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JOHN F. KENNEDY

THE GREAT CRISES, VOLUME TWO

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Timothy Naftali and Philip Zelikow
Editors, Volume Two

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substantial payment to the coalition government in Vientiane. Moreover, in order to prepare for the expected Communist violations, Kennedy instructed his team to develop the necessary intelligence sources so that the world, especially the International Control Commission responsible for supervising the accord, could be made aware of the violations in good order. Finally, as insurance against any further deterioration of the U.S. position in the region, Kennedy ordered the retention of U.S. troops in neighboring Thailand.[6]

Ironically, the most likely use of U.S. forces in the near future was not in far-off Asia but at home in the Deep South. Two of the men at the Laos meeting had just come from a meeting at the Pentagon War Room with Attorney General Robert Kennedy. The Governor of Mississippi was resisting a court order to allow an African American James Meredith—to register at the main campus of the University of Mississippi system. The President had no meetings scheduled this day to discuss the progress of negotiations between Mississippi governor Ross Barnett and the Attorney General. But he was certainly kept informed of his brother's efforts to avoid a military showdown like that which had happened in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957.

Saturday, September 29, 1962

The President was supposed to be in Newport, Rhode Island, for the weekend. However, he delayed his departure and went into the office at 9:55 A.M. His first visitors were the incoming Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Maxwell Taylor, who stayed about half an hour, and Michael V. Forrestal, son of legendary Secretary of Defense James Forrestal and a key member of the President's National Security Council staff, particularly on issues dealing with Southeast Asia. Twenty minutes after Forrestal's departure, the President welcomed his two closest Kremlin watchers for a seminar on Nikita Khrushchev.

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6. See National Security Action Memorandum No. 189, 28 September 1962, *FRUS*, 24: 904.

11:00 A.M.–12:27 P.M.

Generally speaking, I think, Khrushchev has felt, at least up until recently, that things are going his way and he needn't take any risks, that he is playing for the big stakes and not the small.

Meeting on the Soviet Union[1]

President Kennedy had just received a letter from Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev by way of their top secret back channel. One of the dangers of the President's back-channel diplomacy with the Russians through Robert Kennedy was that a careless remark might lead to serious misunderstanding. It appeared from the letter that the Soviet leadership understood Robert Kennedy to have said in a private meeting with Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin that Washington would accept a long-term moratorium on underground testing following the signing of an atmospheric test ban. It was a Soviet objective to halt testing underground. Given U.S. insistence on a strict verification system to strengthen any comprehensive test ban, it seemed most likely that the superpowers would only manage to agree on a partial test ban. Nevertheless, the Soviets hoped to make a moratorium on underground testing a precondition to any partial test ban. Kennedy knew what his answer would be to this Soviet misunderstanding.

Kennedy made sporadic use of the administration's top Soviet experts.[2] Between them, Llewellyn Thompson and Charles Bohlen had nine years' experience as U.S. ambassador in the Soviet Union and had witnessed Khrushchev's rise to power.[3] The President knew Bohlen much better than Thompson but had not even consulted Bohlen before he sent the Attorney General to see Dobrynin. On this Saturday, he called them in to help shape his response to Khrushchev. The U.S. congressional elections were only five weeks away, after which, Kennedy assumed, the

1. Including President Kennedy, Charles Bohlen, Llewellyn Thompson, and later Jerome Wiesner. President Kennedy also has a telephone conversation with Senator Henry Jackson during the latter part of the meeting. Tape 25, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection.

2. Timothy Naftali Interview with McGeorge Bundy, 16 November 1995.

3. Charles "Chip" E. Bohlen was U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1957. Thompson succeeded him and stayed until his return in August.

Soviets would initiate a new, more dangerous challenge to the status quo in West Berlin—a warning Khrushchev repeated in his letter.

Later the President's science adviser, Jerome Wiesner, would join the conversation. Wiesner would not be told that Khrushchev had written directly to the President. Instead, in another demonstration of how information could be compartmentalized even among the President's closest advisers, President Kennedy would ask Wiesner to suggest responses to certain Soviet attacks on the U.S. negotiating position at the test ban talks, never letting on where these allegations had come from.

Kennedy started taping as Bohlen was reminiscing about his experiences with Khrushchev. Thompson can be heard deferring somewhat to Bohlen, a better linguist and more-experienced, though not necessarily better, Kremlinologist.

Charles Bohlen: [*tape fades in*] . . . other than that [*unclear*] he continues—his wife was the one that's—but she's crippled.

Llewellyn Thompson: Yeah.

Bohlen: And after the breakup of the Summit in Paris [in 1960], she rushed down to the airport when Khrushchev was leaving and presented him with a big bunch of roses.

Thompson: Yeah, that's right.

President Kennedy: But [*unclear*] . . . that is assuming he wants to talk to [*unclear*] but at least I would [*unclear*] that part of it. [*Unclear.*]

Thompson: And this letter, Chip says, is—

Bohlen: This letter is clearly an appeal [*unclear*] to a meeting, perhaps. This letter . . . I don't know if this . . . [*unclear*] is worse.

President Kennedy: Oh, it's not worse. It's just the transparency of it is less [*unclear*] are the Russians. Well, I'd like to have him be a little less . . . [*reading aloud from the most recent letter from Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev*] "I would like to note with satisfaction that you now seem to agree in principle that along with the conclusion of the treaty with . . . a moratorium."[4]

Bohlen: We had never agreed to that, at all.

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4. The exact line runs: "I would like to note with satisfaction that now you seem to agree in principle that along with the conclusion of a treaty on the ban of nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water a moratorium with regard to underground explosions be accepted" (Nikita S. Khrushchev to John F. Kennedy, 28 September 1962, *FRUS*, 6: 152–61).

President Kennedy: That's right. [*continuing to read*] "If this is so, then it opens certain prospects."

Bohlen: Do you think that's anything that Bobby might have told him?

President Kennedy: No, but Bobby would. . . . Well, I think Bobby did—[5]

Bohlen: Did say something.

President Kennedy: Bobby did say maybe for a period of six months—

Bohlen: Yeah.

President Kennedy: —but not an indefinite one. It seemed to me there was nothing wrong with . . . just not quite in that form. In a legal thing . . . that there should be no unlimited moratorium. . . . Yeah, I [*unclear*] to say something. But we never put the question that way. We are not proposing [*unclear*] unlimited, we [*unclear*] just for a certain period of time. Of course I always knew they would do that the first time it's needed for . . . But then it seems to me we could follow that up quickly.

Bohlen: Yes, if it . . . what he's saying is that after the period of moratorium, he proposes five years, which is nonsense, of course, but . . . He says that if at the end of that time you haven't reached an agreement on a treaty for [the] underground thing, then you agree to reexamine the whole thing. In other words, any treaty that you might sign for the atmosphere or something like that, would be conditional.

President Kennedy: Well, I think Bobby used the six-months phrase; obviously five years . . .

What is your judgment as to why they won't take an atmospheric test?[6] Because they can't underground . . . they can't test underground as well as we can? Is that the reason?

Bohlen: This might be the reason; but I also think there probably is some element of principle in their, in the . . . Tommy, would you? . . . They may fear that we've got some tricks or scientific gimmick that's going to increase our . . . He says it, in essence, he's not going to make a [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: [*reading*] "If, however, even during that term . . . then the whole question of a ban will have to be reconsidered anew. And if . . . insists . . . I want to say this already now and in plain terms—the Soviet Union will consider itself free from . . . "

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5. Robert Kennedy met with Anatoly Dobrynin on 18 September 1962.
6. Atmospheric test ban.

Thompson: I think they'd agree to a three-year moratorium; but not much . . . and I doubt if you could get anything less than a two and a half period. [*Unclear*] The others that could support five, that's a bargaining—

President Kennedy: But I don't see much advantage to us. We propose six months; they propose five years. I don't see much advantage to us in that proposition. It would be an unpoliced moratorium for three years.

Thompson: Well, if this included those automatic stations—?

Bohlen: Well, he mentioned these automatic stations in here. Tommy, is this the first time he has ever come forward with—?

Thompson: As far as I'm—

Bohlen: Yeah. And I don't know whether—

President Kennedy: He says it's national. Isn't this in line with his traditional position? That if he—

Thompson: Well, if you had a radio readout out on those stations, that you are constantly monitoring—if they ceased to work, then you'd obviously have—the whole thing would be up in the air. I don't know how effective they'd be; but I—

President Kennedy: [*Unclear*] we look at this part of it? I was wondering what [*unclear*] at Pugwash—

Thompson: Seems to me this is up to you. But there would be added assurance because we would get reports from other stations that know if they weren't—if this thing wasn't working or wasn't reporting.

Bohlen: Yeah, but the difference between this and the on-site inspection is that I gather that there is absolutely no way no matter what readings you get where you can tell the difference between certain kinds of natural explosion and a nuclear one. And then the idea was that when you got readings of this kind, you would go to the spot to measure. [*Pause.*]

Well, Mr. President, I think this letter gives you a vehicle to make a response, speaking now of the Berlin section of it, which can I say, I feel quite strongly is necessary in some form or other. Now, there are three or four different ways that you can get this over that the regularity with which he [Khrushchev] has been telling everybody that the United States is too liberal, et cetera, et cetera, to fight.[7] And I must say the general feeling, I think is that, among the demonologists, is chances are he believes this. And now the question is how can you convey—

President Kennedy: Why would he say it? What is the argument for his saying it?

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7. On Khrushchev's statement, see the editors' introduction, 10 September 1962.

Bohlen: Well, he believes—if you take it from his own military point of view—that the local military situation [that] makes the correlation of forces is all in their favor and he probably thinks that in view of public opinion and [*unclear*] of the horrors of a nuclear war that the United States would not . . . would back away from that point. Therefore he's got a situation with all the advantage on his side where he can proceed. And there'll be a great whooping and yelling around but that nothing will happen. But the thing he's interested in, which is the only thing you worry about, is a nuclear war. And this is cockeyed, I think. Although, I don't know, if you read some of Joe's articles, [*unclear*] old Alsop's articles about de Gaulle's view and all this other stuff.

President Kennedy: But de Gaulle . . . that's why I think de Gaulle . . . I think de Gaulle would like to start to get out of Berlin and [*unclear*] blame the United States. Because, if they could only get Berlin eliminated, then they could really have a . . . Europe which would be in pretty good shape.

Bohlen: Well, I'm not so sure. But I think that de Gaulle's basic feeling, and I've talked to Joe about this, and I've told him [that] whoever his informant was, who I believe was [French foreign minister] Couve de Murville.

President Kennedy: [*Unclear question.*] Well, he said it was [French diplomat Jean] Laloy; he talked to Laloy.

Bohlen: Laloy?

President Kennedy: Yeah. Apparently de Gaulle asked about contingency planning. Then de Gaulle said, "Why, my dear fellow, don't worry—the Americans aren't going to fight anyway. [*Unclear.*] Don't worry about it."

Bohlen: This is de Gaulle's, sort of, method of presentation. But I think de Gaulle's thought runs differently. I don't believe that he thinks there's going to be a real crisis over Berlin, or what Joe would call a crunch, in other words.

President Kennedy: Hopefully.

Bohlen: And he thinks that the thing is going to—the French have always thought that Berlin was going to die on the vine. Couve de Murville told me that last June.

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Bohlen: He just said . . .

President Kennedy: They don't really care, do they?

Bohlen: "[*Unclear*] just stay away" and that they don't give a damn. No. Because if they don't . . . they want Germany divided which is essentially their whole policy.

And I think that de Gaulle's chief mistake about the Russian thing is

that he attributes the present structure of Russian power to be identical with the time of Stalin. And he never can forget that he stood up to Stalin and said, "Nuts to you," and Stalin came around. And he doesn't realize that this guy, and I think Tommy would—I'd like to know what Tommy thinks about this—operates in a very different power circumstance from Stalin.[8] Stalin could change anything like that himself, whereas this guy has pressures and tendencies that he has to take cognizance of, if he . . . and this limits his personal sphere of maneuver.

But the question is, Mr. President, and this obviously is a subject we're not supposed to ask you. [*He laughs.*] But . . . this is your business and not ours. That it seems to me very important to halt this sort of progress that the Russians are doing in Berlin, building up this enormous record of saying that the West is not going to do it. You and Macmillan and de Gaulle really agree with him that Adenauer gets the big picture. And it's very difficult to know why he's doing it, unless it's in preparation for another dialogue which he talks about—

Thompson: That's what I think is the—

Bohlen: But I think this is the likelihood; but on the other hand—

Thompson: The other thing it might be is that—

Bohlen: —what in God's name—?

Thompson: The other reason why he might make these remarks is that he wants to, he wants to—

Bohlen: To show those to some of the others.

Thompson: Yeah, to provoke us into a strong reply, which he can use to ease [*unclear*] policy. In either case it would argue for going back at him.

President Kennedy: I mean for us to, for us to—do you want some orange juice?

Thompson: No, thanks.

President Kennedy: For us to . . . for him to tell Americans and other people that the Americans aren't going to fight . . . that doesn't seem to me to . . . what would be the log[ic] . . . as you say unless he wants us to, [*unclear*] first [*unclear*] to fight but I don't ever—if that's his opinion you don't really announce it, because that's really rubbing our face in it. Do you think therefore—it could be—He doesn't have to have a reason for everything. If he's telling what he actually thinks—

Thompson: Yeah.

Bohlen: Agreed.

Thompson: He's capable of doing it.

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8. Referring to Khrushchev.

Bohlen: The trouble is, that this circulates, and it's already circulating around Western Europe and you're getting a sense of panic [*unclear*] European countries. De Gaulle doesn't necessarily help it at all, you know.

President Kennedy: [*Unclear.*] Are you saying this keeps downgrading our changes?

Bohlen: Yeah. Definitely.

Thompson: I don't know, I think—

Bohlen: There are three or four different ways in which this particular aspect of the problem can be [*unclear*]. One, by you being direct. I think you've seen that draft of the—

President Kennedy: Yeah, I saw yours and then Bundy did another one.

Bohlen: Yeah.

President Kennedy: Bundy's was satisfactory . . . [*unclear*] be yours or [*unclear*].

Bohlen: [*speaks over the President*] Well, it seems to me that this, in a sense . . . part of this could be tacked on, if you're proposing to answer this letter of his. Some of this stuff in this draft could be a [*unclear*].

That would be one way of doing it, the other way would be by a public statement, which I think everybody believes would not be either convincing or very desirable at this time.

The third way would be to use a diplomatic channel, possibly you to [Anatoly] Dobrynin or Foy [Kohler] right to Khrushchev.[9] My feeling about this is negotiating a substance as serious as this, I really think that the direct communication thing would carry more conviction, if you did it to Dobrynin, you had no certainty how he would—

President Kennedy: Yeah. I don't see these . . . anybody . . . these fellows having any more of these conversations for a while. I'll try to—

Bohlen: And I think that also if you sent your ambassador in Moscow to talk to Khrushchev along these lines, we're still working on the same thing.

President Kennedy: Maybe we should get just a . . . get awfully belligerent to Kohler.

Bohlen: And the third way, Mr. President, is one that I must say that I've always been inclining to [*unclear*] is in the field of action. These fellows have been buzzing our planes in the corridors—running these MiGs within 2[00] or 300 yards of a passenger-loaded Pan Am plane, which just contains all the ingredients of an accident. Because these things go so fast, you know, 2[00] or 300 yards is just nothing. And that if you would

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9. Anatoly Dobrynin was the Soviet ambassador to the United States.

consider with your allies the possibility of the next time they do this, of putting in fighter escorts for these planes and running them until they seem to be calling it off and then call it off and then be prepared to start again. I have a feeling that the Russians in situations of this kind pay much more attention to action than they do to words.

[*to Thompson*] So what would you think of that?

Thompson: Yeah. As I was saying earlier, I think this may . . . buzzing may be related to their annoyance at our buzzing their ships.[10] It's the prestige factor [*unclear*].

Bohlen: But you have a decided difference in there, is that the buzzing of the planes in the corridor could at any point produce a terrible accident, whereas the buzzing of a ship has got very little chances to bring about that.

