

The
PRESIDENTIAL
RECORDINGS

JOHN F. KENNEDY

➔➔➔➔ *THE GREAT CRISES, VOLUME ONE* ➔➔➔➔

JULY 30–AUGUST 1962

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community to step up its surveillance of the island. Another U-2 mission was scheduled for August 29.

President Kennedy may well have taped the Net Evaluation and Cuba meetings. Tape number 16 in the Secret Service tape series, which was most likely made on this day, is described by the John F. Kennedy Library as being blank and has not been released.

The series picks up with Tape 17, which contains conversations recorded on August 27.

Monday, August 27, 1962

The President had spent the weekend in Newport, Rhode Island, and reached the White House just after 10:00 A.M. He had no scheduled appointments until noon, when he was to be at Walter Reed Hospital to present the Bronze Star for Meritorious Service to Major Lawrence R. Bailey, who had been kept a prisoner in Laos for over a year.

Sometime during the day the President dictated a memorandum to Eugene Zuckert, the secretary of the Air Force.

Time Unknown

I do not know how Time secured this quotation, but I would be interested to know suggestions for improving the "tone and pace of our program."

Dictated Memo to Eugene Zuckert¹

After his conversation with the President on August 21, 1962, Zuckert replied by memorandum, criticizing Kennedy for focusing in his public statements solely on the peaceful uses of space. This emphasis, he argued, created an international perception that while NASA programs were peaceful, the U.S. military's programs had to be "war-like and aggressive." Zuckert told Kennedy that "this philosophical limitation

1. Dictabelt 35.2, Cassette K, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection.

must be removed if we are to provide the climate for an energetic space program aimed at the national security." He stressed that this change in rhetoric was the "most important single action" that the President could take "in behalf of the military space program." As if this confidential criticism were not enough to irritate the President, *Time* magazine published a short piece about the space program which quoted Zuckert as saying "The tone and pace of our program are not right." The article also stated that the Air Force "had consistently had its proposals turned down by the Department of Defense." The President needed to respond.

President Kennedy:

1. For fiscal '63, that were not approved by us, and secondly what programs they now recommend.
2. The latter matter I understand is under consideration at the moment, coming to me after having been submitted to the Secretary.
2. [sic] I noticed in *Time* magazine of this week, August 31st, has a quotation ascribed to you, taken from a conversation between you and McNamara. "The tone and pace of our program is not right." I do not know how *Time* secured this quotation, but I would be interested to know suggestions for improving the "tone and pace of our program."
3. Paragraph 3. Quite obviously there must not be duplication between the Air Force and NASA.

[to Evelyn Lincoln] No, leave that out. Just send that over to him.
[Unclear.]²

The dictation ends.

After the presidential midday break, Kennedy met with Congressman Sidney R. Yates to make a film for Yates's campaign. Then the President entered a meeting with his budget director, David Bell. His first recorded meeting came right afterward. Although the Middle East did

2. The memorandum as sent reads:

Thank you for your memorandum to me on space. I am not so much interested in quotations from my previous speeches as I am in finding out exactly what programs the

not require as much of this President's time as it had for his predecessor or would for his successor, the region did make demands on the Kennedy White House. With so much now in the air about the possibility of the Soviets' sending some kind of missiles to Cuba, the President found today that he had to consider the consequences of his own decision to sell surface-to-air missiles to an ally.

5:00–6:06 P.M.

It's like a Negro wanting to go back to Mississippi, isn't it?

Meeting on Arab-Israeli Questions³

The Kennedy administration tried to perform a delicate balancing act in the Middle East. The United States had two separate and sometimes competing objectives: to limit Soviet influence in the region and to moderate the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was hard to pursue both objectives simultaneously and particularly hard when dealing with Gamal Abdul Nasser, the ambitious leader of Egypt, and the United Arab Republic, created by a federation of Egypt with Syria in 1958. Egypt received Soviet military aid and was the strongest of the Arab states hostile to Israel.

