, in two months' time. I think that there's a hell of a lot of talk going on about this, presently. I think it's very relaxed. I think if they were dynamic in the movement of those, if we feel they are completely on top of it, then we could send in commando raids of all kinds [*unclear*] all the rest.

President Kennedy: Is this language clear enough? [*reading*] "Although we do not object to 20-man drops, we would not want to press this size drop."

Harriman: No, [*unclear*] we ought [to] argue along the lines of what John had in mind—that we do not believe you should press for any drops. But if they made one, we would cooperate with . . . But [*unclear*] says they . . .

McCone: I was encouraged, and I was very willing to aid drops that they need up to 20 men. I said increase them when I was over there—for the purpose of this intelligence and testing the conditions on the mainland.

President Kennedy: Do we want to say we would support drops up to 20 men?

McCone: [*Unclear*] not the question [*unclear*]. Do you have the number?

Forrestal: Do we want to support any such drops up to 20 men? Or are we saying we're opposed?

McCone: Uh, huh.

Harriman: I think we might say to him that [what] we have in mind are smaller drops.

Forrestal: [*writing*] "Soon, we will also have in mind—"

Harriman: From the telegram, that they have in mind smaller [*unclear*].

Forrestal: We were talking about seven-man.

Harriman: Seven-man drops. Do you have . . . And do you have the [*unclear*] put out this [*unclear*]—

McCone: I wouldn't say that entirely, but I have a certain feeling about pressing for a contingency study for various reasons. I think that—

Bundy: I know what Kirk has in mind there and wants contingency staff officers and amphibious operations. You get a sense that if we can get them to look at this problem honestly it will cool the hell out of them.

McCone: Is this what he said?

Bundy: I have an inclination to believe that under his direction, it will have that effect rather than the reverse effect.[39]

McCone: Uh, huh.

Harriman: I think that—

Forrestal: The thing that is bothering us, Mac, is that this might get some publicity. The fact that overt representatives of the U.S.—

Bundy: It's not too hard to put this out on another channel that we're engaged in bringing home the reality of his lies to these people. I think that . . . It is a hazard, but they live in a never-never land, which really does affect their behavior. We [*unclear*] really amphibious men would be needed. How many thousand tons of supplies are you going to have to get across the beach per day? I don't know how you would have to con-

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39. McGeorge Bundy has known Admiral Kirk a long time. In 1944 he served as an assistant to Admiral Kirk, who commanded the maritime component of the 6 June 1944 invasion of Normandy.

trol and manage the . . . You could put that warning in that you will be glad—[*unclear, as someone asks another for coffee*]—has to be carefully handled so that it is not an appearance of current planning of a landing.

McCone: That's correct.

Forrestal: That's what I would [*unclear*].

FitzGerald: Kirk is under the—[*Garbled voices.*]

McCone: —to educate and demonstrate how difficult it is, that's fine.

Harriman: Well, let's use the word again *encouraging* because [*unclear*] *encouraging contingencies.*

Forrestal: He said he would cooperate, but the study may generate additional requests for U.S. equipment and may have security problems or may . . .

Bundy: Hadn't you better make that a new sentence?

McCone: Yeah, I think I would.

FitzGerald: We want to avoid having a statement on the aspect of general planning.

Bundy: I assume your purpose is educational and that you will make every effort to avoid any possibly damaging appearance of joint amphibious planning. [*Several garbled voices.*]

Twelve seconds excised as classified information.

Bundy: It's been increasingly their line, Mr. President. It's the argument they have used to justify the 200-man team.

McCone: Well, he agreed about that and after we had two long discussions on this. We'd start off through the summer with 20-man drops, and if they were successful . . . And we would jointly agree upon each one of those, analyzing the success of the earlier drops. If they worked out successfully, then we'd drop about a 200-man drop in October and there would be five of them. Each one would be subject to concurrence. And the first one would go by the success of the 20-man drop. Then if the fire had been started, then we'd go to the other [*unclear*], but he said indeed that all actions could be concurred in to go step by step building up into the larger one, to be first started by allowing the 200-man drops. Finally he agreed that he didn't have any intelligence findings to support their success. Therefore he agreed to the 20-man drops really as exploratory and as intelligence finding.

Harriman: Then we swing back to the 7-man drop?

McCone: The reason for the 7-man drop was that the 20-man drop would be from a C-54 and the electronic countermeasures for this left it somewhat exposed, so we reduced that to a 7-man so that he could fly them in on a P2V, which had a better chance of survival really than the C-54 transport plane, more maneuverable, and had somewhat better

electronic gear but it would only take seven men, that's why I proposed a 7-man drop.[40]

Harriman: The 123 would be better protected than any other planes we have.