President Kennedy: We . . . How much [of the] buzzing has there been? Remember last year there was . . . [in the] spring there was a big argument with [Lucius] Clay wanting us to put in fighters and [General Lauris] Norstad against it. And I thought Norstad's judgment was right. Because fighting . . . well, it just struck me . . I would think you ought to wait on fighters. That is one of the things we can do without [*unclear*] shooting . . . put fighters in there. And I . . . It seems to me we ought to wait until this thing gets a little higher before we do that?

Bohlen: Well—

President Kennedy: So they're doing [*unclear*] we did say we'd knock it down, then . . . at least then they've taken an action which is . . .

Bohlen: Yeah. But then you'll have an accident which will create an enormous amount of excitement in this country and you will have the loss of life with the passengers on the plane. And I think this will force your hand into action which will be a little beyond what should be proposed to do now.

Now the other possibility of action, which perhaps might be put in this letter as a, sort of, a warning, but one which, I think, many of us in the Department of State have been thinking of for a long time. And that is the question of making West Berlin a *Land* of the Federal Republic. This would mean complete recognition that you were through with East Berlin. Well, we are de facto. But you will have a hell of a time, I think, with the French in getting any agreement and the British to include that, and it

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10. In his 28 September letter, Khrushchev makes direct reference to a conversation he had with Llewellyn Thompson where he had complained to the U.S. ambassador about the buzzing of Soviet ships on the high seas.

would require that agreement. I don't know what the West German attitude would be.

Thompson: They'd be for it.

Bohlen: They'd be for it, I think. And the West Berliners would surely be for it. It would have the advantage of—you'd have to have a whole series of new agreements. That is to say, you'd have the West German government requesting the presence of the Western troops with the agreement of the Federal Republic. The only problem would be how this would affect your right of access through their territory.

I just have a very strong feeling that the trend is being manipulated by Khrushchev very much to our detriment.

Thompson: You'd certainly have to study that one carefully because on your access . . . one of our main points now is [that] we hold the Soviets responsible. I mean . . . they haven't recorded that . . . but once you make . . . do it just by agreement, the Soviets say, "Well, we have nothing to do with this agreement; why talk to us?" You get a—

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Bohlen: Well, you might even do it in a too [*unclear*] sort of way but you would leave your occupation rights there completely, but that you'd also just change the status of the . . . West Berlin as a *Land* of the Republic.

Thompson: Going back to the buzzing, it seems the one thing you could do is to put in some rather vague language in the reply, just raising this problem instead of [*unclear*] our planes. [*Unclear*] could be coming at it rather than just doing it.

Bohlen: A great deal of the language he uses on Cuba could be [*unclear*] directly to Berlin because he's talking about disregarding the normal conventions, [*unclear*]—assigning to ourselves the right to this, that, and the other, and this is exactly what he's trying to do in Berlin.

President Kennedy: [*reading aloud from Khrushchev's letter*] "[*Unclear*] this occupation is here to stay . . . [*unclear*] . . . put it to the U.N."

Did you get a report on Grewe's last conversation with me before he left,[11] about how he thinks the Hallstein Doctrine is dated and that they're going to [*unclear*]?[12]

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11. Wilheim Grewe was West German ambassador to the United States until September 1962. His resignation came about because the Kennedy administration lost confidence in his effectiveness as a liaison after Rusk accused him of leaking to the press in April 1962 a Department of State draft of an allied agreement on Berlin.

12. This doctrine, named for Adenauer's foreign policy adviser, Walter Hallstein, held that Bonn would refuse to maintain diplomatic relations with all countries, excluding the Soviet Union, that recognized the German Democratic Republic.

Bohlen: We picked up some [*unclear*] when we were in Bonn this June. . . . But, it hasn't got . . . a lot of the private interests in Germany are very keen to have the Hallstein Doctrine eliminated and some of the people in the Foreign Office. But I think old Adenauer is clearly hooked on it. He did something recently that . . . well, the reaffirmation of the Hallstein Doctrine.

President Kennedy turns to the section in Khrushchev's letter about U.S. policy toward Cuba.

President Kennedy: [*reading aloud*] "We haven't done anything to give you a pretext for that."[*Kennedy jumps ahead in the text.*] "I must tell you straightforward [ly] . . . that your statement with threats against Cuba is just an inconceivable step." Straightforward? He doesn't say whether existing . . .

[*Kennedy resumes reading aloud*] "Your request for an authority . . . by the way is a step . . . apt to get red hot . . . pour oil in the flame . . . to extinguish that red-hot glow."[13] His metaphors are a little mixed in that. Why would he blame someone who wants to pour oil on the flames to extinguish that red-hot glow? [*Laughter.*]

Thompson: [*Unclear.*]

Bohlen: Who writes these damn things for him?

Thompson: Does Foy know about this thing?[14]

Bohlen: I don't think so. This only came in yesterday, didn't it?

Thompson: I assume Foy will be seeing . . . calling on Khrushchev [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: [*reading from Khrushchev's letter, sometimes mumbling*] "to qualify . . . to remind you of the norms . . . naturally . . . would not say anything on West Berlin. . . . For example, what is going on, for example, in the U.S. [Congress]?"[15] [*The President is quite amused.*] People in the Congress?

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13. Kennedy is paraphrasing as he reads. The sentence goes: "Under present circumstances, when there exist thermonuclear weapons, your request to the Congress for an authority to call up 150,000 reservists is not only a step making the atmosphere red-hot, it is already a dangerous sign that you want to pour oil in the flame, to extinguish that red-hot glow by mobilizing new military contingents."

14. Foy Kohler was the newly appointed U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union.

15. *FRUS*, 6: 159. The full quote reads:

> That is what made us to come out with the TASS statement and later at the session of the UN General Assembly to qualify your act, to remind of the norms of international law and to say about West Berlin.
>
> If there were no statement by you on Cuba, we, naturally, as Ambassador

Bohlen: These are all such—

President Kennedy: What?

Bohlen: —stilted translations from the Russian. If you can see what the Russians said, this [*unclear*]—

President Kennedy: [*reading aloud*] "How can one, for example, fail to notice the decision of the House [of Representatives] to stop giving U.S. aid to anybody that trades with Cuba. . . . Isn't that an act of impermissible arbitrariness against freedom of, freedom of [movement]?"

They have the resolution. [*He continues reading.*] "Very serious consequences may have the resolution adopted by the U.S. Senate . . . ready to assume responsibility for unleashing [thermo]nuclear war."

What do you think is the reason that they are going ahead with Cuba in this massive way? They must know that it . . . I thought one reason why they [*unclear*] Berlin because we'd take a reprisal against Cuba . . . they want to make it as difficult as possible. What other reason can there be? Because they began this buildup in June. In late June there was no indication of an invasion by the United States at this time, so [*unclear*].

Thompson: Well, I would suspect that Castro is nervous about what might be going on and the pressure has been pretty—

President Kennedy: Sorry?

Thompson: —within the bloc, the Communist bloc, this is a good step for him; he's helping this country defend itself against U.S. imperialism and . . .

Bohlen: This is the satellite bond that you get. The Poles and stuff like that . . .

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Bohlen: They think that Castro was planning it. They sent a guy over there, Che Guevara, you know, to try and persuade the Russians to let them join the Warsaw Pact, to give them formal coverage and Soviet protection.[16] And the Russians refused to do this. And then this is what

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Thompson and Mr. Udall were told, would not say anything on West Berlin. Your statement forced us to do so.

We regret that this dangerous line is being continued in the United States now. What is going on, for example, in the U.S. Congress?

16. One of Fidel Castro's closest associates, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, visited moscow in August to discuss the conclusion of a Soviet-Cuban defense agreement. Khrushchev, however, refused to sign the proposed agreement.

they did. And also, as Tommy mentioned, he said from the point of view of the Communist world, it is very important for him to be out in front, showing that he is militant, pushing for the great cause.

President Kennedy: Why do you think they refused to put him in the Warsaw Pact?

Bohlen: Oh, because this is too much for the Russians because then they're not sure what the United States might do—

President Kennedy: Right.

Bohlen: —and they don't want to be committed to go to war over Cuba, [*Kennedy mumbles assent*] if there is an American attack. Oh, I think this has been very clear all the way going back to '60 when he first began to rattle the rockets about Cuba, then he made a statement before anyone would call him on that thing, he made a statement saying, "It's just symbolic." And they haven't gone beyond that and this latest one, which he refers to here; the September 11th one seems to me to have been primarily issued in order to tack on the rider about not doing anything about Berlin.

Thompson: I think, in general, he's, he has very much in mind that meeting you and that, I think, if he can settle Berlin, then—

Bohlen: Well this is what bothers me . . . the hell out of me. He's coming over here in the end of November and this letter is really pitched to the . . . twice he refers to the resumption of the dialogue . . . and then in the last paragraph he talks about the: "Of great importance for finding the ways to solve both this problem . . . are personal contacts of statesmen on the highest level." Well that means between you and him. But, the question is: What in God's name could be the best solution to the Berlin thing if you did meet?

President Kennedy: [*Unclear*] I don't—unless he wants to demonstrate that he's doing every possible—

Bohlen: Well, I mean, this still leaves the situation as it was. I think, from your point of view, [*unclear*] don't see that [there's] anything very much to negotiate about as long as he is insisting on the removal of certain troops.

Thompson: Well, I think, Chip [Bohlen], that if he, I think he's, first of all, that he is in a position where he has . . . he feels he has got to go ahead and sign this treaty.

Bohlen: Yes, I think everybody—

Thompson: And I don't think he wants to play Russian roulette with that and just toss a coin and see whether there's war or not. If he wants to . . . he could get us to accept the East German . . . Solution C approach, where we would accept East Germans deployed at the check-

point.[17] Each of us maintain a [*unclear*] position [*unclear*] would be acceptable [*unclear*] his treaty.

President Kennedy: What's that again? That sounded [*unclear*].

Thompson: Well, each of us would say, we would say, we would still hold the Russians responsible but in a practical way we will let the . . . accept [the] East Germans on the checkpoints as long as they don't interfere with our access. And they would make the statement that they were treated as was a sovereign country. But, in fact, they are not.

Then he could go ahead and sign his treaty, and you wouldn't be then gambling on whether there's war or not. And, I think, that's about the most that you could hope to come out with. He would hope for more, and try for more, but in the end might settle for something like that. As long as he can sign his treaty and then maintain the position that East Germany is sovereign. We say it's not. They, in the meantime, practically control the access but don't interfere.

Bohlen: Wouldn't that be buying an awful lot of future trouble with that sort of a solution because of the East Germans' not being bound by any agreement, anything like that; wouldn't they go in for the harassment that the Russians are now, sort of, semidoing in a much more intensive [*unclear*]?

Thompson: [*Unclear*] would be very dangerous, I think. But if the Russians say then they're out of it except that they are allies of East Germany. The East Germans start doing something and we take some forceful action. . . . Then, we've always got the sanctions against them, of cutting off trade and all that sort of thing. So for the immediate period, a few years, I should think that it probably would buckle them in pretty quietly.

In the meantime they would be pressuring others to recognize East Germany and gradually, I think, time would solve the thing, which in a way, it might. It might not be too bad. Certainly, it's going to go along the way it is for a long time. There could be no solution—

President Kennedy: Could he claim that he had solved this problem by this means?

Thompson: I think so. I think he's off the hook then. And once he's signed this treaty, that's the main thing.

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17. *Solution C* was a term thrown around during the Kennedy administration as it tried to devise a negotiating position on the German and Berlin problems. Solution C was to seek negotiations aimed toward an informal, interim agreement to preserve the status quo in Berlin despite a G.D.R.-U.S.S.R. peace treaty. It appeared to offer the most likely chance of success with the least fuss. It was a view favored by State's old Berlin hands.

President Kennedy: Why don't you think he signed it before? On that basis he could have signed at any time in the last two years. Why don't you think he signed it?

Thompson: Well, we've never let him know that we'd accept [the] East Germans on the checkpoints. That's the thing that would make the issue.

Bohlen: Well, then that international authority just is tantamount to saying that it would be international, whether the East Germans would be in it. We've never presented them a formal draft of that thing. I think that they could . . .

I think it's a . . . He's coming over here . . . [*Someone sighs.*]

President Kennedy: He said, didn't he? I mean, he just writes that he's coming, doesn't he? [*Kennedy reads*] "After the election, especially in the second half of November, it would be necessary . . . to continue the dialogue."

Bohlen: Yeah. He says that twice in there; there's another. [*Unclear interjection by Kennedy.*] That and coupled with the last point makes it perfectly clear that his idea of a dialogue is between you and him.

President Kennedy: Of course that's not very advantageous to us, is it? Just to have he [and I] . . . And then no matter what happens it looks like . . . we become even more obvious as the chief defender of Berlin. Which is just what de Gaulle wants to do to us. Because he doesn't want to fight a war; he wants to make it all [*unclear*].

Bohlen: A sellout.

Thompson: Yes.

Bohlen: And I don't know what the British attitude would be on this sort of thing. I think [that] this will cause a great deal of ruckus and furor.

President Kennedy: What . . . de Gaulle and [*unclear*]?

Bohlen: A meeting between you and Khrushchev. I mean, I think, the British and the Germans . . .

President Kennedy: Why would the British care? They've mucked it up—[*unclear*].

Bohlen: Well, the British wouldn't mind, I mean if they thought that . . . they could be worried that the thing would come to a deadlock and a big impasse and that you would be nearer the danger of war than you were before. And the West Germans, I think, they'd probably follow more or less the line of the French and be ready to fill the air with denunciations of duty.

President Kennedy: And the weakness of the . . .

Bohlen: Of course this question as to why the Russians are pushing this thing so hard is one that I have [*unclear*] almost four years and I don't think that anybody [is] clear why. . . . And de Gaulle may not care

if the United States takes the blame for any sort of a sellout, or whatever you want to call it, in Berlin.

But on the other hand most of the fellows in the French Foreign Office particularly feel that Khrushchev is doing this because of the whole effect on West Germany and on the alliance. In other words, he is seeking larger aims than just Berlin.

I must say, I don't think that. I think that Berlin is a . . . these are the kind of repercussions and results [on] which he would naturally capitalize if they happened. But I don't think he's playing these moves on Berlin with this in view. I don't know what you feel about the alliance.

Thompson: Well, I think he's hooked personally on . . . He's always boasted that this was his solution that he dreamed this whole thing up.

Bohlen: Yeah.

Thompson: He got way out and he's gotten further out since.

Bohlen: Well, what I mean is that [*unclear*] Berlin as a thing in itself. That if he settled this, would he then quiet down? And consider that Europe is all tidied up? Or would it be just a move to disrupt the Alliance, to stop progress—?

Thompson: I think it's mainly the former. I think he—

Bohlen: I think so, too, myself; but on the other hand you can't separate the fact that these might be the consequences which he would then immediately try and exploit.

Thompson: He can exploit any of the—

Bohlen: Well, the thing that mystifies me about this thing is that he himself nearly has a success on his terms which would be an enormous humiliation and defeat for us, which I don't think is going to happen, but assuming that it does, still if he knows anything about history, this is the way of bringing war very much sooner—

[*Someone agrees indistinctly.*]

Bohlen: —because you don't inflict what would be a very humiliating defeat upon a power like the United States when you don't affect his power 1 inch by . . . .Berlin wouldn't affect our power at all.

President Kennedy: Right.

Bohlen: And almost all throughout history a Munich has sort of been followed by—

President Kennedy: Yeah

Bohlen: —the war.

President Kennedy: Right.

Bohlen: So, I can't see that if he is thinking straight, and in historical terms, that he could have very much happiness out of either result of this thing.

President Kennedy: Well, why would they build up Cuba? Why would . . . I mean he must . . . if he calculates correctly, he must realize that what's happened in Cuba this summer makes it much more difficult for us to accept any, to engage ourselves now to have a deal over Berlin. I mean, that's just not been—

Bohlen: [*Unclear.*] This is one thing that I'm convinced of, is that the Russian mind does not have the foggiest comprehension of the American political process. They really believe that you are sort of the dictator of the United States and can do any damn thing you want, and that . . . This just comes through the doctrine. You see, they consider that the capitalist system, that democracy in a capitalist system is just a part of flimflam and [is] a disguise for the control by Wall Street and all this other . . . Look at the way he keeps talking about Dean Rusk being a tool of the Rockefellers because he was head of the thing.[18] I think he genuinely believes in it. So that all this stuff that you—

Thompson: The Pentagon and Wall Street. [*Unclear.*]

Bohlen: Yeah. It's a very complicated sort of process. But I think the conclusion that they reach is that public opinion doesn't—

President Kennedy: Really count.