As of August 1962 Kennedy faced a dilemma. When Kennedy paid a state visit to Israel in May 1961, the Israelis asked him for Hawk anti-air-

Air Force recommended to us for fiscal 1963 which were not approved by the Defense Department or me.

Secondly, I would like to find out if there were any programs which were proposed by the Air Force between our budget and the recent Soviet flight.

Thirdly, I notice that TIME magazine of this week, August 31st, has a quotation ascribed to you taken from a conversation between you and McNamara—"But the tone and pace of our program was not right." I do not know how TIME secured this quotation, but I would be interested in having your suggestions as to how we can improve the tone and pace of our program.

Zuckert later responded with three suggested improvements: (1) the United States needed to expand its ground-based detection and tracking network for outer space, (2) [deleted], and (3) a manned military space station. The Air Force Secretary also denied giving the quotation to the *Time* reporter. These memoranda can be found in "Air Force 7/62–12/62" folder, President's Office Files, Box 69A, John F. Kennedy Library.

3. Including President Kennedy, Walworth Barbour, McGeorge Bundy, Myer Feldman, Dean Rusk, Robert Strong, and Phillips Talbot. Tape 17, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recording Collection.

craft missiles as protection against Soviet MiGs being acquired by Egypt. Kennedy had temporized. He knew now, however, that the Israelis had begun to dicker with British suppliers for Bloodhound missiles which would serve the same purpose. He knew, too, that the Israeli government was eager to have nuclear weapons of its own and had begun to receive assistance of various types from France. If he continued to deny Israel the Hawk missiles, he might not only cause U.S. contractors to lose out to British contractors but also spur the Israelis to speed up their nuclear program.

The one chance for giving the Israelis Hawk missiles without driving the Egyptians further into the Soviet camp seemed to lie in requiring, as a condition, that Israel make concessions regarding Palestinian refugees who were protégés of the Egyptians. The United Nations had a Palestinian Conciliation Committee (PCC) consisting of representatives from France, Turkey, and the United States. Secretary general of the United Nations. Dag Hammarskjöld had appointed Dr. Joseph E. Johnson, head of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace as a special representative of the PCC, and Johnson had quietly worked out a plan for repatriation, compensation, and resettlement of the refugees.⁴

In mid-August, the President had sent his deputy special counsel, Myer Feldman, to test Israel's reaction to the Johnson Plan. On August 24, a day after returning, Feldman met with Kennedy to report Israel's grudging willingness to consider the Johnson Plan provided that Egypt did not press too hard for the return of the refugees to Palestine.⁵

Kennedy now needed to know whether Nasser would accept the Johnson Plan and the sale of the Hawk missiles to Israel. On August 24, 1962, John S. Badeau, U.S. ambassador to the United Arab Republic, and Robert Strong, director of the office of Near Eastern affairs at the Department of State, had met with Nasser at his vacation cottage in Alexandria, Egypt, for a little over an hour.⁶ The meeting in the White House began with Strong's report on Nasser's reactions.

Robert Strong: The mood became a little bit more sober than it had been at the beginning. However, he showed no signs of perturbation in

4. For a text of the Johnson Plan, see *FRUS*, 17: 39–47.

5. Memorandum of Conversation, 24 August 1962, *FRUS*, 18: 73–74.

6. For a summary of conversations with Nasser, see Badeau to Department of State, telegram, 24 August 1962, "U.A.R., Security, 1962" folder, President's Office Files, Box 127, John F. Kennedy Library.

any way but also made no comment on it. In starting the conversation, Ambassador Badeau remarked that it had been our understanding that we could talk over our differences and our problems fully and frankly. And with this, President Nasser agreed—concurred.