McCone: Yes, but it's not there. It would be better protected and, it's a better plane to drop them. It's one of these things we've had to worry about with the 20-man drop. You can drop quickly and in a pattern rather than to—sure enough. The one serious problem, you know, these planes will be in the radar, and they have to pull up into slow motion. And I know that with 20 men, the radar will spot them so that then on the ground they will know almost where to go to find the team, whether it's a 200-man team or a 20-man team. And this is a very serious problem for the whole operation. In other words, if you make it [*unclear*] high for them to establish their—

Forrestal: [*Unclear*] they're gonna have to make a visible pattern, but with a—

McCone: —prepare to drop—

Forrestal: —prepare to drop, you're going a little bit slow—

McCone: Quite slow. Sufficiently slower so that the radar operators can pinpoint where the drop is taking place.

Forrestal: If they're exactly on the [*unclear*], yes.

McCone: [*Unclear.*] Observing that last U-2 plane, where they picked the plane up—the last U-2 we sent in according to [*unclear*] from [*unclear*]. They picked it up 12 minutes after it took off the runway at Taiwan, and they had it in the radar continuously until it was within 10 minutes away. The lights on all the time. They have very good coverage.

President Kennedy: Did some planes come up from that last one?

McCone: What's that?

President Kennedy: Did they have some planes come up from that last one?

McCone: No, I don't think so, Mr. President.

President Kennedy: They didn't try to . . . They didn't get close?

McCone: They were at 55,000 feet if I recall, and so they were . . .

President Kennedy: They never charged us with flying U-2 flights, have they?

McCone: Never have. Never have. And incidentally it was a very successful flight. [*Unclear*] 90 percent . . .

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40. The P2V was a slightly smaller plane with two fewer engines than the C-54. It was primarily used as a land-based submarine hunter and therefore carried special detection gear and an electronic countermeasures package.

Forrestal: That's humorous. At 10,000 feet, we'll give the President another U-2 disaster.[41] [*Chuckles.*]

McCone: You can talk [*unclear*] about how good the weather was. [*Laughter.*]

President Kennedy: [*Unclear*] get our cover story?

Unclear exchange. Several voices can be heard responding to President Kennedy's joke about getting a cover story.

President Kennedy: [*chuckling*] What is it going to be this time—the Chinese Communists? [*Unclear*] without warning, be it Vietnam and that's going to be a [*unclear*].

McCone: [*Unclear.*]

President Kennedy: [*Unclear*] the Chinese Communists or the Nationalists doing anything [*unclear*] Formosa.

Harriman: But I think he got into trouble because he admitted it.[42] Khrushchev [*unclear*] told me so. He took me aside, and he said, "I publicly asked the President now not to admit, but he insisted upon saying he did."

McCone: [*apparently jumping to Eisenhower's defense*] Well, I know he had a difficult problem, Averell. I sat in on some of those discussions.[43]

Twenty-three seconds excised as classified information.

McCone: One of the reasons and [*unclear*] on that—

President Kennedy: In drawing that up evidently Ambassador [to the Soviet Union Llewellyn "Tommy"] Thompson told us this morning that [*unclear*] the fellow from Stockholm the other day on account of [Andrew H. T.] Berding's book.[44]

McCone: Oh.

President Kennedy: And I guess Tommy didn't feel comfortable that the President [Eisenhower] couldn't very well deny it—

McCone: With Tommy there he probably couldn't.

President Kennedy: —very well have denied it, I think . . . I don't . . .

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41. Thompson and Kennedy had talked at length about the U-2 affair of May 1960 in a conversation that morning. See note 2 in "Meeting with Llewellyn Thompson on Khrushchev," 8 August 1962. On 9 September 1962, Communist China would down a U.S.-made Nationalist China U-2 flying a reconnaissance mission over East China.

42. Harriman is voicing the opinion that President Eisenhower had worsened his position because in May 1960 he admitted publicly that he had authorized the violation of Soviet airspace by Francis Gary Powers's U-2.

43. In May 1960 John McCone was the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission.

44. On 27 July 1962 the *New York Times* reported that Andrew Berding, assistant secretary of state for public affairs in the Eisenhower administration, argued in his recently published book, *Foreign Affairs and You! How American Foreign Policy Is Made and What It Means to You* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), that Eisenhower's decision to accept personal responsibility for the decision to send a U-2 over Russia in May 1960 was "one of the greatest mistakes in the diplomatic history of the United States."