Bohlen: —really have any real effect and [*unclear*] enormous pressure this can put on a presidency.

President Kennedy: And I suppose we don't . . . we over . . . we underestimate the pressures that go on him, not from public opinion but from other [*unclear*].

Bohlen: Well, I think you can describe public opinion in the Soviet Union the same way that a good general pays great attention to the morale of his troops. In other words, he doesn't let troop morale dictate his course of action, because then he wouldn't be worth a damn as a general. He is very conscious of the fact that they rely on the morale. I mean this just . . . but this doesn't mean any—

President Kennedy: But you don't think that he would calculate what they're doing in Cuba as a broad sort of traditional position and so on would [*unclear*] really intensify the feeling here greatly, and make it much more difficult to do anything about Berlin?

Bohlen: No, sir, I think this is probably something that's just a complete blank page in his mind. I think that—what Tommy said—I think he did Berlin because here it was something they had engaged in about this regime, and then the Cubans got very scared and panicky for fear

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18. Dean Rusk was president of the Rockefeller Foundation.

there was going to be another, sort of, Bay of Pigs, something like this. Which they would probably have lost.

President Kennedy: [*Comments indistinctly.*]

Bohlen: And went to the Russians and said, "My goodness, my goodness, you've got to help us." Their first idea was to put them in a treaty, and then the Russians put these arms in there; and then also the effect of his standing in the Communist world because the Chinese have been constantly attacking Khrushchev from the left, which is the first time in Bolshevik history that this has ever happened. Heretofore they have always been the extreme left—denouncing yellow Soviet so-and-so as the opportunist and everything like it. The Chinese now come and say, "You are scared of the thing." Now there is one factor that underlies [*unclear*] that I don't know anything about. Tommy may have some ideas about it.

Thompson: History [*unclear*] points their way [*unclear*] move is to keep the Chinese from doing it—

Bohlen: This is what I mean.

Thompson: —[taking] the Chinese with it.

Bohlen: Well, the Chinese are not in much shape to give very much help.

Thompson: [*Unclear*] I think it doesn't.

Bohlen: Yeah, I think it is more in the psychological field, of his leadership in there, [*Thompson murmurs assent*] the other factor may be in there. But the one question that perhaps may underlie this is that we know now that all this flap about the missile gap is just for the birds because they didn't put their main effort on ICBMs and our estimate now of the correlation of military forces is heavily in our favor [*someone mumbles assent*] and not in their[s]. Now, if you go back to the history of the Sino-Soviet dispute, you will see the Chinese undoubtedly believe, completely literally, the Soviet claims which they were making in '57 and '58 of having . . . the balance having shifted in their . . . point. And I just wonder whether or not in the Soviet hierarchy how much real understanding there is of the actual correlation of military force or whether they are not operating on their previous, sort of, at least, announced estimate that they had sort of passed us. And their policy would be much more intelligible if they believed that; because if they believed that they had the nuclear, sort of, equality, or even superiority, then their lines of action would be quite continuous, I mean, quite consistent. But it is not consistent if it's viewed in the light of what our estimate of the two forces are.

President Kennedy: We are taking a look at a contingency plan for

sort of building up a staging area in Florida for . . . in case we ever have to go into Cuba. This would be impossible, I suppose, to keep this completely—we'll look at this next week—to keep it completely submerged. But obviously there is no sense in having about a four months' gap between the time we've decided to do something about Cuba and have to wait. So, we want to begin to build up down there. Now, I suppose that will surface. . . . What effect does that have?

Bohlen: Well, they'll pick it up with all of this stuff, [*unclear*] calling up this . . . Getting the authorization to call up 150,000 reservists and state this in Congress. They'll make a big thing out of it. And I think this inevitably will . . .

President Kennedy: Do you see any reason not to do it?

Bohlen: I don't. Although the question is—I'll tell you one thing, Mr. President, that I do think is that if you ever come to do any action against Cuba, it would almost have to be on the basis of a declaration of war. I mean serious action, that is—

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Bohlen: —U.S. forces and all. Because this will give you the legal basis for a blockade and everything of this kind. If you try a blockade without a declaration of war, then I think you get into a mess of complications with your friends and allies, as well as with the Russians. Now, if the Cubans would make some move that would establish a reasonable justification for a declaration of war, I think this is the only way you could do it, if you are going to use United States forces. I don't know what's being done in the sense of infiltration of people into Cuba—

President Kennedy: Well, we've warned them that we've been trying to do that. . . . We've been doing that for nine months—

Bohlen: Yeah.

President Kennedy: —under General [Edward] Lansdale but he hasn't had much success. We've got these intelligence teams in there. But, I saw the *Washington Post* suggested that we'd given up on internal revolt. You [*unclear*] that editorial this morning?

Bohlen: I saw that. But that's very curious [*unclear*]—

President Kennedy: It sounds like some guy got in there late at night, and he wrote . . . [*unclear*] from the Pentagon staff.

Bohlen: [*Unclear.*]

President Kennedy: What?

Bohlen: That has not been the *Washington Post*'s general line—

President Kennedy: Oh, no.

Bohlen: —on the Cuban thing at all this year.

President Kennedy: Suddenly, a complete [*unclear*] operation.

Bohlen: Some guy must have gotten a bright idea and sold it to Phil Graham.[19]

President Kennedy: Yes, you're probably [right].

Bohlen: But the . . .

Thompson: I think . . . I had the impression, that at the start of the Cuban thing, that the Russians thought it wasn't going to last and they were very reluctant to get too committed, to put too much in there.

President Kennedy: Of course, if we had gone in a year ago—and it was much easier in April after the Bay of Pigs—and you had that become the regular United States invasion . . . I have always thought that they would—of course you can't tell what they would do, a year ago. Now . . . but it always seemed to me they would just grab West Berlin, don't you think?

Bohlen: Well, they might have, Mr. President, and this might have led to general war. But I think the situation is getting to the point where there are so many places, there are many instances where if we take certain kinds of forcible actions, the Russians can retaliate. I think we tend [*unclear*] to let the Berlin situation dominate our whole action [*unclear*]. But this is what the Russians are clearly trying to do. [*Unclear.*]

Thompson: I would have thought a move against Iran would have been more likely than for Berlin.

President Kennedy: Except they could grab Berlin in two hours. Iran, they would have to really—

Bohlen: Yeah, but any one of these things [*unclear*]—

Thompson: Grabbing would have meant direct fighting with U.S. troops—

President Kennedy: What? What?

Thompson: Grabbing Berlin. And that's, I think, much more dangerous than a move in Iran.

Bohlen: Their play is . . . the Russian game has always traditionally been this way with the non-Communist power . . . is to push, pull, to feel around and then judge, make their next move based upon their estimate of the reaction to what people do. There is a phrase of Lenin in which he said there are certain situations which you control with bayonets: if you run into mush, you go forward; if you run into steel, you withdraw. And since anything that Lenin said is enshrined in letters—

President Kennedy: That's right.

Bohlen: —in gold and scarlet, I still think that Khrushchev's attitude

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19. Philip Graham was the publisher of the *Washington Post*.

on Berlin is in one sense to test us. Now, I don't know; but Joe Alsop wrote about this . . . saw him the other day and I think you saw him, didn't you?

President Kennedy: Yeah, I saw him.

Bohlen: Joe has a new theory about the [Berlin] Wall, did he tell you that?

President Kennedy: This was to cover up the . . .

Bohlen: This was to . . . The Wall was not to stop the refugees but to provide the necessary circumstances where they could make a major buildup of East German forces. And I said, "Well, I think that these issues are one of the consequences but not necessarily the cause"—but you know Joe when he gets on an idea—

President Kennedy: Then he's got the idea that the solution to the strategy is that the United States [*unclear*] our contingency planning, he knows that the allies won't do anything and therefore—

Bohlen: Yeah.

President Kennedy: —it [*unclear*] the United States to indicate it's going ahead.

Bohlen: Well, I must say, Mr. President, it depends on how your analysis of this whole situation is. But, I think, that if we are going to do anything, we're going to have to do it—

President Kennedy: Quickly.

Bohlen: —unilaterally.

President Kennedy: Yeah. I just yesterday, or the day before, sent a memorandum over to the Pentagon to ask them how long it takes to move in. You remember that time we sent up that battle group into West Berlin; then it turned out it took 28 hours to reach the autobahn. Well, so now I asked whether they've got. . . . They're still a long way away from the autobahn, so we've got a camp there that they can make into a barracks. So I asked them to—

Bohlen: McNamara was very much impressed with the state of training and the morale of the forces that he saw—

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Bohlen: —in Germany [in] the last two or three days. I don't think the strategy is worth a damn; but at least [*he chuckles*] the troops are in good shape.

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Bohlen: But . . . because you might have an awful lot of pulling and hauling with your allies, you see. For instance, suppose Khrushchev when he signs the treaty does the following things: that he just turns over to the East Germans the access rights to the military on the road

and the [East] Germans say, "Well, we haven't got any agreement with you; they can't go through," leaving the air alone, because the air is a place where we have much more freedom of maneuver. Then what'll you do? You will have consultations with your allies. The British, undoubtedly, will call for a conference, [*Thompson or Kennedy laughs*] and the French will just sort of stay out of it totally. [*Bohlen chuckles.*] You know them. And [*unclear*]. So you could lose an awful lot of time on this thing.

If they're foolish enough to announce that the air corridors are closed, then, I think, you have a very clearly indicated action which is to send your fighters in. [*President Kennedy speaks indistinctly.*] But send them in, in force. Anything you do on a subject like that, the danger is that you send in too few forces and that this doesn't create the impression. You ought to send in double the number of fighters that people think would be adequate for the purpose.

And in the air, I think, this is the place where the thing is going to come to a real . . . the crunch will happen there. Wouldn't you think so, Tommy?

Thompson: Generally speaking, I think, Khrushchev has felt, at least up until recently, that things are going his way and he needn't take any risks, that he is playing for the big stakes and not the small. In places like Iran and others, where he could have done a lot of things, but if he did, he'd [*unclear*] make it more difficult to spread further later on. And he's been . . . in Laos the same way and there are other complicating factors there, but. . . . In general, I don't think he wants to really run a real risk of war at this time.

Bohlen: I wouldn't think so.

Thompson: [*Unclear.*]

Bohlen: But then you come back to what is their estimate of the general correlation of military forces?

Thompson: Well, it certainly isn't something that can be deliberately calculated in this period. A wise thing to do . . .

Bohlen: Whatever happened to this idea that at one point was being kicked around [*unclear*] of showing Khrushchev some—

President Kennedy: Pictures?

Bohlen: Pictures. It was leaked, I mean, it was deliberately let out of NATO. And I think that [*unclear*] the probability is that they've got it. The only question is do they realize to what extent we cover their installations and therefore we know what ICBM rockets they have and what we have, which is growing every month here, I think?

President Kennedy: I think he thinks they've got enough to cause such damage to us, that we wouldn't want to accept that damage unless the provocation was extreme. But, of course, those are all calculations he

has to make about what we are going to do, and what the French will do and what the British will do. And I suppose it just comes back to what you . . . we were originally saying, that it's just a question of how do we convince him that the risk is there. And that raises whether we ought to go with this letter or not. Or whether we just choose to ignore this and just let this thing drop until he comes over here in November. So McNamara had some statement this morning about the [*unclear*]—

Bohlen: Yes, I saw that. In fact, that got the headlines in all the papers about the fact that we had nuclear weapons there and that in certain circumstances we were prepared to use them.

President Kennedy: Whether we ought to let it drop at that or whether these words get to be, as you suggested . . . They begin to have less and less effect. Because I don't know whether [*unclear*].

Bohlen: And the one thing about this channel, Mr. President, so far, thank God, is it [has been] kept completely confidential—

President Kennedy: Yes.

Bohlen: —thoroughly. One of the few things—

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Bohlen: —in the United States government operations which there is not the slightest leak on. And this fact, I think, would lend a little more weight to the words which you send back on it. The danger of not answering this and letting him come over here would be he'd come over with some positions which had obviously been agreed to in the hierarchy of the Soviet government and that they may be completely based on a miscalculation, on a misjudgment of the whole situation. And then he comes over here and you meet, and you have just a complete confrontation with no formal agreement, or anything like this, and this sets off its own chain of events. What would you think, Tommy?

Thompson: Oh, I think, if . . . if by chance, he is, he did say these things in order to get a positive response from us that he could use with his colleagues, or with the East Germans . . . then it would be too bad, if we didn't . . .

Bohlen: Well, let's put it this way. What would you lose by having in the Berlin part of this letter, something along this line, which you take to be daring?[20] I can't see that you would lose anything. The only danger that it might involve would be that it would bring it to a head; but I

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20. Bohlen seems to be referring to a draft response from President Kennedy. The actual response, as sent from Washington on 8 October 1962 did not include any reference to the Berlin question (see Kennedy to Khrushchev, 8 October 1962, *FRUS*, 6: 163–64).

don't think the way this is worded it would have very much of this, if it's sufficiently general. And if he doesn't believe it, well, you've wasted some time in writing a letter, but I don't think the consequences would be any worse than they are. I am very much afraid of his coming over here filled with these impressions, that our silence in the face of his—there were four occasions now, one to [Secretary of the Interior Stewart] Udall, one to [poet Robert] Frost—did he say it to you, Tommy, too, that we're not fighting on the . . . ?[21]

Thompson: No.

Bohlen: No. And [to] the Belgian and the Finn. And he has repeated the same damn thing to them. And he hasn't had any reaction whatsoever. Now that—

President Kennedy: It's another . . . I don't know whether I ought to do anything about Frost about supposedly this secret Frost [*unclear*], Macmillan sent these up . . . a civilized remark. But . . . I was just wondering whether there's . . . have you talked to Frost?

Thompson: No. And I haven't been near the [State] department, so I don't know . . . for the last two months, so I [*unclear*] . . . uninformed [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: I'll call [*unclear*] on the phone so he can't say he wasn't asked.

What about this? Would you go along with this thought about responding to this letter and in it, including in it . . . ?

Thompson: I agree with Chip. I think, if the letter is to have a . . .

President Kennedy: Would you get that letter you [*unclear*]?

Unidentified: Yes.

Bohlen: I think it's in your [*unclear*].

Unidentified: I think it's [on] the chair.

Thompson: I think now . . . You cut it down a bit, Chip.

Bohlen: Yeah.

Unidentified: [*Unclear.*] [*Rustling of paper, then silence.*]

Bohlen: You've got to change the first [*clears his throat*]. [*Silence while they read.*]

President Kennedy: I think when he says that people over here agree with him, I think he may in that case be meaning just the division of Western Germany, which everybody does agree with him on in Europe. Not this question of our rights and troops in West Berlin, because he's

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21. The Udall and Frost discussions on 6 and 7 September are described in the editors' introduction, 10 September 1962.

been told that so many times. He knows we don't agree with that. But I think he knows that de Gaulle and Macmillan and, possibly, I don't really care about the unification of Germany.

Bohlen: Yeah, well, except that in one of these things, I think it was to the Belgian, he was more explicit than that, in which he said that President Kennedy and Macmillan and de Gaulle really agree with my solution to the Berlin thing, and it's only Adenauer who just wants trouble, pulling the spokes from the wheel. I don't know which is—

President Kennedy: Of course that may be just a way to [*unclear*] to Germany and . . . but . . . I wish if the Germans were ever going to do anything about the division of Germany or recognition of East Germany . . . what kind of [*unclear*], they would go ahead and do it and not try to do it when it becomes useless as a . . . when they can't sell that position for anything.

Actually that last conversation that Adenauer had with Norstad and [NATO general secretary Dirk] Stikker, I don't . . . he didn't even mention Berlin. [*Unclear*] George Ball, et cetera. But he doesn't get around to Berlin when he talks. I don't think he wants to see Germany reunified.