On the missiles, he denigrated the military importance of them but said that we could expect to have adverse political effects from it in the Arab world. He predicted that there would be strong political attacks on us by the Arabs and said that that would include not only the United States but the West, in general. He remarked that the Soviets would prove willing to sell rockets to the Arabs as a result of this. He gave us a reassurance on the nonaggressive intentions of the U.A.R. towards Israel and he remarked that the U.A.R. was building a deterrent force only, that the stress was being placed on air. He indicated again that whoever started the war would not know how it was going to come out and that for the U.A.R. there was no military solution to the problem in sight or contemplated. He added that U.A.R. policy was going to continue in this respect, but it did not intend to respond to the charges by the other Arabs that it had made a deal with us over Israel in exchange for aid for this policy. And you—

President Kennedy: Have there been such challenges?

Strong: Yes, the other Arabs have charged frequently and openly that our aid is the price for Nasser's agreeing to keep the lid on Israel.

McGeorge Bundy: Any recent development?

Strong: This has been going on for several months. It became—it heightened after Kaissouni's visit here and after word got around that considerable aid [was] given, promised to the U.A.R.⁷

On the missile part, the implications as Ambassador Badeau saw them, and as we discussed them, were that the U.A.R. may well try to use the sale of the Hawk, or similar missile to Israel, to justify its own acquisition of missiles from the Soviet Union. The fact that the U.A.R. is acquiring those things from the Soviet Union is not publicly known. Presumably, therefore, an effort will be made before there is knowledge.

President Kennedy: Are they acquiring them?

Strong: So far as our intelligence shows, we believe that they are.

7. Abdel Moneim Kaissouni, minister of economy and planning for the United Arab Republic, visited Washington between 19 and 26 April 1962. The purpose of his mission was threefold: to reach an agreement on a multiyear PL 480 sales program, to seek U.S. support for organizing a consortium to meet the United Arab Republic's foreign exchange problems and long-term economic development, and to ask for help on an IMF stabilization program.

President Kennedy: But he . . . They've never admitted this.

Strong: They have not admitted it and the. . . But President Nasser did not touch upon what they had under order. He merely indicated that, in the future, as a result of this sale to the Israelis, that then the U.S.S.R. would be willing to sell—

President Kennedy: But he didn't indicate . . . But we are sure that they have done it already anyway. So he was rather misleading on that point, is that it?

Strong: We believe that they have, in fact, placed orders. They are not in being as yet. They're not installed.

President Kennedy: What kind of missiles, do we know?

Strong: Our intelligence would indicate that they have acquired ground-to-air missiles of the Nike-Zeus type.⁸ They have air-to-air missiles coming within another 21—

Bundy: [*Unclear*] Nike-Zeus [*unclear*]?

Strong: Yes, sir.

Bundy: Yeah.

Strong: The Soviets apparently do not have a smaller round. And that they are obtaining also surface-to-surface missiles for naval vessels. These are the three types known so far.

President Kennedy: Where is . . . Can I see the report on which we base that assumption?

Bundy: Yeah.

President Kennedy: OK.

Dean Rusk: Under the present circumstances, this is partly irrelevant because the Hawk missile is aimed at aircraft, and there's no question that the Egyptians already have the aircraft to which the Hawk missiles are a defense.

President Kennedy: Yes, but because the Israelis already have a comparable aircraft—in comparable quantity . . .

Myer Feldman: No, no they don't.

President Kennedy: I believe I saw those figures, though.

Feldman: No, they claim they don't have bombers. I asked that question.

President Kennedy: I saw that line of battle right before we went . . . You looked at that, and I thought that what was underneath to be quite similar, but however that . . .

Feldman: What did they say?

8. Developed by the U.S. Army in 1956, the Nike-Zeus was a ground-based system of radars and missile interceptors that used command guidance.

Walworth Barbour: Mr. President, they . . . The Israelis do have the fighters, but I think they do claim that they don't have the bombers.

Feldman: They do not have any bombers.

Unidentified: I agree.

President Kennedy: What have the U.A.R. gotten in the way of bombers lately?

Phillips Talbot: They have . . . TU-16, which is a low-flying [Soviet] bomber. They have that already.

President Kennedy: How many of those?

Talbot: Not many, but they have a lot on order. They have, what—14 or somewhere—

Feldman: In the teens.

Talbot:—so far.