He didn't say anything about whether there was an alternative statement. As I say, the only thing that I've ever felt . . . would have been something: "It's a matter that . . . It's being looked into." *Period.* Or something. And not made it [the denial] fuller. But I guess [Berding's] statement probably disturbed Presi[dent Eisenhower]—

McCone: Probably so [*unclear*]. I think [*unclear*] would write a book on [*unclear*]. [*Mixed voices and laughter, unclear exchange.*]

Harriman: [*Unclear.*] At one point, [*unclear*] Ike turned to Chris [Herter] and said, "Now why shouldn't I apologize for this?"

And [*unclear*], "No, don't do it."[45]

Now Chip [Bohlen] says that he never heard him say that.

President Kennedy: He could have saved himself a lot of trouble by saying he would express regret.

Harriman: I know. [*Unclear.*] I'm saying that this is what Khrushchev told me. It was President Eisenhower that turned to Herter and said, "Well, why shouldn't I apologize for this?" Chris said, "No, you mustn't." Now Chip says he never heard that. Khrushchev told me that [*unclear*]—

President Kennedy: You know, this has nothing to do with anything we talked about, but I was reading this week [Robert] Sherwood's account of the [1945] Tehran meeting in which you played some role.[46] [*Unclear exchanges involving Harriman.*]

[*referring to Harriman*] He's a real . . . [*unclear*] other interest meetings about that [*unclear*] . . . You're a survivor. [*Unclear exchange.*]

Their discussion shifts to the civil war raging in the former Belgian colony of the Congo. The Kennedy administration found Moise Tshombe's determination as exasperating as the unremitting pressure of Chiang Kai-shek. Tshombe was the leader of Katanga, a state that two years earlier had declared its secession from the newly independent Congo. The day before, a U.S. representative in Geneva had received information that Tshombe was anxious to speak directly with Harriman, who felt he grasped the complexities of the Congolese problem and could serve as Kennedy's personal emissary.[47] Harriman was one of the few open admirers of Tshombe within the Kennedy administration. The

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45. Christian A. Herter was secretary of state from 1959 to 1961.

46. The President was referring to Robert E. Sherwood's book, *Roosevelt and Hopkins, an Intimate History* (New York: Harper, 1948).

47. Roger W. Tubby (assistant secretary of state for public affairs) to Dean Rusk (secretary of state), 7 August 1962, "Tshombe" folder, W. Averell Harriman papers, Box FCL 18, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

Department of State, especially the African Bureau, was the center of the anti-Katanga sentiment.

On June 30, 1960, after virtually no preparation for decolonization, the Belgian Congo received independence and quickly degenerated into chaos. The Congolese central government was initially divided between President Joseph Kasavubu, a moderate nationalist who headed a regional party, and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, a radical nationalist whom many Western leaders considered a Communist. A host of regional and tribal parties, which preferred a confederated political system, created further divisions. Tshombe was head of the largest regional party, the *Confédération des Associations Tribales du Katanga* (*Conakat*), based in the mineral-rich Katanga province. Financially backed by the Belgian mining company *Union Minière du Haut Katanga*, Tshombe announced the secession of Katanga on July 11, 1960.

President Kennedy sought the reintegration of the province because most of the developing countries considered Tshombe a Belgian stooge. The Congo posed a serious foreign policy dilemma for Kennedy. If he supported European clients in Africa, he risked antagonizing the developing countries and possibly paving the way for Soviet influence. Yet if he opposed his allies in Africa, he might alienate the NATO allies.

Kennedy viewed U.N. intervention as a way out of this policy conundrum. Outside aid poured into the fighting parties from East and West bloc countries. Foreign mercenaries supported various Congolese factions. Murder and political chaos prevailed. Lumumba was delivered to Katanga and killed by his enemies there. On September 17, 1961, U.N. secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld died in a plane crash while en route to meet Tshombe in Northern Rhodesia. Speculation that Tshombe's forces were responsible added to the confused state of affairs. The U.N. forces had helped prop up a fragile national government in Leopoldville (now renamed Kinshasa) but had not yet intervened decisively against the rebel government of Katanga.

Kennedy, who was committed to a united Congo under a non-Communist leader, worried that as long as Tshombe's secession continued, leftist separatist Antoine Gizenga (Lumumba's successor) would draw Soviet support for his rival national regime at Stanleyville (now renamed Kisangani). From Kennedy's perspective, the first major breakthrough in resolving the civil war came in 1961 when Cyrille Adoula formed a moderate central government. Despite continued U.N. mediation talks and intermittent cease-fire agreements, hostilities between Tshombe's forces and those of the central government persisted.