Bohlen: Hell, no.

President Kennedy: So what are we all doing?

Thompson: Khrushchev—

Bohlen: [*Unclear*] with the Germans [*unclear*] nothing in the German ethos because one of the things that you always run into is this deeply felt thing, blah, blah, blah [*unclear*] take any action [*unclear*], is put off, you'll really disrupt Germany. I must say I never totally believed it because Germany is a [*unclear*] country. And I think also—

President Kennedy: We don't want any—

Bohlen: —that the French fear of the Germans turning East, under the present circumstances, is very illusory because Khrushchev cannot give them Eastern Germany. He told me this and I am sure he said it to you, but he used to use one expression to me in the last two months: "I was there but you must understand that we are not in a position to make any agreement with you affecting East Germany." What he meant by that was that they were hooked with this Soviet invasion of East Germany, and, therefore, the only bait that he could offer to the West Germans would be the reunification of the country in return for their neutrality. Well if you had that possibility, my God, we would have had that out on the table informally years ago. Don't you think so, Tommy?

Thompson: Uh, huh. Since we've got the bigger half, the bigger part, any unification even in neutrality would eventually be [*unclear*]—

Bohlen: Yes, I mean, that is why I think that this would have been if he had not Sovietized, if the Russians had not Sovietized Eastern Germany, they would have an enormous diplomatic card that they could play to wreck NATO, wreck the German involvement in it. But since this is not one that they could play, I don't really see much real danger of the Germans turning to the East, particularly as this process with France and the Common Market is going [*Kennedy can be heard indistinctly*] very far now.

President Kennedy: Well, Chip, what do you think is the . . . how pleased with . . . I suppose anything that the West Germans did about East Germany now would be regarded as indicating that Khrushchev was right, and we really don't care about West Berlin. West Berlin seems to have less and less importance once you, if you give up the idea of unification. And then . . . what are we doing then in West Berlin . . . except for the people that are involved—

Bohlen: Well, you've got two and a half million people—

President Kennedy: [*Unclear.*]

Thompson: The symbol and [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: What's the symbol got—?

Thompson: They'll never give up the idea that eventually reunion will be the case. It's one thing [*unclear*].

Bohlen: But, of course, one of the, I think, major arguments against doing anything formally such as recognition of East Germany is that it's extremely doubtful as to whether that East Germany setup is a viable thing. I think that Khrushchev's attitude may be primarily motivated by a desire to do something which will increase the viability of East Germany. He may have thought that this Wall was going to do it and this hasn't done it. He may think that if you could get his arrangement on Berlin this would fix Ulbricht up. For God's sake, all of this seems to be very much founded on wishful thinking.

Thompson: Yeah. Perhaps on the basis that the other solution would be to go in with a lot of money and build up East Germany to where it would be viable and as [first deputy Soviet foreign minister Vasiliy] Kuznetsov once told somebody, he said, "We can't do that because that would mean that the Germans would live better than we do and—"

Bohlen: Yes, and this is a factor, but another thing is—

Thompson: —"and that would be immoral," he said.

Bohlen: Being a divided country, and given the temperament of the Germans while they haven't been unified for so damn long historically, they nevertheless, which is a great thing for them, and I just don't think that even building it up would necessarily make it into a satellite country comparable to say Poland or [*unclear interjection by Thompson*]

Czechoslovakia because it's [*unclear*]. These other ones that are divided such as North Korea and Vietnam are new countries which haven't got any tradition of unity.

President Kennedy: What do you think about this letter of Chip's?

Thompson: I think that the line is sound. I think it could be . . . you know, this would be a long thing anyway, given the testing, if this could be maybe boiled down a little more, not quite so—

Bohlen: And you could add this part onto the thing. Of course you'll want to discuss this with the Secretary.

President Kennedy: Yes.

Thompson: When he is coming back?

President Kennedy: He's coming back this Wednesday, isn't he? Coming back Tuesday [*unclear*]?

Bohlen: Mac gets back on Wednesday, doesn't he?

President Kennedy: Yeah. So why don't we see what, on this [*unclear*] come Wednesday?

Bohlen: Yeah.

President Kennedy: But I have. . . . Why don't we get somebody working on a draft response to this?

Bohlen: On the Cuban [part]?

President Kennedy: To the whole thing.

Bohlen: All right, sir. Now the only question is [that] there are very few people in the Department who know about this correspondence at all [*Kennedy is mumbling in the background*], and I don't know if, for example, that anybody who is knowledgeable on the Cuban thing would be . . . is in on the general knowledge of—

President Kennedy: Actually what we say on Cuba, I think, almost anybody would know more or less the general position on Cuba as to—

Bohlen: What would you want to say on that, then?

President Kennedy: Well, I think we ought to say that this decision of the Soviet Union to so greatly increase the military power of the . . . of Cuba constitutes, I don't know, an unfriendly act or whatever the diplomatic term is and that had increased tensions and made . . . reaching an accord on matters of Berlin far more difficult and that because of the many treaties of the United States in this hemisphere and the special position, the historic position of the relationship of the United States with countries surrounding it, this represents a very serious assault on our position—something like that. Without sort of saying that we would [*unclear*]—

Thompson:[*Unclear*] get in something about the two things that concern us about the buildup in Cuba is: one, our own vital interest; and

the other is the possible use of Cuba as a threat to other countries in this hemisphere.

Bohlen: And you might point out, if you want to mark a difference between let's say our assistance to Iran, where we have no bases, of course—we just concluded an arrangement—is that Cuba was a member of the American defense establishment. It is just as though, it would be more comparable if the United States had acted in the case of Hungary—

President Kennedy: [*Unclear.*]

Bohlen: —to give military support to the Hungarian government which declared its—to the Soviet Union—its neutrality from the Warsaw Pact. We can do that and what about—

President Kennedy: What about saying [that] a Cuba friendly to the hemisphere is as significant to [us] . . . that we believe, inasmuch as you had believed that a Hungary friendly to the Soviet Union is in your vital interest? So that he doesn't get off on Turkey and Iran.

Bohlen: Yeah.

President Kennedy: Then on the testing, we're pretty . . . We know—

Bohlen: And our position—

President Kennedy: —We just can't buy . . . on the other hand, it seems to me, we just ought to say, "Well, in this case there's just no . . ." I mean he's offering us five years and then if there is not an agreement by then, that's just unpoliced.

I think we ought to, I'll get Jerry Wiesner. I'll have to give Jerry Wiesner these two pages and tell him that this is . . . and see if there is anything he can do about them. Let me tap Wiesner. I think this ought to be just paraphrased. And I can give this . . . these two pages to Wiesner and ask him for comments at least and [*unclear*] [Sir Edward] Bullard and [Sir William] Penney, et cetera. What it is they did say that is significant, whether he is accurately restating it.[22]

Bohlen: Of course a great deal depends on what [*unclear*].

Jerry Wiesner enters the Oval Office.

President Kennedy: Oh, hi Jerry.

Bohlen: Hello, Jerry.

Jerry Wiesner: Hi.

Bohlen: What the value of these—

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22. In his letter of 28 September, Khrushchev alleged that Sir William Penney, the chairman of the U.K. Atomic Energy Authority, and Sir Edward Bullard had argued at the tenth Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs, held in London 3 to 7 September 1962, that unmanned seismic stations would suffice to verify a comprehensive test ban.

President Kennedy: Could you just take this down? I'll give you this notation, if you have a piece of paper. "The Russian scientists have said that according to the British scientists Bullard and Penney, at Pugwash concerning the use of automatic seismic stations." [*Unclear.*]

Wiesner: Actually I have the statement that they issued. I don't know whether you want to read it.

President Kennedy: What exactly did they say? Who are Bullard and Penney? Are they very good?

Wiesner: Yeah, they are two top British scientists.

President Kennedy: What did they say?

Wiesner: Thursday's statement . . . the group . . . this doesn't quote either Bullard or Penney. That's the group that signed the document but apparently Bullard and Penney and a number of other people worked on it. What they're proposing are some unmanned seismic stations in undefined number, including—

Bohlen: Two or three, he said.

Wiesner: Oh, it has to be hundreds. It has to be large numbers.

President Kennedy: Would it? Have they [*unclear*]?

Wiesner: They don't say that. They say "enough." Actually I have had a study going since I got this document to try to find out just what the right number is without us shooting past—

Bohlen: He mentions two or three in this letter.

Wiesner: Oh, that won't do any good.

Bohlen: Right.

President Kennedy: Other than that we ought to . . . I'll tell you what we ought to do: just take these points down then you could respond to them like we're going to write a letter to these scientists.

Wiesner: Oh. Who is this letter from?

President Kennedy: Oh, this is from one of their people that came to us.

Wiesner: Uh, huh [*possibly skeptical*].

President Kennedy: [*reading from the secret letter from Khrushchev*] "As we understood the idea, the suggestion is that automatic seismic stations help with their records to determine what is the cause of this or that underground tremor—underground nuclear blasts or ordinary earthquakes. It would be sort of a mechanical control without men. After thinking this suggestion over we came to the conclusion that it can be accepted if this would make it easier to reach [an] agreement. In this case, it could be provided in a treaty banning all nuclear weapons tests that automatic seismic stations be set up both near the borders of the nuclear state and two to three such stations directly on the territory of the states possessing nuclear weapons—in the areas most frequently

subjected to earthquaking. The Soviet government agrees to this . . . agrees to this perhaps only because it seeks a mutually acceptable basis for an agreement."

Wiesner: Uh, huh.

President Kennedy: Well, I think that that sort of violates the agreement, but we also want to . . . And then it says that [*he resumes reading from the text*] "The American scientists who took part in the Pugwash Conference . . . approved of the suggestion about the use of automatic seismic stations for the purposes of control. Soviet scientists approved the suggestion . . . so, it appears the scientists were already in agreement and there's a possibility to move ahead . . . "

I think we ought to move [*unclear*].

Wiesner: What they say is in the document that I have given you, is that in principle they think this should work and it should be considered by the governments and—

President Kennedy: [*reading*] "They need to be sealed in such a way that they cannot be tampered with; they may be self-contained. The instruments would be installed by the host government and periodically returned to the international commission for inspection, replacement and repair, and such."[23] See . . .

Wiesner: My basic reaction is that I would like these things to have regular communication. I'm not sure it's necessary, and I don't want to insist on it until I can prove it because [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: [*reading further*] "All the records would be turned over to the Commission for analysis."

Could they bug these instruments?

Wiesner: It would be pretty hard because you have, see if you have your external seismic stations, which we still would have, you can get calibrations on this signal.

President Kennedy: How long do you [*unclear*]?

Wiesner: You could—

Bohlen: But Jerry, what would happen if you had an explosion that was suspicious, you weren't sure?

Wiesner: Well, here's what you're hoping for—

Bohlen: Are these things are so good that they can detect the difference between an earthquake and a nuclear explosion?

Wiesner: Well, the thing you want, Chip, is a large number of seis-

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23. Once again President Kennedy appears to be reading from a text, although these sentences do not appear in the 28 September letter from Khrushchev.

mic stations so that some of them are always close to the events. If they're close, you can usually tell the difference.

Bohlen: Hmmm.

Wiesner: I don't believe that any such system would get us out of the necessity for some mandatory inspection of the seismic areas. It would reduce . . . Anything of this kind that you do reduces the number. But it's technically—

President Kennedy: I'll tell you what you do. Would you then prepare for the . . . by Tuesday or so a response to this argument that it needs only two or three—

Wiesner: Yeah.

President Kennedy: —agreed upon at Pugwash by first going back to what they really said at Pugwash and the subsequent . . .

Wiesner: OK.

President Kennedy: . . . and then say what the seismic—

Wiesner: Can I get your reaction to one other idea—

President Kennedy: Fine.

Wiesner: —that I have been playing with . . . that I have actually been trying to understand this to prepare a memo? As you know, I have been impressed for the last year with the fact that the earthquakes—now I think I have talked to both of you about this—[*muttered assent*] in the Soviet Union occur in a very few remote places.

Unidentified: Yes.

Wiesner: And here are some maps that I've had made [*unclear*].

[*Wiesner flips maps. Kennedy leaves the room?*]

Wiesner: This is 1957. They're in there. They're in here and they're down here, an occasional one out there. They're in the same place down here. In fact, I've drawn an area in which I can't find any record of seismic—

Bohlen: [*Unclear.*]

Wiesner: Maybe one a year in here. So, I've been wondering whether if we went into this direction we would be willing to do another trick; and that is to say, we'd accept [*unclear*], we would accept invitational inspections in a defined a seismic area [*Bohlen mumbling in the background*] and mandatory in the seismic areas and this would probably be mandatory in a quarter—

Bohlen: The only trouble is that these areas of where they are, they have the big complexes.

Wiesner: I know [*unclear*] but one. But they're not where your missile bases are. These are [*unclear*] complexes [*unclear*].

Bohlen: Yeah but your [*unclear*] bases are all in here.

Now where is this . . . Where is . . . this place, Semipalatinsk in all of this?

Wiesner: Semipalatinsk is in here. It's [*unclear*].

Bohlen: [*Unclear*] for all that testing area—

Wiesner: All their testing and all their missile bases, with the exception of their Kamchatka—

Bohlen: Yeah.

Wiesner: —Terminal. Now I've talked to a Russian about this in Geneva and he said, "Well, the only trouble is that these are on the borders where our intelligence complexes are." And I said—

Bohlen: Yeah.

Wiesner: —"Sure but who cares about that anyway." You see. Hey, 60 percent of them are out here underwater on these damn Kuril Isles. So when you finally find out about these things, I'm ready to concede that they probably have some basis for their suspicions of what we are trying to do, but two or three stations would make no difference. There was a very thorough study that was made of this a couple of years ago: if they were willing to put in 100 or 200 of them, or maybe 50 I am not sure what the number is, it would make a very substantial difference because what would happen—I think you'd then go in the following way, Chip: you'd first . . . Your external system would say there was something in here that can't be resolved. The next thing you'd do is call for these unmanned stations. Either that or look at your radio records. I would suspect in a large fraction of the cases, the unmanned stations would then give you enough data so you could resolve it and say, "This was probably an earthquake." There is no question that there would always be a residue—

Bohlen: Well, the only things you're really interested in are precisely the ones which would not be resolved by mechanical [*unclear*] . . . In other words—

Wiesner: Yeah. But suppose you start with the assumption that they are not going to cheat.

Bohlen: Yeah.

Wiesner: You just . . . and then what you are looking for in both cases is a system of assurance. Because if they're going to cheat, I think they can always cheat. I could always cheat on one or two [*unclear*] explosions and get away with it. I don't think they could cheat on a large test series. . . . In fact, at present, they've never gotten away with it now. We know when they're testing—

Bohlen: Listen Jerry, tell me one thing: how valuable are underground explosions?

Wiesner: I don't think they are terribly valuable. And I think this is

the boss's impression.[24] But the fact is that we've got a political problem here at home—

Bohlen: Yeah.

Wiesner: —but I think the Russians have got one, too, now, because . . . What I'd like to see is whether you could invent a system in which [*Door closes. Kennedy comes back in the room?*] we made a compromise, in which we accepted invitation in the aseismic area and mandatory inspection in the seismic area.

Bohlen: Yeah.

Wiesner: Do you think we would get in trouble politically, Mr. President, with a—

President Kennedy: What?

Wiesner: —proposal that said that we would accept invitational inspection in that part of the Soviet Union where there normally aren't earthquakes if they would accept mandatory inspection in the seismic area? Here's a map, a series of maps that show what's going on. This is year by year and you see it. Most of—

President Kennedy: [*Unclear.*]

Wiesner: —that great big bulk of the Soviet Union probably doesn't have an earthquake a year.

Thompson: [*Unclear*] that?

Wiesner: And [*unclear*] here [*pointing to map*] 60 percent are over here in the Kuril Islands. So, we have been asking, you see, for the right to—of course if they were smart, they would say, "Well, if there are no earthquakes, you can't go there, because there's no record." But they say, "We'll fake them."

President Kennedy: What?