Strong: They may have had up to as many as 40 on order. I think for sure 20. The second implication from the discussion of the Hawk missiles was that we believe that the U.A.R.—

Talbot: Excuse me, one minute, I think the relevance of a comment on surface-to-surface missiles, though, that the U.A.R. has [is] that would probably be the next Israeli request because the U.A.R. has surface-to-surface missiles—

President Kennedy: Naval vessels?

Strong: Naval vessels and also, I'm told—

Unidentified: Ground to ground.

Strong: Ground to ground. Yeah. I think we [should] be prepared for that kind of—

President Kennedy: [Have] we made some sort of . . . One of the things we talked about was making the proposition that we wouldn't give them the Hawk missiles if all missiles were removed. Is that proposal . . . ?

Strong: Yes, that's coming in on the arms limitation, which follows immediately here. The second implication we thought was that since Nasser emphasized that their present policy would continue—their policy of restraint, their policy of continuing to cooperate with us to a degree—that there may be some restraint in their reaction to the sale of the Hawk other than the matter of endeavoring to cover their own purchase by pointing to the sale of the Hawk. I think we must expect some U.A.R. reaction, however, to the Hawk. It must . . . I believe it will be within the limits of what we can live with.

On arms limitation, the ambassador followed—

President Kennedy: We indicated to who . . . that we would sell the Hawks. . . . Would we sell the Hawks to him and then we indicated that?

Strong: The discussion of the Hawk included a remark by Nasser that, of course, we would not sell missiles to the Arabs. Ambassador Badeau responded immediately to that, that he had not said that. He wanted to make it very plain that his instruction had not included that he say anything of that nature. Nasser, however, did not pursue the matter. He did not then say, "Well, would you sell them to us?" At no point did he ask—

President Kennedy: Did he ask this question whether we would offer to sell them to the Arabs?

Feldman: He decided more or less that it would be useless to offer them to him because he could get what he wants without them.

Strong: Ambassador Badeau's instructions included the authority to respond that we understood that the U.A.R. preferred to obtain its weapons from the Soviet Union. However, if he wished to make a request to this government for the Hawk missile, we would give it serious consideration. However, when Nasser made the comment that we would not sell it to the Arabs, the ambassador merely responded at that point that he had not so indicated. His presentation did not include that. Nasser did not pursue it. The opening was given to him. He did not pursue it.

On arms limitation, the ambassador made a strong presentation on the desirability of it, pointed out that the decision on the Hawk was one in principle only and that if something in the way of arms limitation could be worked out then this could be allowed to go by the boards. Now Nasser's response was to review the facts as he saw them, that in 1948, the Arabs had not been able to obtain arms from the West for use in their war with Israel, whereas Israel had been able to obtain arms.⁹ Second, in 1956, the French had supplied aircraft, pilots, and maintenance facilities to Israel for use in their Sinai campaign.¹⁰ He also pointed out that two of the three signers of the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 had themselves participated in aggression against Israel.¹¹ Therefore—

Feldman: Against the U.A.R.

Strong: Yes, against the U.A.R. Therefore his conclusion was that he could not count upon the West to administer controls in an impartial

9. The reference is to the first Arab-Israeli War, of 1948–49.

10. The reference is to the secret French arms deliveries to Israel in the months prior to the Suez crisis of October–November 1956, when Great Britain, France, and Israel initiated military attacks against the U.A.R.

11. The Tripartite Declaration of May 1950, signed by Great Britain, France, and the United States, pledged restraint in the delivery of arms and a common effort to prevent a renewal of war between Israel and the Arab states. The British and French participated in the military actions against Egypt during the Suez crisis.

manner. He could not count on the limitations being placed on Israel to stand. Thus, he did not show any interest. He did not pursue the matter then nor did he pursue it later. And the only conclusion that we could draw was that he was entirely negative on the subject. However, the matter was left open for later discussion.