In early August 1962, the Kennedy administration worked with

Belgian, British, and French representatives on a proposal for national reconciliation, which they planned to present to acting U.N. secretary-general U Thant.[48] On August 3, Under Secretary of State George Ball submitted a four-phase course of action to Kennedy. The first phase would be the approval of the reconciliation plan by Adoula, while the second phase demanded Tshombe's acceptance within ten days after receipt. The third phase asked for an embargo of Katangan copper, while the fourth phase called for U.N. enforcement of such an embargo.[49] On August 6, President Kennedy approved the program.

As the conversation shifted to the Congo crisis, uncertainty remained about Tshombe's cooperation for reintegration.

Forrestal: Your next exasperation now, Mr. President—Tshombe. [*Laughter.*]

President Kennedy: Did you realize that [*unclear*]. [*Explosive laughter.*] Tshombe wants to meet with Governor Harriman?

Forrestal: Tshombe said that he is at his wit's end and the man that could help him was Harriman.

President Kennedy: He said that?

Harriman: I was told to see him in Geneva, and I ended the telegram by saying I think this fellow could be made a good friend of ours if we pay some attention to him. Nobody's paid any attention to him since . . . He's never seen anybody.

President Kennedy: Are you [*unclear*].

Harriman: And he told me on . . . He said he'd come back to meet with the four powers anytime.[50]

President Kennedy: When did the recent procedure—

Bundy: He told David at the ILO a couple days ago that he would go anywhere to meet Governor Harriman.[51]

President Kennedy: How about going back to Geneva? [*Laughter.*]

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48. For a text, see, "Proposal for National Reconciliation," "Congo, 7/28/62–8/2/62" folder, National Security Files, Box 28a, John F. Kennedy Library.

49. Memorandum, George Ball to President Kennedy, 3 August 1962, *FRUS*, 20: 527–32.

50. Belgium, Great Britain, France, and the United States were the four nations involved in devising the plan for national reconciliation.

51. On 7 August, during a private dinner in Geneva, Tshombe told David Morse, the director general of the International Labor Organization (ILO), that he was "most anxious to talk to Averell Harriman under any circumstances, in any place that could be arranged" (*FRUS*, 20: 534).

Bundy: He'll go anyplace, but the Governor won't.[52] [*Laughter.*]

Harriman: I think if—

President Kennedy: Well, what about somebody seeing Tshombe?

Forrestal: That'd [*unclear*] good idea.

Harriman: Well, seriously, I could go to him and go and see, if there's any reason to be—

President Kennedy: How about let's look into that. I don't think we ought to just—

Forrestal: I agree.

Harriman: Harlan's supposed to meet this morning.[53] He said he'd go tonight—

President Kennedy: I think you're the one to go. I think it—

Harriman: [*Unclear*] and I saw him. He kept his word to me. He came to see me with one of these native grandfathers. He came to the United States in May of 1960.[54] Two black men—

President Kennedy: Tshombe?

Harriman: Tshombe and this other fellow.

Unidentified: Lumumba?[55]

Harriman: No, no. The other fellow next to him who created trouble.[56] Anyway, he told me then. He said, "Now, Lumumba's going to win the election—because we haven't got enough money. We can carry our tribes locally, and Lumumba's going to be Communist and we're going to have difficulty." And so we discussed that.

And I went to see him—called on him at the hotel, as I was asked to, and the press caught me there. I said, "I'm just going to tell him . . . I'm going to do nothing except tell him that you called on me in my house,

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52. Harriman, who felt uncertain about President Kennedy's opinion of his usefulness, often believed he had been "exiled to Geneva" and jokingly used that phrase with colleagues.

53. Harlan Cleveland was assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs. In that capacity, he worked closely with U.N. representatives to end the Congolese civil war.

54. On 3 May 1960, at his New York residence, Harriman hosted 34 corporation executives to garner support for an African trade and investment conference scheduled four months later at New York University. At this time, Tshombe was visiting the United States for the first time. He was in Washington, D.C., where he hoped to win political friends with his pro-Western stance. On 10 May 1960, at 4:30 P.M., in Washington, Harriman met with Tshombe and Chief Albert Kalonji. The meeting was not reported in the press, and no record of their conversation has been found. Kalonji, the principal leader of the Baluba tribe of South Kasai, traveled to the United States with Tshombe in May 1960 and later, in August of that year, followed his example and declared South Kasai an autonomous state.