Wiesner: But they . . . when we say, "Well if there's no earthquake, we won't go because we won't have a basis for going." They say, "Well, you can fake the record." So that they worry about the other side of . . . [*points out places on the map*]. You see, all of their factories and missile bases, and so on, are in this part of the country there. There is a little bit over here: at Kamchatka the terminal guidance for their ballistic missile tests is there. But I think—

President Kennedy: Well, I think if there was a chance that they [*unclear*], we might try—

Wiesner: You see, I think they've got . . . Khrushchev's got [*unclear*

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24. President Kennedy.

interjection by Kennedy] the clear advantage of your political problem by now. People are saying you don't want it, if you [*unclear*] . . .

Bohlen: I think this is one of the things . . . that Khrushchev has the most distorted picture of the way American democracy or any democracy operates. I think this is one of the great inefficiencies in his whole complex.

President Kennedy: Do you think that Khrushchev says all this business about him finding inexplicable congressional action and the de jure power and all the rest because he really does . . . astonished at that or is it because this is this . . . What?

Bohlen: He probably thinks in the bottom of his heart that you put them up to it.

President Kennedy: Put the Congress . . . ? [*Laughter.*]

Bohlen: Well, I'm kidding—actually, I've always . . . Well, you see, up to very recently, I don't know whether it's changed so much now, no Soviet Embassy in this town even bothered to read the Constitution of the United States. I've talked to some of them, and they said, "We don't want [*unclear*] to read that." And they literally didn't understand anything about the operation of our own system and any democratic system because of the main thesis that this is just a flimflam to delude the people.

Thompson: Or they'll say a different thing. I've argued with a lot of them and they'll say, "Well, the President can't help with these pressures on him; they'll force him to do things, even if he doesn't want to." So that you get both these images [*unclear*]—

Bohlen: Yeah, I have simplified it a lot in there. [*Thompson agrees.*] And it may be with a man like Dobrynin, that they are getting a little more understanding of how the thing works because some of his . . . except for . . . on the basis of the fundamental Bolshevik thought, some of this stuff, you see, that he says in public speeches and all this sort of stuff is just a lot of nonsense.

President Kennedy shifts the discussion to the issue of providing nuclear aid to France. Bohlen has recently been named to replace General James Gavin as ambassador to France. Gavin announced his resignation in early August and left Paris the week of September 20, ostensibly for personal financial reasons but actually amidst controversy over his ongoing proposals to provide nuclear aid to France. Gavin had encouraged the sale of missile technology, enriched uranium, and compressors for gaseous diffusion plants that separated radioactive isotopes. President Kennedy's opening statement to Bohlen is a sarcastic reference to Gavin's downfall.

Gavin had not been a lone voice in the wilderness. In March 1962,

Kennedy had opened debate within the administration over the question by asking for a "new appraisal of our atomic policy in regard to France."[25] Broadly speaking, the Department of Defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff favored nuclear sharing while the Department of State adamantly opposed it.

President Kennedy entertained the idea of providing some form of nuclear assistance because of U.S. balance of payments worries and fear of Franco-German nuclear collaboration. By selling missile technology and other information up to the level of fission weapons, he hoped to offset U.S. military outlays. He also thought it would prevent de Gaulle from pressuring West Germany to cooperate in a nuclear program.

Throughout the spring and summer, the Department of State had gotten the upper hand, and the administration maintained its official unequivocal opposition to nuclear sharing with France. Behind the scenes, however, Department of Defense officials continued to discuss the issue with French officials. On September 5, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric left for Europe to discuss allied contributions to help redress U.S. balance of payments deficits arising from military expenditures on the continent. From September 7 to 9, he met with French defense minister Pierre Messmer and used their talks to explore U.S.-French cooperation in research and development, procurement and production, and logistic support.

When this meeting of September 29 occurs, the administration is seeking congressional authorization for the sale to the French government of the Skipjack nuclear submarine, which was the Nautilus rather than the Polaris missile-firing type. The McMahon Act of 1958, of course, prohibited assistance relating to nuclear weapons. Advocates of nuclear sharing within the administration argued, however, that the McMahon Act had been extrapolated into other technical areas such as missile technology. During the meeting, Kennedy takes an important call from Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, head of the Joint Atomic Energy Committee.

President Kennedy: How long do you think it will be before we get our first cable from you suggesting we give atomic weapons to France? [*Laughter.*]

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25. C. V. Clifton, "Memorandum of Conference with the President," 7 March 1962, "Conference with President and JCS, 10/61–11/62" folder, Chester Clifton Files, National Security Files, Box 345, John F. Kennedy Library.

Bohlen: Mr. President, I think it will probably take at least—

Thompson: Two weeks. [*More laughter.*]

Bohlen: Two years. Three years. [*Unclear*] two years.[26]

Thompson: That's all it takes?

Bohlen: Now I have been through all that drill, and I think the arguments are very solid on this. [*Unclear exchange.*]

President Kennedy: [Gilpatric] was told by [*unclear*] that this Brosio has just bought the French position completely and that he's followed—[27]

Bohlen: It seems to have a . . . Paris is a very seductive town—

President Kennedy: Is it?

Bohlen: —Mr. President. [*Chuckles.*][28]

Wiesner: I often thought that we may be of a lot of help to them with nuclear submarines because—

Bohlen: Well, my God. [*Chuckles again.*][29]

Wiesner: But [*unclear*].

Bohlen: Listen, we could [*unclear*].

Unidentified: Come in [*unclear*] construction. As we—

Thompson: The only thing they'd settle for—our technology.

Wiesner: I understand that.

Bohlen: The technology.

Wiesner: After two years of being sore at us because we wouldn't help them build one. Now you're going to sell them one! [*Laughs.*]

President Kennedy: [*Unclear*] sell you one, don't you think?

Bohlen: Oh yeah. I think so. The French . . . to hell with the . . . the French strategy with its . . . is not exactly the most generous [*unclear*].[30]

Thompson: Well, look, I don't know how much this—

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26. Bohlen is being flippant because he had received stern written and oral instructions from the Secretary of State to pursue the official administration line of opposing nuclear sharing.

27. Manlio Brosio was the Italian ambassador to France. From 17 to 19 September, Gilpatric met with Italian defense minister Giulio Andreotti in Rome to discuss defense cooperation and Italian contributions for offsetting U.S. military expenditures. Brosio had apparently reported to his government that de Gaulle sought greater Franco-Italian defense collaboration.

28. The Kennedy administration had adopted what former secretary-general of NATO Paul-Henri Spaak said was a running joke among the West Europeans: "Italy is always looking for a compromise. Italy's position is to say yes to France, no to the U.K., and do what the U.S. tells her to do."

29. He is laughing at Wiesner's heretical suggestion to provide some form of nuclear aid to France. There had been acrimonious debate throughout the spring and summer over the issue.

30. Reference to their perception that both France's *force de frappe* and conventional forces were for the defense of France. De Gaulle had declared that a *force de frappe* would not be integrated with NATO's nuclear forces.

Bohlen: This nuclear submarine thing, I hope to God that this goes through.[31]

President Kennedy: Where is it now?

Bohlen: Well, I don't know. Gilpatric told me yesterday that he talked to Scoop Jackson and he talked to [Admiral George W.] Anderson.

President Kennedy: And they bullied?

Bohlen: Thought that there would be a considerable amount of concern at the Department of State. Gilpatric went over there and sort of made a conditional offer and this has produced a great sort of feeling in the French: "Oh, boy, here the logjam is broken and this is wonderful" and they've all expressed great pleasure and delight. But the only thing is, if there's a hitch in the congressional thing and we have to call it off, then . . . [*Unclear exchange.*]

President Kennedy: Oh no, I thought Anderson had that?

Bohlen: Did you see that letter from Jim Gavin to the Secretary [of State]?

President Kennedy: A letter, no.[32]

Bohlen: On this subject?

President Kennedy: No. Maybe you can send it over to me? But I think that, as I recall Anderson was in favor, or maybe Jackson, I think, was in favor of our doing something with the French.

Bohlen: I don't think so.

President Kennedy: What? You know giving them some—

Bohlen: Yeah.

President Kennedy: —nuclear assistance—some of them were . . .

Wiesner: I always thought we were making a mistake in not helping them with things that weren't bombs. Because this made them particularly bitter. They'd say, well this is not nuclear explosives, and confront us on . . .

President Kennedy: Well, I think it is possible that we'll just have to . . . The fact is the Soviet Union in all these things recognizes France as a nuclear power, so that it wouldn't be a question of diffusing anymore.[33]

Bohlen: Now, this is one of the things in this diffusion angle that has really bothered me.

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31. Reference to its going through the Joint Atomic Energy Committee.
32. No record of this letter has been found.
33. This was a concern because of President Kennedy's hope for a test ban treaty.

Wiesner: But at the bottom of this is the faster you . . . the more you help the French, the more incentive you give other people to get to that stage, too, you see. So, I think you have to be very careful on the bomb.

Bohlen: As I've always understood, Mr. President, your thought on the things you told Malraux,[34] was that this is surely, but in particular when Adenauer leaves, is going to produce a comparable German effort to get one.

President Kennedy: Uh, huh.

Bohlen: And I would say that this is one of the places where I think de Gaulle shuts his mind and is focusing on his needs, ready to bring Germany into the European Community. He doesn't seem to be paying very much attention to the old talk about the WEU treaties.[35]

And you recall what Adenauer said to Rusk when we were there in June; he talked about the atomic [*unclear*]. He said, "Well, of course [*unclear*] when we signed the WEU agreement because it is based on the doctrine of *rebus sic standibus*."[36]

President Kennedy: Yeah. Yeah.

Bohlen: —which gives the impression which was [*unclear*] *rebus sic standibus* is a hell of a lot and that the situation is quite different than it was then. I think the main thing on this thing is whether or not the French—de Gaulle—really believes that this independent nuclear capability . . .

President Kennedy: [*to Evelyn Lincoln*] Is he calling me? Jackson's calling?

[*to gentlemen in room*] Jackson's calling me. So [*unclear*].

[*to Evelyn Lincoln*] Can I get Senator Jackson please?

[*to gentlemen*] Yeah, let's put that away for a little . . . [*unclear*] and then let's come back to it.

Unidentified: Uh, huh.

President Kennedy: [*to Wiesner*] Well, would you see if you can get me a response [to Khrushchev's test ban letter]?

Wiesner: Well, who's this to? Can't you . . .

President Kennedy: I just want a paper.

Wiesner: You want a paper?

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34. André Malraux, French minister of state for cultural affairs, visited the United States from 10 to 16 May 1962 at President Kennedy's personal invitation.

35. Western European Union.

36. *Rebus sic standibus* is the legal doctrine that treaties can be terminated on the ground of a change in circumstances that defeats the treaty's purpose. Bohlen is telling the President that Adenauer admits to relying on this document as a possible escape hatch from the WEU agreement that bars West Germany from acquiring nuclear weapons.

President Kennedy: —a paper with an explanation of it.

Wiesner: All right.

President Kennedy: I just want to know what the Pugwash scientists did say and what, particularly about this question, of their being quoted—

Wiesner: Right.

President Kennedy: —as having only said two or three.

Hello. Can you get Senator Jackson?

Door closes. Kennedy speaks on the telephone to Senator Jackson.

President Kennedy: Hello, Scoop, how are you? Good.

Henry Jackson: I'll see if I can't find out about [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: Yeah, fine, then why don't you come and see—why don't you come down next week, Monday or Tuesday?

Jackson: All right.

President Kennedy: Can I . . . I'll call your office Monday morning and then—

Jackson: I'll be in a meeting [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: Good. Did Ros Gilpatric talk to you about—Yeah, what is the feeling up there?

Jackson: On the [*unclear*], I think [*unclear*] used to be [*unclear*]. In the meantime, [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: Oh. It seems to me that he accepted.

Jackson: [*Unclear.*]

President Kennedy: Yeah . . . right. I think. Go on. Yeah but that; but do they think there is some stuff there that the other people don't have? Oh, I see. Good. OK.

Jackson: [*Unclear.*]

Bohlen and Thompson begin to talk while President Kennedy is on the telephone to Jackson.

Thompson: I would say, West Berlin. I'm not sure we're done.

Bohlen: [*Unclear*] consider very carefully. This is the . . . sort of an amendment to the original resolution [*unclear*] much more. But it is, as you notice, he speaks of the continued exercise of their rights in Berlin which means, in effect, West Berlin.

President Kennedy: Oh, I see, I see. I understand what you mean. Well, I'll talk to you about it next, the first part of the week. Have you told all this to Gilpatric? Right, to Gilpatric. Look, I'll see you Monday or Tuesday.[37]

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37. On Wednesday, 3 October, Senator Jackson met with the President at the White House from 11:10 to 11:30 A.M.

Jackson: I'll brief him.

President Kennedy: Thank you.

Telephone conversation ends. President Kennedy turns to Bohlen.

President Kennedy: He says [*unclear*] the Soviets—evidently there's some material there, information there, [which] could be valuable to the Soviets.[38]

Bohlen: This is Rickover's position.[39]

President Kennedy: That's Rickover. And he says the suggestion, therefore, is that the training program might be adjusted so that this information could be available at the very end. By that time the information would not be useful—evidently they assume the Russians will have it by then.

Bohlen: The main thing I'll be interested in, and Gavin in this letter said to me, if this is called off after Gilpatric's thing. He said this would make it very difficult for Ambassador Bohlen. In other words, this is the kind of thing the French would consider we did.

Unidentified: [*Unclear.*]

Bohlen: —double-crossed them.

President Kennedy: Oh, I think we can—we'll just indicate that we'll stay at it. I think we might as well . . .

Bohlen: Again, I see no objection to the thing, this resort, to the question of this leakage of secrecy that it be handled that way. That's all right. I think the feeling is that in the French scientific community there are some people who are very doubtful as to their former connection to the Soviet Union, apart from their actual connections. But I think that if this could do it, then . . . But first, there's one thing, you know this business of the nuclear diffusion that the Secretary has been talking to [Soviet foreign minister Andrei] Gromyko about, that . . . If you put France in the category, as the agreement does, as a nuclear possessing power—

President Kennedy: I am very reluctant [*unclear*].

Bohlen: —then you really—

President Kennedy: That's right.

Bohlen: —just knock the ground out from under your feet about helping them, except on the grounds of unfriendliness to France. Now, I've told this to the Secretary, and I think he is well aware of it. And it'll be worth it

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38. Summarizing his telephone conversation with Jackson, Kennedy tells them that there is fear of compromising U.S. nuclear reactor technology by allowing the possibility of secrets passing to the Soviets by sharing the Skipjack submarine with the French.

39. Admiral Hyman G. Rickover.

if you really have a good tight nuclear diffusion agreement; but if you don't . . . That's why I was worried about sending it on to the allies to consider and you ought to have a lot more clarity with the Russians as to whether they'd really need—[*reference to conflict between a nuclear nonproliferation or nondiffusion agreement and any U.S. nuclear assistance to France*].

President Kennedy: That's what I thought. We don't want to go through one of these terrible allied [*unclear*]—

Bohlen: —allied performances on a hypothetical situation.

President Kennedy: Right.

Bohlen: And, Mr. President, one more thing, you know this resolution on Berlin?

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Bohlen: —that Zablocki has sponsored.[40]

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Bohlen: Well, I'm going up there on Monday at ten—

President Kennedy: OK.

Bohlen: —to talk to him. And you've seen this draft?

President Kennedy: And I asked him to take out this question of German . . . The government . . . the conclusion, the final. Secondly—

Bohlen: And that isn't accurate either because the agreements don't provide for that.

President Kennedy: That's right.

Bohlen: I mean, the agreements are not based on until—

President Kennedy: I think that I see no particular disadvantage. [*reading text*] I don't see any advantage of it, I don't see it's a great disadvantage.

Bohlen: No, it's just that we've been trying to get Zablocki to lay off it, but he's just hot on it. You know, he feels that since we've asked [*unclear*] reservists, he asked that you mention Cuba and Berlin that . . .

President Kennedy: Yeah, but I think . . . I just think—

Bohlen: If you have one on Cuba, you ought to have one on Berlin. He really wants to pick up some political capital for being the—

President Kennedy: With the Germans?