On the Johnson plan, he referred to his previous talks with Johnson, indicating the two principal points: first, that the problem of Palestine could not be settled so long as the Arab citizens in Israel were treated as second-class citizens. Second, that what he understood to have been a proposal by Johnson for a quota of 20,000 refugees to return to Israel was not satisfactory, that it could not be made to work that way. He said that he, in fact, saw no solution in sight for the Palestine problem up to, perhaps, 70 years from the present time. He then referred to the previous interest of the U.A.R. government in resettling perhaps 70,000 refugees from the Gaza Strip in Egyptian territory to the east of [the] Suez Canal in the Sinai Desert.¹²

He said that the refugees had refused to accept such resettlement for fear of losing their rights to repatriation at a later date. However, he did demonstrate considerable troubled mind over the future of the refugees in the Gaza Strip, particularly the younger generation, which is being educated—educated generally along technical lines—pointing out that last year he had to take 4,000 of them, unemployable in the Gaza Strip, into the U.A.R. government in order not to have unemployed, perhaps intellectual types, stirring up trouble. And he considered that it would be necessary for the U.A.R. government to continue to take even larger numbers as their numbers increased of the educated types from the Gaza Strip.

He then went on to the matter of repatriation. He pointed out at least three times that numbers should not be made a matter of discussion. Repatriation, he said, that we should not discuss in terms of 10,000, 20,000, 50,000, or 100,000—we should stay away from numbers entirely. He said that if the Johnson Plan, or any plan, held out the hope to the refugees that there would be continuing repatriation, or return of groups of refugees to Israel over the years—over a longer period—there is hope that the plan would be accepted by the refugees. This was really the most optimistic statement made in the discussion. He made no com-

12. The Gaza Strip is a coastal district along the Mediterranean and adjoining the Sinai Peninsula. Then administered by Egypt, the Gaza Strip held the highest concentration of Palestinian refugees.

mitment of any kind, except that he agreed the plan would be studied very carefully by himself and his government, and that later on, his comments would be made available—that either he would discuss them with the ambassador or ask [a member] of his staff to do so.

Feldman: Well now, did you give him the actual [Johnson] plan or—

Strong: No, that has not been given to him. That will be given if we go forward in New York to his representative there.¹³ The implications as we saw them on the Johnson Plan were first, that there was no hostility in his manner at all—there was no turndown in any way. He gave his most concentrated attention to it. He showed no particular perturbation at the discussion. Unlike his response to the proposed sale of missiles to Israel, he made no dire prediction of an adverse political reaction in the Arab world to this point.

He did not react to the ambassador's repeated insistence that the refugees must be given free choice in their preferences, that there must be no pressure placed upon them. However, it is clear that he understood that particular point.

Rusk: [Unclear] but not necessarily accepting the same thing.

Strong: Not necessarily, no. There was the implication as I mentioned earlier that if we stay away from the numbers game and allow the refugees to do their own conjecturing as to how many will return over the coming years, that he might be willing to let the plan run along. Yeah. This is an optimistic assumption.

In no way did he link the discussion of the Hawk or the sale of the Hawk missile to the Johnson Plan. He did not draw any conclusion that the two would in any way be interlinked. And finally I would refer again to the fact that the President had stated that his policy would remain unchanged regardless of the attacks upon the U.A.R. by the other Arabs on its policy toward Israel and its cooperation with us. That this, it seemed to us was—although he did not mention it the second time in the discussion of the Johnson plan—was an optimistic sign, as well. This, I think, covers [the] highlights and conclusions of the—

Rusk: I wonder if I could ask Mr. Feldman, Mr. President, whether you think it's possible for us to go ahead without getting into numbers.

Feldman: Oh, yes, yes—

Rusk: The numbers are for opposite reasons—

Feldman: Yes, yes.

13. Mahmoud Riad was the permanent representative of the United Arab Republic to the United Nations.

Rusk: —are just as difficult for the Israelis.

Feldman: The only, as I said in my cable, the only time, I mentioned numbers was when they said, “We think they’ll all take repatriation because of the pressures brought on them.”¹⁴ And I said, “This isn’t our own analysis. Our own analysis would indicate they don’t endanger your security.” And they said, “Well, what do you mean by that?”