55. Patrice Lumumba, former prime minister of the Republic of the Congo, had been killed in January 1961, just before Kennedy took office.

56. Reference to Chief Albert Kalonji.

so I returned the courtesy call." Well, we lunched together the next day, and he stuck to that story. There was no publicity about it at all. Now he could have used my having called on him very much to his advantage at that point.

President Kennedy: Why don't we look into this and see whether we can figure out some reason for the Governor to be going to Europe anyway.

Bundy: He can go to Paris and serve the French some news on Laos. Or he can go to . . . There are lots of reasons for Averell to go.

President Kennedy: Well, why don't we wait and see how long Tshombe's going to stay in Europe and whether we ought to respond to—

Harriman: He's only going to stay until Friday, I think, and Congress . . .

Bundy: He would stay over. And then—I mean, if we could get the people who see to this.

Harriman: I have no idea—

Bundy: I think the hazard is that the U.N. crowd and Adoula crowd will then put a plan . . .

President Kennedy: I think that would be—

Harriman: On a fresh note, the news is that this fellow is as a confirmed non-Communist as the Communists are Communists. He was educated by a Baptist fishing house, and he is as intelligent in many ways, converted by a black man.[57] They see things very rigidly. He's concerned over what's going on in Leopoldville.[58] He says he trusts Adoula but not to run. . . . What he wants, of course, is a much looser federation than anything that anyone's had in mind. And I'm not going to agree to that. I do have a feeling that if we paid a bit more attention to him he would be more amenable. I don't know that he'd be completely amenable.

He's a very determined young man. I must say I respect the fellow in spite of the fact he may be on the wrong side. On the basis . . . They beat him up pretty badly. He described that they beat him, and so on, and put him in jail, and he said he was lucky to get out alive. And he didn't want to go through that one again.[59]

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57. Moise Tshombe was actually brought up in the Methodist religion by U.S. missionaries. The eldest son of 11 children, Moise, as a young adult, kept the account books for his father's successful businesses, organized a troop of boy scouts, and directed a Methodist youth association.

58. Capital of the Congolese central government under Cyrille Adoula.

59. On 26 April 1962, Congolese soldiers of the central government detained Tshombe at the Coquilhatville airport and placed him under house arrest until his release on 22 June 1962. He was treated hospitably. Harriman's reference to Tshombe's beating is from an earlier undetermined incident.

President Kennedy: Well, let's check into that, shall we?
Unclear conversation as meeting breaks up. The machine was turned off.

Ultimately President Kennedy did not send a personal emissary to Tshombe in Geneva. Harriman had been an unpopular choice for this mission among the Africanists in the State Department and was discarded in favor of Under Secretary of State George Ball. But Ball never made it to Geneva, either. United Nations officials opposed separate U.S. mediation, fearing this would undermine their own efforts at conciliating the parties in the Congo. And Kennedy himself began to have doubts that this initiative was a risk worth taking. If Tshombe refused to accept the reintegration of Katanga with the rest of the Congo, a presidential mission might only achieve international embarrassment.

Director of Central Intelligence John McCone remained behind in the Congo meeting to speak privately with the President. Kennedy did not tape this meeting, which lasted 20 minutes, and no memorandum of the conversation has been found. Nevertheless, the topic was almost certainly Cuba. The members of the Special Group (Augmented), which included McCone and all of the rest of Kennedy's covert action policy team, had received that morning a key paper on U.S. policy toward the Castro regime: "Consequences of (U.S.) Military Intervention (in Cuba) to include cost (personnel, units, and equipment), effect on worldwide ability to react, possibility of a requirement for sustained occupation, the level of national mobilization required, and Cuban counteraction." The paper was to be the basis for discussion at the next meeting of the Special Group, scheduled for August 10. McCone may well have also raised in this short discussion with the President some new intelligence about developments on the island. A report then circulating in the intelligence community argued that the Soviets were establishing a submarine base in Cuba.[60]

Following the meeting with McCone, the President tidied up some loose ends in the office for three-quarters of an hour, then went to the Mansion for the day.

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60. Indeed, at that time, in addition to their secret plan to place medium range and intermediate range ballistic missiles on Cuba, the Soviets had also decided to build a submarine base in Cuba. Seven ballistic missile submarines and four diesel submarines with nuclear-capable torpedoes had already been designated (see Fursenko and Naftali, *"One Hell of a Gamble,"* pp. 188–89). Khrushchev would get cold feet about the submarine base in September but, of course, would push on with plans to deploy the nuclear missiles. On 10 August, General Edward Lansdale, the chief of operations, Operation MONGOOSE, called the State Department to request a