Bohlen: No, with his election cam—[41]

President Kennedy: What [*unclear*] is German?

Tape spools out.

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40. Clement J. Zablocki (D-Wisconsin) was on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.
41. Zablocki was up for reelection in November 1962.

The secretary of the army, Cyrus Vance; the U.S. Army chief of staff, General Earl Wheeler; and the incoming Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Maxwell Taylor, entered the Oval Office next to discuss the possible use of the Army in Mississippi. Kennedy may have wished to tape this conversation; but he only successfully pulls the switch at the end of the conversation, leaving the machine on to catch the strategy session with Attorney General Robert Kennedy and Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall.

1:18–1:30 P.M.

The question still will remain . . . as to whether we call out the guard today, federalize the guard today, put it on an alert . . .

Meeting on the Crisis at the University of Mississippi[42]

The struggle to integrate the University of Mississippi ("Ole Miss") began quietly in January 1961, just after the inauguration of John Kennedy. Inspired by the words of Kennedy's inaugural address, James H. Meredith, a 28-year-old Air Force veteran, decided to apply to the leading institution of higher learning in Mississippi. Requesting an application, Meredith described himself as an "American-Mississippi-Negro citizen," who had been moved by all the changes "in our educational system taking place in the country in this new age." He noted that the application would probably not come as a surprise to the university and hoped the matter would be "handled in a manner that [would] be complimentary to the University and to the State of Mississippi. Of course, I am the one that will, no doubt, suffer the greatest consequences of this event." Convinced that his goal of ending segregation at the university was but one part of the great struggle for racial justice, Meredith would later write of his "Divine Responsibility" for ending "White Supremacy" in Mississippi, observing that desegregating Ole Miss was "only the start."

Over the next two years, as Meredith's case moved through the courts and finally exploded on the grounds of the Mississippi campus, it received national and even international attention, and Kennedy admin-

42. Including President Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, and Burke Marshall. Tape 24, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection.

istration officials, including the President and the Attorney General, devoted a great deal of time to managing the crisis. Before the episode ended with the registration and matriculation of Meredith at Ole Miss in the fall of 1962, tense standoffs, rioting, and death would come to the university, and President Kennedy would order thousands of U.S. Army troops to the campus in order to protect Meredith and enforce the rule of law. Meredith's determination to attend Ole Miss, Mississippi's steadfast efforts to prevent him from doing so, and the conviction of the President and his aides that it was essential to allow Meredith to enter the university combined to make the episode one of the most celebrated in the history of the civil rights movement.

Having decided to transfer from all-black Jackson State to all-white Ole Miss, Meredith recognized that he would need legal assistance, which led him to contact Medgar Evers, Mississippi field secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Evers put him in touch with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, where his case would be handled by Constance Baker Motley, one of the defense fund's talented young attorneys. With the nation's leading civil rights organization behind him, Meredith embarked on what would become a tortuous legal battle to enter the segregated institution. After Ole Miss had denied him admission on clearly specious grounds, the struggle moved to the courts, and over the next several months, Meredith continued to seek admission to the university. In September 1962, the federal courts established Meredith's legal right to attend the institution. But the struggle was far from over, as white Mississippians—politicians, Ole Miss students, local journalists, and ordinary citizens—united to block the young black man from entering their beloved university.

Spearheading the movement against the integration of the university was Governor Ross Barnett, who combined the soft-spoken demeanor of the southern planter with the overheated rhetoric of the southern populist. Barnett's performance during the crisis is not easy to characterize: in speaking to the Kennedys, he was generally conciliatory, searching, or so it seemed, for a way out of the legal and political morass. But the governor was equally capable of appealing to the basest instincts of those who would stand in Meredith's path. In one of the most highly charged moments of the crisis, Barnett declared to a crowd of 46,000 football fans attending an Ole Miss game: "I love Mississippi. I love our people. I love our customs." The throng laughed, cried, and roared its approval; the moment, a spectator recalled, resembled "a big Nazi rally." In showdowns that saw Barnett and his colleagues confront U.S. marshals and Justice Department officials, many Mississippians came to perceive the crisis as pitting the federal Goliath

against the southern David—or perhaps more aptly, as providing a second chance to fight for the honor of the south against the northern invader.

The U.S. Department of Justice was interested in the case from the start, with Burke Marshall, assistant attorney general for civil rights, telling Meredith that the Civil Rights Division was following his efforts and was prepared to do everything it could to assist him. In August 1962, one month before the federal courts had established Meredith's right to enter the University, the Justice Department had become officially involved in the case, filing an amicus curiae brief, which argued that several delays issued by Judge Ben Cameron of the Fifth Circuit were improper. On September 10 Justice Hugo Black of the U.S. Supreme Court concurred, thus paving the way for the federal order that Meredith be admitted to Ole Miss.

While by August 1962 the Justice Department had become an active participant in the case, its role in the person of the Attorney General and others would increase markedly in the days ahead. During the latter part of September, Robert Kennedy would engage in some twenty conversations with Governor Barnett in an effort to work out a plan to register Meredith at Ole Miss, an eventuality the Mississippi politician seemed determined to prevent.

Meredith was scheduled to start classes at the university, after registering on September 25. But Governor Ross Barnett prevented Meredith from registering, blocking his entry into the trustee's room in a state office building in Jackson, where the registration was scheduled to take place. Accompanied by John Doar of the U.S. Justice Department and James McShane, chief U.S. marshal, Meredith was forced to leave after Barnett willfully refused a court order to admit him, declaring he did "hereby finally deny you admission to the University of Mississippi." The large crowd roared its approval, an onlooker cried "Three cheers for the governor," and Meredith departed, along with his federal escorts.

The following day, September 26, Meredith, again accompanied by Doar and McShane, headed to the Ole Miss campus in Oxford to register for classes. The car carrying the three men, escorted by the highway patrol, was forced to stop a few blocks from the entrance to the campus. Backed up by state troopers, county sheriffs, and a line of patrol cars, Lieutenant Governor Paul Johnson approached Meredith, Doar, and McShane. Filling in for Governor Barnett (low clouds had prevented him from flying up from Jackson to Oxford), Johnson said, "I would like to read this proclamation," which stated that Mississippi was "interposing" its powers and would deny Meredith admission to the university.

After some gentle pushing between McShane and Johnson, it was apparent the Mississippian would not yield. After they exchanged some words, McShane turned in retreat, and Meredith, Doar, and a retinue of federal marshals departed the scene, prevented once more from fulfilling their court-ordered task.

On September 27, the group again tried to register Meredith. This time an elaborate plan had been worked out in discussions between Attorney General Robert Kennedy and Governor Barnett and his friend Tom Watkins, by which the U.S. marshals would draw their guns on Barnett and Paul Johnson in a "show of force." Once this symbolic act had been completed, the Mississippi politicians would stand aside and allow Meredith to pass (with his escorts) and register for classes. But the plan was thwarted, as some 2,000 people, including students, farmers, and self-styled vigilantes, converged that day on Oxford from all over Mississippi, determined to stop Meredith from registering at the university. A worried Barnett telephoned the Attorney General late in the day to report that he was uncertain if he could maintain order and claimed he had been unable to disperse the crowd. The Attorney General, never comfortable with the planned "show of force," ordered Meredith's convoy, which was heading from Memphis to Oxford, to turn back. Less than 50 miles from Oxford, the group turned around, recrossed the Tennessee border, and returned to Memphis.

On Friday September 28, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals found Governor Barnett guilty of contempt. Barnett, who did not appear in court, was found guilty in absentia and given until the following Tuesday to clear himself by retracting his proclamation and allowing Meredith to register. In the event he failed to do so, the Court declared Barnett would face arrest and a fine of $10,000 a day for each day he remained in Meredith's path.

On September 29, President Kennedy would become more directly involved in the crisis, having previously allowed the Attorney General to assume primary responsibility in the affair. That morning Robert Kennedy had been on the telephone with Ross Barnett and his chosen intermediary, Thomas Watkins, an attorney from Jackson, Mississippi. The deal reached the day before had fallen through. Now the Mississippians wanted an even larger show of federal force before giving in and letting Meredith register at Ole Miss.

The President had to decide whether the U.S. Army or a federalized Mississippi National Guard would be needed to cope with the increasingly tense situation.

Unidentified: . . . the witness is on the telephone, so you know that he says, "I can't do it any longer." Second point of it is that even if you have the problem of, on Sunday if you call the guard on Sunday, this is the quietest time in those towns, and you will look like you're calling the guard when there's nothing happening. Sunday is the psychologically quiet time, unless they incite somebody to meet. And so it ought, even in Little Rock, there's no doubt we read about Sunday always looks like everybody was going to church, and the *Life* magazine pictures will look like the very devil.[43]

On the other hand, it's the easiest time to mobilize, when there's nobody around. And that's an advantage. A third critical point, I guess, is, what if the governor chooses, in effect, to call out the guard before you do and again, if he says you're challenging him on keeping law and order. And he said, "All right, I'll keep law and order." For one thing, he'll tell you if you'd call off Meredith, why there won't be any disturbance.

President Kennedy: But I can't call off Meredith for that.

Unidentified: No. No. I agree with you.

President Kennedy: I don't have the power to call off Meredith.

Unidentified: But he'll put it in the conversation that *you're* the one inciting the trouble.

President Kennedy: I understand that.

Unidentified: But the other point is, do you want him to call the guard? If he says, "Well I could keep law and order, I guess, if I call out the guard," you have to think of whether he might preempt you on that.

President Kennedy: Well, let him do it. Let him do it. I don't mind that. That'd be all right.

Unidentified: You can always federalize the guard [*unclear*] or even get the chance to.

President Kennedy: So now the question really is . . . I think we ought to go ahead [with] my contacts, and your conversation and telegram, with Barnett, number one. Now the question therefore, we know what the result of that's going to be. The question still will remain with us today as to whether we call out the guard today, federalize the guard today, put it

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43. The reference is to the autumn 1957 Little Rock crisis in which the governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, defied a federal court order to desegregate Little Rock's Central High School. Faubus used the National Guard, ostensibly to prevent violence but in reality to block nine African American students from enrolling in the all-white high school. After scenes of hate-filled mobs harassing the students appeared on national television, President Eisenhower called in 1,000 federal troops and 10,000 federalized National Guardsmen in order to protect the young African Americans.

on an alert, start an intermediate step in the guard, or do we wait till Monday and do it? Or do we wait till Barnett sent me an answer? I think I'll . . . Well, in any case, I'll wait for Barnett's answer, I guess. Then I would think unless he sends me such a vague . . . I don't know what kind of wire he'll send me. What'll he say to me, or send me?

Robert Kennedy: Maybe he'll attack Meredith, I suppose.

President Kennedy: But he won't say whether he can keep order, will he?

Robert Kennedy: No, I think he's . . .

President Kennedy: He'll give me an answer saying, "If you will just call off that thing, we can keep order." So it won't be a clean answer to me. So we still have to . . .

Robert Kennedy: Yeah, but you can of course, you can phrase the telegram in such a way that's going to make it look difficult.

President Kennedy: All right, let's get this wire written. Let's get something, Burke [Marshall], as to what I'm supposed to ask him in two or three questions.

Burke Marshall: All right.

President Kennedy: Now, what about the guard? In other words, if we decide in the next hour or so, after I've talked to Barnett, et cetera, getting them there, how would a proclamation be handled . . . [*trails off as the President walks away*] . . . It will take . . . It will require a federal proclamation to that effect.

Unidentified: Right.

President Kennedy: I don't know whether this requires a television speech or not [*unclear*].

Unidentified: That's what I hoped [*unclear*].

Robert Kennedy: [*Unclear*] the purpose and then [*unclear*].

Unclear exchanges. The voices get distant. Kennedy is heard saying,

"The one tomorrow night to the country."

President Kennedy: Evelyn? Burke, do you want to dictate a memorandum for this conversation, guidance, what is it I want to say to Barnett?

Robert Kennedy: Well, why don't we, just the three of us go and . . .

President Kennedy: And a telegram? To follow?

Unidentified: If we do that [*unclear*], yes.

President Kennedy: OK, then I'll call . . . If we've got to go with the guard, it seems to me we ought to call out [*unclear*] regiment should go.

Unidentified: What's the word, sir? If you call [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Unidentified: . . . federalizing the guard . . .

Unidentified: . . . put them in the armories, just about, I'd say that'd be [*unclear*] use, and I would say the first battle group of the [*unclear*] the Cavalry Regiment under Colonel Martin. Now, I would suggest that we go ahead and move General Billingslea of the Second Infantry Division Headquarters in there and put him in command . . .[44]

Unidentified: Under Vance?[45]

Unidentified: Right, under Vance.

Unidentified: None of the others . . .

President Kennedy: To do what? To do what?

Unidentified: Well, Billingslea would be the Army officer in overall charge. Put him into Memphis right now.

President Kennedy: Where is he now?

Unidentified: He's down at Benning now.[46]

President Kennedy: I see.

Several unclear exchanges follow.

Unidentified: No, I agree. We were going to use, first, two M.P. battalions . . .

President Kennedy: How many would there be in one?

Unidentified: Well, there would be 800 men, all told. And we'd also bring in the battle group from the Second Infantry Division at Fort Benning to give [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: How about the map of the town and so on? Is there somebody around who knows which way and can direct the guard to go . . . ?

Unidentified: Oh, yes. [*Unclear*] military [*unclear*] set of maps [*unclear*].

President Kennedy: Will you have a regular Army fellow with them or will it be Billingslea?

Unidentified: You have regular Army. [*Several speakers at once.*]

President Kennedy: Has Billingslea [*unclear*] made an analysis of what he would do with the various forces?

Unidentified: People have been working on . . .

Unidentified: Right. And Creighton Abrams will be down . . .[47]

Unidentified: Maybe he should talk to [*unclear*].

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44. Colonel Martin is not further identified. General Billingslea is Brigadier General Charles Billingslea.

45. Cyrus R. Vance, secretary of the Army.

46. Fort Benning, Georgia.

47. Major General W. Creighton Abrams was assistant deputy Army chief of staff for military operations.

Robert Kennedy: [*Unclear.*]

Unidentified: I can talk to Senator Stennis, if you like, Mr. President, on this thing, but I do think it would be wise to at least bring it up.[48]

President Kennedy: You or [*unclear*]?

Unidentified: I'd be very happy to do it . . .

President Kennedy: I could see him. He's in Washington, is he?

Unidentified: Yes, he's in Washington.

President Kennedy: Well, I'll see him about five or six. He's talked to me personally about [*unclear*] our problem. So [*unclear*] by that time, I'll have had my conversation with Barnett, and we'll send Barnett a wire and hopefully, I'll get a hold of him. [*Unclear.*]

Unidentified: Maybe you'd better go through an ambassador, instead of yourself. [*Lengthy unclear discussion about Barnett follows.*]

Leaving the machine running, the President walks over to the family quarters at approximately 1:25 P.M.

Evelyn Lincoln: Did he go over to the Mansion?

Unidentified: He's in the pool with [*unclear*].

Lincoln: Oh. [*Then about five minutes of distant conversation during which someone says,* "Is he coming back?"]

President Kennedy apparently decides against a swim. Instead he returns to the Oval Office with the Attorney General.

President Kennedy has still not decided whether he will stay in Washington overnight. Slated to meet his friends Lem Billings and Congressman Torbert MacDonald in Newport, Rhode Island, Kennedy is still holding out the option of flying out after he speaks to Ross Barnett.

Robert Kennedy: Jack?

President Kennedy: I think I'm going to go up there after we give [*unclear*] depending on when we . . . [*Unclear*] don't want some Micks in Newport, Rhode Island [*unclear*]. [*Unclear*] going to make a speech tomorrow night.

What about getting Sorensen to work?[49] Does he say Arthur's been working on it?[50]

Robert Kennedy: Yeah.

Can I talk . . . can I get Arthur? Do you want to get Arthur?

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48. Senator John Stennis of Mississippi.

49. For the past week, White House counsel Sorensen had been hospitalized with an ulcer. On Friday, Sorensen had sent a memorandum to the White House with his suggestions for handling the crisis. Evidently the President hadn't yet seen it. Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 484.

50. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., was a presidential special assistant.

Unclear discussion. The President walks over to Evelyn Lincoln's office and has an unclear discussion with her.

President Kennedy: Yes, you just have to get him. I just want to speak to him at home. Where is he? At home?

Lincoln: [*Unclear.*]

Unidentified: Mr. President?

President Kennedy: Yeah.

A brief unclear discussion follows. Then the Attorney General launches into a discussion of a new spy case.

Approximately 1:30–1:35 P.M.

If you're caught spying as a diplomat . . . [y]ou can't try them?

Meeting with Robert Kennedy on the Drummond Spy Case[51]

On September 28, the FBI arrested Yeoman First Class Nelson Cornelius Drummond of the U.S. Navy and charged him with conspiring to pass defense secrets to the Soviet Union. Drummond was apprehended while sitting in a car in Larchmont, New York, with two officials from the Soviet delegation to the United Nations. The FBI agents found eight classified naval documents on the car seat between Drummond and the Soviet officials.

Drummond had been under surveillance for some time and had apparently shown unusual signs of wealth for an enlisted man whose monthly salary was $318. Given their diplomatic status, the Soviet officials were not liable to arrest, although they were detained briefly before their identity was established. Shortly after the Russians were apprehended, the U.S. government demanded their expulsion.

Robert Kennedy: They called [*unclear*] give those guys as much time as he can. Tell him, you can't believe the Russians would do this. You

51. Tape 24, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection.

can't, you must be . . . You know they brought out the card thing, the Russians are diplomats . . .

Unidentified: The Russians would do that. Ughhhh!!!

Unidentified: [*Unclear*] that they've misunderstood. They . . .

Robert Kennedy: It's all about getting those two men.

President Kennedy: What?

Robert Kennedy: [*Unclear.*]

President Kennedy: What were they doing?

Robert Kennedy: We got the chief petty officer [*unclear*] who gave them a lot of valuable information. [*Unclear*] since 1958.

President Kennedy: Why, was he stationed in Moscow, was he for awhile?

Robert Kennedy: [*Unclear.*] And he's been living way above his means. [*Unclear.*] So they got on him.

President Kennedy: How did they catch him?

Robert Kennedy: They started following him. He spent a lot of money and then he [*unclear*] couldn't get any good stuff on the documents. So when he was short of money, they would watch him [*unclear*]. And they followed . . . thought he was going to go last week, so they followed all the way out [*unclear*]. Sometimes he'd drive at [*unclear*] miles an hour. But they had cars stationed all the way. And then they went finally chasing him to Westchester. [*Unclear*] he was with the third secretary of the delegation of the Soviet Union.

President Kennedy: At the U.N. or here?

Robert Kennedy: The U.N.

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Robert Kennedy: They were sitting in the car, with the documents, with the dough.

President Kennedy: They just arrested them?

Robert Kennedy: So, they called me at once because they thought that [*unclear*] speak Russian [*unclear*]. They asked for diplomatic immunity.

President Kennedy: Yes.

Robert Kennedy: Said [*unclear*] could not believe that the Soviet Union would be involved. You would think you must be personally [*unclear*] the Russians. We can't let you go. So they took him down. [*Unclear*] had to wait until someone came down.

President Kennedy: [*Unclear.*]

Robert Kennedy: [*Unclear.*] United Nations delegation about 4:30 this morning.

President Kennedy: Did what?

Robert Kennedy: [*Unclear*] and then they just let them go.

President Kennedy: They let them go? Why?

Robert Kennedy: Because they got diplomatic immunity.

President Kennedy: If you're caught spying as a diplomat, all you do is expel them? You can't try them?

Robert Kennedy: [*Unclear*] cause the guy confessed.

President Kennedy: There isn't anything you can do under law to a guy at an embassy who is caught spying? Have any of our people been imprisoned?

Robert Kennedy: No. They only get expelled. [*Unclear*] at the United Nations. That's the way we do it all [*unclear*] now. Being stationed here in the United States. You know, those other two fellows have been complaining. [*Unclear.*]

President Kennedy: What about . . . what's Kenny O'Donnell [say] about this?

The President turned off the machine at about 1:35. He then called Mrs. Kennedy, perhaps to discuss the prospects of his joining her in Newport, Rhode Island, at the end of the day.

A few minutes later, Arthur Schlesinger reached the White House. He was just in time to witness the President's next telephone conversation with the Governor of Mississippi. An air of unreal humor pervaded the Oval Office. When he was told that Ross Barnett was on the phone Kennedy affected the manner of a ring announcer: "And now—Governor Ross Barnett." "Go get him, Johnny Boy," replied the Attorney General.[52]

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52. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., recounted this scene in *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), p. 344. Soon afterward the U.S. government demanded the expulsion of the two Russians.

On July 19, 1963, Drummond was convicted of conspiring to commit espionage for the Soviet Union, and on August 15, 1963, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. The judge, who spoke of Drummond's "heinous" crime, could have imposed the death penalty, but said he decided on a life sentence out of compassion for the ex-sailor's wife and parents.

2:00 P.M.

[T]he problem is, Governor, that I got my responsibility, just like you have yours . . .

Conversation with Ross Barnett[53]

President Kennedy: . . . Mississippi.
Unidentified: Yes, Mr. President.
President Kennedy: Thank you.
Unidentified: Hello. Hello.
President Kennedy: . . . calling, if they want to know who's calling.
Unidentified: All right. Fine, Mr. President. [*Long pause.*]
President Kennedy: Hello.
Unidentified: All right.
President Kennedy: Hello? Hello, Governor?
Ross Barnett: All right. Yes.
President Kennedy: How are you?
Barnett: Is this . . .
President Kennedy: This is the President, uh . . .
Barnett: Oh. Well, Mr. President [*unclear*].
President Kennedy: Well, I'm glad to talk to you, Governor. I am concerned about this situation down there, as I know . . .
Barnett: Oh, I should say I am concerned about it, Mr. President. It's a horrible situation.
President Kennedy: Well, now, here's my problem, Governor.
Barnett: [*Unclear.*] Yes.
President Kennedy: Listen, I didn't put him in the university, but on the other hand, under the Constitution . . . I have to carry out the orders, carry that order out, and I don't, I don't want to do it in any way that causes difficulty to you or to anyone else. But I've go to do it. Now, I'd like to get your help in doing that.
Barnett: Yes. Well, uh, have you talked with Attorney General this morning?
President Kennedy: Yeah. I talked to him and in fact, I just met with him for about an hour, and we went over the situation.

53. Dictabelt 4A1, Cassette A, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection.

Barnett: Did he and Mr. Watkins have a talk this morning, Tom Watkins, the lawyer from Jackson, or not?[54]

President Kennedy: Yes, he talked to Tom Watkins, he told me.

Barnett: Yes, sir. Well, I don't know what . . . I haven't had a chance to talk with him . . .

President Kennedy: Now just wait . . . just one minute because I got the Attorney General in the outer office, and I'll just speak to him.

Barnett: All right. [*Long pause.*]

President Kennedy: Hello, Governor?

Barnett: Yes. Hold on.

President Kennedy: I just talked to the Attorney General. Now, he said that he talked to Mr. Watkins . . .

Barnett: Yes.

President Kennedy: . . . and the problem is as to whether we can get some help in getting this fellow in this week.

Barnett: Yes.

President Kennedy: Now, evidently we couldn't, the Attorney General didn't feel that he and Mr. Watkins had reached any final agreement on that.

Barnett: Well, Mr. President, Mr. Watkins is going to fly up there early tomorrow morning.

President Kennedy: Right.

Barnett: And could you gentlemen talk with him tomorrow? You . . .

President Kennedy: Yes, I will have the Attorney General talk to him and then . . .

Barnett: Yes.

President Kennedy: . . . after they've finished talking I'll talk to the Attorney General . . .

Barnett: All right.

President Kennedy: . . . on the phone and then if he feels it's useful for me to meet with him . . .

Barnett: I thought . . .

President Kennedy: . . . I'll do that.

Barnett: I thought they were making some progress. I didn't know.

President Kennedy: Well, now . . .

Barnett: I couldn't say, you know.

President Kennedy: . . . he and Mr. Watkins, they can meet tomorrow. Now, the difficulty is, we got two or three problems. In the first

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54. Thomas H. Watkins was the Mississippi lawyer and Barnett aide who served as an intermediary in the crisis.

place, what can we do to . . . First place is the court's order to you, which I guess is, you're given until Tuesday. What is your feeling on that?

Barnett: Well, I want . . .

President Kennedy: What's your position on that?

Barnett: . . . to think it over, Mr. President.

President Kennedy: Right.

Barnett: It's a serious matter, now that I want to think it over a few days. Until Tuesday, anyway.

President Kennedy: All right. Well, now let me say this . . .

Barnett: You know what I am up against, Mr. President. I took an oath, you know, to abide by the laws of this state—

President Kennedy: That's right.

Barnett: —and *our* constitution here and the Constitution of the United States. I'm, I'm on the spot here, you know.

President Kennedy: Well, now you've got . . .

Barnett: I, I've taken an oath to do that, and you *know* what our laws are with reference to . . .

President Kennedy: Yes, I understand that. Well, now we've got the . . .

Barnett: . . . and we have a statute that was enacted a couple of weeks ago stating positively that no one who had been convicted of a crime or, uh, whether the criminal action pending against them would not be eligible for any of the institutions of higher learning. And that's our law, and it seemed like the Court of Appeal didn't pay any attention to that.[55]

President Kennedy: Right. Well, of course . . .

Barnett: And . . .

President Kennedy: . . . the problem is, Governor, that I got my responsibility, just like you have yours . . .

Barnett: Well, that's true. I . . .

President Kennedy: . . . and my responsibility, of course, is to the . . .

Barnett: . . . I realize that, and I appreciate that *so much.*

President Kennedy: Well, now here's the thing, Governor. I will, the Attorney General can talk to Mr. Watkins tomorrow. What I want, would like to do is to try to work this out in an amicable way. We don't want a lot of people down there getting hurt . . .

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55. On September 20, Meredith was found guilty in absentia of false voter registration and was fined $100 and costs and sentenced to one year in the Hinds County jail. The conviction on this clearly specious charge occurred the same day that Mississippi Senate Bill 1501 passed the legislature. The bill barred persons guilty of a criminal offense from attending state institutions of higher learning. In addition, on 20 September, Governor Barnett was appointed registrar of the university. Five days later, the Board of Trustees rescinded the appointment.

Barnett: Oh, that's right . . .

President Kennedy: . . . and we don't want to have a . . . You know it's very easy to . . .

Barnett: Mr. President, let me say this. They're calling, calling me and others from all over the state, wanting to bring a thousand, wanting to bring 500, and 200, and all such as that, you know. We don't want such as that.

President Kennedy: I know. Well, we don't want to have a, we don't want to have a lot of people getting hurt or killed down there.

Barnett: Why, that's, that's correct. Mr. President, let me say this. Mr. Watkins is really an A-1 lawyer, an honorable man, has the respect and the confidence of *every* lawyer in America who knows him. He's of the law firm of Watkins and Eager. They've had an "A" rating for many, many years, and I believe this, that he can help solve this problem.

President Kennedy: Well, I will, the Attorney General will see Mr. Watkins tomorrow, and then I, after the Attorney General and Mr. Watkins are finished then, I will be back in touch with you.

Barnett: All right. All right. I'll appreciate it so much, now, and there . . . Watkins'll leave here in the morning, and I'll have him to get into touch with the Attorney General as to when he can see him tomorrow.

President Kennedy: Yeah, he'll see him and . . .

Barnett: Yes, sir.

President Kennedy: . . . .we will, then you and I'll be back and talk again.

Barnett: All right.

President Kennedy: Thank you.

Barnett: All right.

President Kennedy: OK.

Barnett: I appreciate your interest in our poultry program and all those things.

President Kennedy: Well, we're . . . [*laughs softly*].

Barnett: Thank you so much.

President Kennedy: OK, Governor. Thank you.

Barnett: Yes, sir. All right now.

President Kennedy: Bye now.

Barnett: Thank you. Bye.

2:25 P.M.

[G]ive me some thoughts . . . the speech, is that right?

Conversation with Theodore Sorensen[56]

Theodore Sorensen had been hospitalized with an ulcer earlier in the week. Kennedy telephoned him at the hospital, requesting that he provide some suggestions for a televised speech on the Mississippi crisis that Kennedy thought he might have to deliver Sunday night. Sorensen noted that Republicans were taking a segregationist line, which would help the President avoid a partisan attack. (He would be criticized by both sides.) With some irony, Kennedy himself remarked that this strict Republican line was not one Eisenhower had followed in the Little Rock crisis (when the Republican President intervened with federal troops). Sorensen clarified his point, noting that he meant the Republicans in Alabama.

President Kennedy: . . . sort of a South Caro—

Theodore Sorensen: . . . [*word unintelligible*] campaign going on in Alabama, and the Republicans are taking the straight Ross Barnett line and so forth.

President Kennedy: Well, except Eisenhower, they . . . [*laughs*]. Eisenhower's taking a little away from them.

Sorensen: No, I mean the Republicans in Alabama.

President Kennedy: Yeah, but I mean, well I, you, and Burke can talk, because the legal . . . our legal obligations on Tuesday affect when we go with this guard; that's the point.[57]

Sorensen: Yeah.

President Kennedy: OK, and you're thinking about, give me some thoughts . . . the speech, is that right?

Sorensen: Right.

With the Mississippi situation very much unresolved, the President's hopes to salvage what was left of his Newport weekend were dimming.

56. Dictabelt 4A2, Cassette A, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection.

57. Burke Marshall was assistant attorney general for the Civil Rights Division.

LeMoyne Billings, Kennedy's roommate at Choate and a Kennedy family intimate since 1934, called during the afternoon Mississippi discussions to learn that he probably wouldn't be seeing his friend up in Newport.[58] Billings was having his own difficulties getting there.

2:30 P.M.

I guess it's not going too well . . . [f]or you because of the Mississippi deal.

Conversation with LeMoyne Billings[59]

Unidentified: Mrs. Lincoln?

Lincoln: Um-hm.

Unidentified: Mr. Lem Billings.

Lincoln: Could you hold just one minute?

Unidentified: Sure. [*Short pause.*]

President Kennedy: Lem? Hello.

Unidentified: There you are.

President Kennedy: Lem?

LeMoyne Billings: Hello.

President Kennedy: Where are you?

Billings: Oh. Hi. I'm a . . . I've missed my damn plane, so I'm going to have to shoot up to Boston and back to Providence.

President Kennedy: Oh, I see. Well, I'm still . . . doesn't look like I may be able to go there.

Billings: Oh, go at all?

President Kennedy: That's right.

Billings: Oh, I better not go until . . . until you know.

President Kennedy: OK. You're in a . . . Just leave your message where we can—

Billings: I'm at LaGuardia now. When do you think you'd know? Or you don't know?

58. Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and his Times*, p. 13.

59. Dictabelt 4B1, Cassette A, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection.

President Kennedy: Well, it looks like it will be sometime . . . Why don't you go back into New York?

Billings: All right.

President Kennedy: And then I will be in touch with you.

Billings: OK. Good.

President Kennedy: Because I . . . because you can always come up later.

Billings: OK. As I said, I guess it's not going too well, huh?

President Kennedy: Where?

Billings: For you, because of the Mississippi deal.

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Billings: OK. I'll see you later.

President Kennedy: OK. Bye.

2:50 P.M.

Well . . . as I understand it, Governor, you would do everything you can to maintain *law and order.*

Conversation with Ross Barnett[60]

The President and the Attorney General speak to Governor Barnett, making clear that their primary objective is to maintain order and that they expect the governor to work to that end. Barnett hopes his friend, Tom Watkins, will be able to help hammer out a solution to the problem caused by Meredith's determination to register. The Attorney General tells Barnett that his conversations with Watkins (they had spoken twice that day) have been unhelpful, noting Watkins's suggestion that Meredith register secretly at Jackson on Monday, instead of at the Oxford campus. As Barnett had actually initiated the plan through Watkins, he finds it attractive, noting an earlier ruling had ordered it. In addition, the plan would permit him to demonstrate his unyielding opposition to desegregation (he almost certainly planned a

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60. President Kennedy and Governor Barnett were later joined by Robert Kennedy. Dictabelt 4C, Cassette A, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection.

public stand to prevent Meredith's registration), and also because he could claim the federal government had decided by stealth to enroll Meredith anyway.