I said, “Well, from the conversations that Dr. Johnson has had and from indications we’ve had from other people, it’s our best guess that not more than one in ten would take repatriation,” and they accepted that. That’s all.

President Kennedy: What did they figure? It’s like a Negro wanting to go back to Mississippi, isn’t it? Or is that . . . ?

Feldman: It’s different because it’s as if the dominant doctrine were [the] Black Muslim doctrine in a sense . . . [*He laughs.*]

President Kennedy: [*Unclear.*] Well, the whole question really is how much economic value they can get without . . . It’s a quite different thing to say that you want to go back as the only means of getting compensated . . . that you get compensation without going back. Of course, they both have a different view, don’t they? Nasser will think they all want to go back. He doesn’t think the Israelis will take them so he thinks it’s going to collapse. The Israelis are—

Strong: They place a great deal of stress on the arguments that I made about—concerning the disincentives to going back.

President Kennedy: Yeah, but, aren’t they . . . ? Isn’t one group going to be horribly disappointed, either the Israelis—

Strong: Yeah.

President Kennedy: —by a lot more than one out of ten coming back, or the Arabs when only one out of ten want to go back? Isn’t it going to blow up, then, the plan when this fact becomes a pattern?

Strong: I would think that’s a fair assumption.

Bundy: The problem is—and what I’d like Mr. Strong’s reaction on is whether—to what degree Nasser could stand still in the face of propaganda about repatriation from all the other Arabs. Was he saying, “I’m not going to start something but I’m not going to be caught in a non-Arab position here”? Or how do you interpret his position on that?

Strong: Well, this is a little hard to be certain of. All that I think we can conclude is that the—there was no turndown, that Nasser did state

14. Telegram from the embassy in Israel to the Department of State, 21 August 1962, *FRUS*, 18: 69–70.

that he had been under attack from the Arabs and did not intend to change his policy nor to respond to such a—

President Kennedy: That's sort of a self-serving statement. Has he really been under attack?

Strong: Yes, quite serious attack from the Saudis, from the Jordanians, and from the Syrians.

Feldman: Of course, this is about the only counterattack that these other countries have been able to devise yet, that we have seen, in response to the threat of Arab socialism that he has put forward as an ideal for the Arab countries.

Rusk: I think it's entirely possible, though, and consistent with the promises that he made, or may have made, that he would now . . . already be laying on preparations in the Gaza Strip camps to be sure this is knocked out.

Strong: What is done by means of overt propaganda and what is done by means of agents or clandestine operations? They are clearly separable in the Egyptian mind.

President Kennedy: What is the . . . How far . . . Is this stage by stage, and can be dropped conveniently at different stages?

Strong: No.

President Kennedy: Or once we launch this thing are we . . . have we really got hold of it there?

Strong: The Israeli concern is over initiating it and not completing it. They say [if] it's initiated and then they are compelled to withdraw because too many are coming back and then the onus will be on them. And—

President Kennedy: What would you begin to . . . ? There's no way to sort of get this first stage going? Let's say you get 10,000, 9,000 [who] choose not to go back; 1,000 go back. Would that be acceptable to the Arabs?

Strong: Well, I don't . . .

President Kennedy: It would be acceptable to the Israelis. Would it be acceptable to the Arabs?

Strong: I don't know. This remains to be seen. This is an imponderable, Mr. President.

Rusk: That's right. There are several steps here. First, that the French and the Turks may not, for various reasons, be willing to go along on this, with this in the PCC, which means, I think . . . We couldn't bow over both of them if they refused to go along with it.

As soon as we put it to the PCC, we'd like for Johnson to start talking about it with the parties—while the PCC is still thinking about it.

Now that . . . Of course, in about a week or ten days' time, you may have such a reaction from the parties that it just isn't worth trying to go ahead with it.

Feldman: Well, now Mrs. [Golda] Meir made a point of asking that she talk to Johnson about it before any further studies were taken.¹⁵ She said they'll consider it—just as Nasser said, "Yeah, I'll consider it."

But she was very anxious to talk to Johnson about all of the details, and how it was going to work out. She doubted the legality of it at first. She said, "This is an illegal plan since it didn't call for a United Nations resolution. It wasn't this much authority."

Now this I understand was checked—this was U Thant's original thought, also, that it was illegal. Is U Thant convinced that it's a legal plan?

Talbot: His legal adviser is; but he has yet really to be heard from finally—

Rusk: Well, you can see U Thant's problem. If he starts spending U.N. money and puts up some U.N. machinery on a plan which has not been agreed to by the parties, he's exposed—[in] a very badly exposed position, so he's interested in somebody telling him that it's all right—either the parties, or a U.N. resolution. And so this is, I think, unless we can tell him that the parties are going to acquiesce . . . I think we will have a real problem with U Thant.

Talbot: But it may be that we could, if we really play it down the middle—a slightly grudging acquiescence on the part of the parties, and then the confirmation two, three months from now of an ongoing administrative thing that's already started, in a very small way, on the ground in a U.N. resolution.

Feldman: In my own mind, I don't see the need for doing it right now any more than I did before. It seems to me that it needs so much additional groundwork. You have only a tentative agreement from Nasser to consider it and I have more or less the same kind of agreement from Israel to consider it. They're going to consider it for a while, and it may take some time for it to sink in, and for them to finally agree and acquiesce. And during this time, Johnson can perform some very useful work by going back and talking to both the U.A.R. and Israel.

Rusk: Let me ask my colleagues who have been working on this. If we have a meeting of the PCC on Friday, and we put this to the PCC and then Johnson puts it to the parties, what is then the pressure of time on the other end? Suppose it takes two months rather than ten days for

15. Golda Meir was foreign minister of Israel.

them to explore this thoroughly with the parties. What's the problem with time? What deadline are we running into?

Feldman: Our feeling has been that once this process carries the plan to the parties, then they will begin to build up formal positions and [*unclear*] very likely positions and propositions. Johnson feels that we don't want to get into a situation in which their agreement in advance is necessary because that would be very difficult. But if we can move ahead quite steadily, and fairly promptly after putting it to them with their minimum acquiescence—grudging acquiescence, the chances of success are pretty decent.

Talbot: The real deadline is the moment at which this and all the related subjects about the UNRWA and so on, all comes up in the General Assembly, which probably won't be in any case—¹⁶

Feldman: November.

Talbot:—until sometime in November, but the idea is then to have something going on, even if it is in a relatively small way that can be protected against it.

Rusk: Well, there's a very important point, Phil. When Joe Johnson's analysis runs out—in other words, acquiescence is all right for the purpose of getting the views of the refugees, but when the time comes to repatriate, or resettle, a refugee, then somebody's got to do something more than acquiesce; they've got to agree.

Talbot: They're not going to agree to a ten-year plan. [*Mixed voices disagreeing.*]

Bundy: One step at a time, gentlemen. [*Unclear*] one at a time.

Strong: As each step is taken, it becomes a little more difficult for them to be responsible—

Talbot: A point which is quite plain—

Strong:—for calling the whole show off.

Talbot:—be very plain to them.

Feldman: The Israelis made clear they would have to respond to Arab pressures upon the refugees to select repatriation. At this point, you'd get a turndown if the Arabs started propagandizing refugees. We'd immediately get a statement from the Israelis that they weren't going to accept any refugees, in fact.

Rusk: Did you see any difficulty on going ahead and putting this to the PCC—the French and the Turks?

16. The abbreviation UNRWA stands for U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Feldman: Well, I wonder . . . So long as our own prestige isn't committed at that point—behind the plan. I think before we commit ourselves to it, we want to make sure that it at least would be . . . it would work in the—

President Kennedy: Do you know if Joe Johnson will be regarded as an independent agent putting it forward a [*unclear*]? At what point do we become the sponsor of the Johnson Plan?

Bundy: That is what our draft dispatches would, in effect, do.

Rusk: Well, I think we have to assume that the French and the Turks will not themselves come along prior to a commitment of ours and will be in need of persuasion on our part.

Talbot: I don't think we're kidding anybody about our sponsorship. But I think it's . . . as in the Bunker case, if the parties see enough advantages in letting this process proceed, then the cover sticks.¹⁷ If anybody wants to blow it off, the cover can be blown off quite easily.

President Kennedy: He's working for U Thant, is he, Johnson?

Talbot: No, he's working for the PCC. He's hired by the U.N., by the U.N. Secretariat at the request of the three governments—¹⁸

Rusk: U.S., France, and Turkey?

Talbot: U.S., France, and Turkey, with Turkey in the chair. So that he's a staff member, hired by the U.N. and assigned to work under the PCC as the executive really of—

President Kennedy: Well now let's see, Mike [Feldman], at what point do you think that the—

The tape recording then stopped. Later that night, Rusk sent a telegram to the U.S. mission at the United Nations that explained the next step as the submission of the Johnson Plan to the PCC.¹⁹ The Kennedy adminis-

17. During the spring of 1962, U.S. diplomat Ellsworth Bunker mediated between the Dutch and the Indonesians over the sovereignty of West New Guinea. The Kennedy administration had hoped to play the role of honest broker but found itself angering both sides. Earlier in August, after five months of negotiations at Middleburg, Virginia, the parties reached an agreement that authorized the United Nations to provide interim administration over an eight-month period as sovereignty passed from the Dutch to the Indonesians. The agreement also called for the Papuan inhabitants of West New Guinea to decide, in 1969, whether they wished to remain part of Indonesia.

18. The Secretariat is the administrative arm of the United Nations. It is headed by the secretary-general.

19. Telegram from the Department of State to the Mission to the United Nations, 27 August 1962, *FRUS*, 18: 77.

tration anticipated resistance within that body, especially from the French representatives. Reflecting President Charles de Gaulle's general political outlook, France opposed the use of the United Nations as an instrument to resolve international issues. On August 31, Dr. Johnson submitted his refugee plan to the PCC, which deferred approval but authorized the presentation of the plan to Israel and the relevant Arab countries.

After his Middle East team left, Kennedy turned to a jousting match with one of his most prolific liberal critics, the economist Leon Keyserling. Keyserling was outspoken in characterizing the administration as overly cautious and conservative. He had called, for example, for an immediate tax cut. Kennedy respected him nonetheless. On August 6, during the conversation with Wilbur Mills that apparently sealed the fate of the quickie tax cut, the President had joked about the economist, "He can talk like a bastard, can't he? He's the most articulate fellow." This evening, the "fellow" got nearly an hour alone with the President. Unfortunately, Kennedy opted not to tape the session. After the Keyserling seminar, Kennedy went to the pool and then to the Mansion.

Wednesday, August 29, 1962

On this day, Kennedy had to make up his mind whom he would select to succeed the venerable Felix Frankfurter on the Supreme Court. Justice Frankfurter had been on leave from the Supreme Court since suffering a stroke in March. Hopes that Frankfurter could return for the Court's fall term faded over the summer, and on August 28, he submitted a letter of resignation to the President.

The Kennedy White House already had a shortlist of strong candidates. Harvard professor Paul Freund was very well regarded, as was the solicitor general, Archibald Cox. However, Kennedy had promised the job to Arthur Goldberg. He wanted to appoint a Jewish American and thought highly of Goldberg's talents as a lawyer and as secretary of labor.¹

1. On the selection of Goldberg, see Edwin O. Guthman and Jeffrey Shulman, eds., *Robert Kennedy in his Own Words: The Unpublished Recollections of the Kennedy Years* (New York: Bantam, 1988), p. 117; Ken Gormley, *Archibald Cox: Conscience of a Nation* (New York: Perseus Books, 1997), p. 171; David L. Stebenne, *Arthur J. Goldberg: New Deal Liberal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 309–10.