President Kennedy: Hello.

Ross Barnett: All right.

President Kennedy: Governor.

Barnett: Mr. President. Yes, sir.

President Kennedy: Oh, will you talk to Mr. Watkins? The Attorney General did.

Barnett: No, I haven't talked with him now in a couple of hours . . .

President Kennedy: Oh. Well, now . . .

Barnett: . . . I talked with him though about two hours ago, Mr. President, and he said he was going to *talk* with the Attorney General and go *see* him tomorrow morning.

President Kennedy: Oh. Well, in the meanwhile, then, the Attorney General talked to Mr. Watkins to see whether there was some . . . Wait just a second. The Attorney General's right here. He'll tell you what he talked to Watkins and Watkins was going to talk to you. Wait a minute.

Barnett: All right. All right.

President Kennedy: He'll come right on the other phone.

Barnett: Yeah, sure.

President Kennedy: Wait just a [*unclear*].

Barnett: All right. All right.

Robert Kennedy: Hello?

Barnett: Yes, sir, General. How are you?

Robert Kennedy: Fine, Governor. How are you?

Barnett: Fine, fine.

Robert Kennedy: I talked to Mr. Watkins, you know, earlier this morning.

Barnett: Oh, yes?

Robert Kennedy: And he really did not have much of a suggestion. He had mentioned yesterday the possibility of our coming in tomorrow Monday with marshals, and . . .

Barnett: Yes.

Robert Kennedy: . . . that under our understanding for Thursday that the marshals would show up and that you and the others would step aside and Mr. Meredith would come into the university. Well, he felt that when he mentioned he talked to me today, he said that he thought that would create some problems, which they could not over-

come. And he suggested at that time, some alternatives which were not very satisfactory.

Barnett: Well . . .

Robert Kennedy: And then he mentioned the fact that he might come up early tomorrow morning.

Barnett: Well . . .

Robert Kennedy: I called him back after I heard the President's conversation with you . . .

Barnett: Yes.

Robert Kennedy: . . . and said that I thought I'd be glad to see him, but I thought that unless we had some real basis for some understanding and working out this very very difficult problem that really he was wasting his time; and that one of the basic requirements, in my judgment, was the maintenance of law and order, and that would require some very *strong* and vocal action by you, yourself. . . .

Barnett: Well, I'm certainly going to try to maintain law and order, Mr . . .

Robert Kennedy: Yeah.

Barnett: . . . General, just the very best way that I can.

Robert Kennedy: But in the . . .

Barnett: I, I talked with the student body the other day and told them to really, to have control of the physical and mental faculties. But it didn't do much good it seemed like.

Robert Kennedy: Well . . .

Barnett: They cheered and carried on, but then they just started raving and carrying on, you know.

Robert Kennedy: Yeah. I think, Governor, that if we . . . as a very minimum and as a start, an order by you and the state that people could not congregate in Oxford now in groups of three or five, larger than groups of three or five; the second, to get the school authorities to issue instructions to the students that if they congregate in groups that they are liable for expulsion. If that was done this afternoon, I think that would be a big step forward. And that anybody carrying an arm or a, arms or a club, or anything like that would be liable to punishment.

Barnett: Well . . .

Robert Kennedy: Those kind of steps by you . . .

Barnett: Yes.

Robert Kennedy: . . . would indicate an interest in maintaining law and order.

Barnett: Well, General, I certainly, I'll tell the chancellor to announce to all the students to keep law and order and to keep cool

heads. But the trouble is not only the students, but it's so many thousands of outsiders will be there.

Robert Kennedy: Yes, but I think, if you said, Governor, not just to . . .

Barnett: Yeah.

Robert Kennedy: . . . keep cool heads, but that they couldn't congregate.

Barnett: How many do you figure on sending down?

Robert Kennedy: Well, that's a . . . I think that the President had some questions for you that he thought that maybe if we could get some answers to them that . . .

Barnett: Yeah.

Robert Kennedy: . . . that would be what [it would] depend [on].

[*speaking to President Kennedy in the room*] Mr. President . . .

Barnett: Mr. General, why don't you . . . I believe that if you and Tom Watkins could get together it would help a lot. He's a very reasonable man, and, and he's, he knows, he knows the situation down here as well as anybody living. If you all could get together tomorrow morning, *I* really think that it would pay. I think it would help.

Robert Kennedy: Well, he doesn't have any suggestions, he just told me, Mr. Governor.

Barnett: Yes. Well, I . . .

Robert Kennedy: So I don't know what . . .

Barnett: . . . I thought he did have.

Robert Kennedy: Well, he didn't. I mean he said something about sending Meredith, sneaking him into Jackson and getting him registered while all of you were up at . . .

Barnett: Yeah.

Robert Kennedy: . . . at Oxford. But that doesn't make much sense, does it?

Barnett: Well, I don't know. Why? Why doesn't it? That's where they'd ordered him to go at first, you know.

Robert Kennedy: Yeah.

Barnett: You see, there's an order on the minutes, Mr. General, for him to register . . .

Robert Kennedy: Well, would you . . .

Barnett: . . . [*unclear*].

Robert Kennedy: . . . you'd get . . . As I understand it, you'd get everybody up at Oxford, and then we'd, and then . . .

Barnett: Oh, well, that's exactly what Tom Watkins must have had in mind, you know.

Robert Kennedy: Yeah.

Barnett: Let me talk with Tom and call you back in a little while.

He's not but a block from me. That's what he had in mind, I think. And, of course, you know how it is in Jackson. Monday they, no school's going on here, you know, and . . . Uh, of course nobody would be anticipating *anyone* coming here, you know.

Robert Kennedy: Are you going up to Oxford on Monday? Is that your plan?

Barnett: Well, that's what I planned to do, yes, sir. The lieutenant governor and I, both, *I* guess, we'll have to be up there to try to keep order, you know. And, we're to be up there pretty early Monday morning.

Robert Kennedy: Will you?

Barnett: We'll be up there, unless you ask us not to.

Robert Kennedy: Yeah.

Barnett: Well, like, you see, we'll be up there and that's where all the people will be. Yeah. I thought you and Watkins were going to talk about that kind of a situation, then what'd be the best thing to do under those conditions, you know.

Robert Kennedy: Yeah, I think, Governor, that the President has some, uh, questions that he wanted some answers to . . .

Barnett: Well . . .

Robert Kennedy: . . . make his own determination.

Barnett: . . . that's right. He wanted to know if I would obey the orders of the court, and I told him I, I'd have to do some . . . study that over. That's a serious thing. I've taken an oath to abide by the laws of this state and our state constitution and the Constitution of the United States. And, General, how can I violate my oath of office? How can I do that and live with the people of Mississippi? You know, they're expecting me to keep my word. That's what I'm up against, and I don't understand why the court, why the court wouldn't understand that.

President Kennedy: Oh, Governor, this is the President speaking.

Barnett: Yes, sir, Mr. President.

President Kennedy: Now it's, I know that . . . your feeling about the law of Mississippi and the fact that you don't want to carry out that court order. What we really want to have from you, though, is some understanding about whether the state police will maintain law and order. We understand your feeling about the court order . . .

Barnett: Yes.

President Kennedy: . . . and your disagreement with it. But what we're concerned about is how much violence [there] is going to be and what kind of action we'll have to take to prevent it. And I'd like to get assurances from you that the state police down there will take positive action to maintain law and order.

Barnett: Oh, they'll do that.

President Kennedy: Then we'll know what we have to do.

Barnett: They'll, they'll take positive action, Mr. President, to maintain law and order as best we can.

President Kennedy: And now, how good is . . .

Barnett: We'll have 220 highway patrolmen . . .

President Kennedy: Right.

Barnett: . . . and they'll absolutely be unarmed.

President Kennedy: I understa—

Barnett: Not a one of them'll be armed.

President Kennedy: Well, no, but the problem is, well, what can they do to maintain law and order and prevent the gathering of a mob and action taken by the mob? What can they do? Can they stop that?

Barnett: Well, they'll do their best to. They'll do everything in their power to stop it.

President Kennedy: Now, what about the suggestions made by the Attorney General in regard to not permitting people to congregate and start a mob?

Barnett: Well, we'll do our best to, to keep them from congregating, but that's hard to do, you know.

President Kennedy: Well, they just tell them to move along.

Barnett: When they start moving up on the sidewalks and different sides of the streets, what are you going to do about it?

President Kennedy: Well, now, as I understand it, Governor, you would do everything you can to *maintain* law and order.

Barnett: I, I, I'll do everything in my power to maintain order . . .

President Kennedy: Right. Now . . .

Barnett: . . . and peace. We don't want any shooting down here.

President Kennedy: I understand. Now, Governor, what about, can you maintain this order?

Barnett: Well, I don't know.

President Kennedy: Yes.

Barnett: That's what I'm worried about, you see. I don't know whether I can or not.

President Kennedy: Right.

Barnett: I couldn't have the other afternoon.[61]

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61. Barnett is undoubtedly referring to 27 September, when some 2,000 people, including students, farmers, and self-styled vigilantes, converged on Oxford from all over Mississippi, intent on stopping Meredith from registering. A worried Barnett telephoned the Attorney

President Kennedy: You couldn't have?

Barnett: There was such a mob there, it would have been impossible.

President Kennedy: I see.

Barnett: There were men in there with trucks and shotguns, and all such as that. Not a lot of them, but some, we saw, and certain people were just, they were just enraged.

President Kennedy: Well, now, will you talk . . .

Barnett: You just don't understand the situation down here.

President Kennedy: Well, the only thing is I got my responsibility.

Barnett: I know you do.

President Kennedy: This is not my order; I just have to carry it out. So I want to get together and try to do it with you in a way which is the most satisfactory and causes the least chance of damage to people in Mississippi. That's my interest.

Barnett: That's right. Would you be willing to wait awhile and let the people cool off on the whole thing?

President Kennedy: Till how long?

Barnett: Couldn't you make a statement to the effect, Mr. President, Mr. General, that under the circumstances existing in Mississippi, that, uh, there'll be bloodshed; you want to protect the life of, of, of James Meredith and all other people? And under the circumstances at this time, it just wouldn't be fair to him or others to try to register him at this time.

President Kennedy: Well, then at what time would it be fair?

Barnett: Well, we, we could wait a, I don't know.

President Kennedy: Yeah.

Barnett: It might be in, uh, two or three weeks, it might cool off a little.

President Kennedy: Well, would you undertake to register him in two weeks?

Barnett: Well, I, you know I can't undertake to register him myself . . .

President Kennedy: I see.

Barnett: . . . but you all might make some progress that way, you know.

President Kennedy: [*Laughs.*] Yeah. Well, we'd be faced with, unless we had your support . . .

Barnett: You see . . .

President Kennedy: . . . and assurance, we'd be . . .

General that day to report that he was uncertain if he could maintain order, claiming he could not disperse the crowd.

Barnett: . . . I say I'm going to, I'm going to cooperate. I might not know when you're going to register him, you know.

President Kennedy: I see. Well, now, Governor, why don't, do you want to talk to Mr. Watkins?

Barnett: I might not know that, what your plans were, you see.

President Kennedy: Do you want to, do you want to talk to Mr. Watkins then . . .

Barnett: I'll be delighted to talk to him, we'll call you back.

President Kennedy: OK, good.

Barnett: Call the General back.

President Kennedy: Yeah, call the General, and then I'll be around.

Barnett: All right. I appreciate it so much . . .

President Kennedy: Thanks, Governor.

Barnett: . . . and I thank you for this call.

President Kennedy: Thank you, Governor.

Barnett: All right.

President Kennedy: Right.

Barnett: Bye.

President Kennedy finally goes to the swimming pool. Burke Marshall and the Attorney General returned to the Justice Department, where they put finishing touches to two important telegrams, one to Louis Oberdorfer and the Justice Department's team in Oxford and the other on behalf of the President to Governor Barnett. The Justice Department ordered 300 deputy marshals to move to the campus at Oxford at 3:00 P.M., September 30, by helicopter.[62] The plan was to lay the groundwork so that Meredith could peacefully register at the Lyceum administration building on Monday. The gist of the President's wire was quite different. The White House was prepared to accept the plan for Meredith's sneak registration at the university's Jackson, Mississippi, campus on Monday while the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor made their public stand in Oxford.

A little after 7:12 P.M. on September 29, Barnett and the President spoke again, their third conversation of the day.[63] Beyond discussing the

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62. Angie Novello to Evelyn Lincoln, 29 September 1962, with attachment, Robert F. Kennedy, Personal Correspondence, Civil Rights, Mississippi, Box 11.

63. Due to a technical error with the recording system, this third conversation was not recorded. An approximate time for this conversation comes from a memo written by Robert

Monday plan for Meredith's sneak registration, Barnett assured Kennedy that the highway patrol would maintain law and order and guarantee Meredith's safety. The Kennedy administration, it seemed, had worked out a deal. Robert Kennedy was with his brother in the White House at the time of the call and then left for the night.

Although a political solution now seemed likely, Kennedy knew he wouldn't be going to Newport this weekend. He called an old friend, Congressman Torbert MacDonald of Massachusetts, who he hoped would substitute for him at a political event there.

7:36 P.M.

[Y]ou have to make a judgment about whether these trips are worthwhile or those speeches are worthwhile.

Conversation with Torbert MacDonald[64]

Evelyn Lincoln: Hello?

Unidentified: I have Congressman MacDonald for the President, in Malden. [*Pause.*]

President Kennedy: Hello. Hello?

Torbert MacDonald: Hello, Mr. President.

President Kennedy: How are you doing?

MacDonald: Oh, all right. How are you?

President Kennedy: Where are you? Up at York?

MacDonald: Oh, no. No, I'm in Malden, Jack.

President Kennedy: Oh, I see.

MacDonald: Yeah.

President Kennedy: Listen. Bill was down here this weekend. I didn't know whether you'd be able to come down.

Kennedy's secretary Angela Novello in February 1963 (see Novello to Burke Marshall, 19 February 1963, Robert Kennedy, Mississippi File). At 7:12 Barnett called the Justice Department to alert Robert Kennedy that he would be in his office for the next 10 to 15 minutes. Burke Marshall relayed this message to the Attorney General, who was with his brother at the White House. Robert Kennedy responded that Barnett should be told that "he was out of the office for a few minutes and to find out if this call was in answer to the wire sent by the President."

64. Dictabelt 4D2, Cassette A, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings Collection.

MacDonald: Oh.

President Kennedy: And get Sam Atkinson.

MacDonald: Well, not until the first of the week.

President Kennedy: Oh, you can't?

MacDonald: No.

President Kennedy: You can't get away there tomorrow?

MacDonald: No.

President Kennedy: Oh. OK.

MacDonald: How long is he going—

President Kennedy: Well, he's got to go back to . . . work tomorrow night, late. What do you got tomorrow?

MacDonald: Well, you know, it's been a full week.

President Kennedy: I know. Oh, I know you've had . . . I agree with that.

MacDonald: And, uh—

President Kennedy: You have to speak tomorrow?

MacDonald: Yeah.

President Kennedy: Oh.

MacDonald: And . . . they've sent some stuff up for me that has been postponed during the week, you know.

President Kennedy: Yeah, yeah.

MacDonald: And so . . . I'd love to . . . not until . . . What time is . . . he going back?

President Kennedy: Well, he'd probably go back . . . I don't know. You know, in time to get there at class Monday morning. But I didn't know whether you could sort of arrange your schedule, because it seems to me this is going to be one of those things that you wouldn't want to miss.

MacDonald: I'd certainly . . . I'd certainly try to do it—

President Kennedy: Well, why don't you check on it and then give me a call in the morning?

MacDonald: All right. I will.

President Kennedy: Will you be home in the morning?

MacDonald: Yes.

President Kennedy: Well, I . . . My judgment would be . . . based on long years of . . . Bill's been down here today. I've just talked to him. And my judgment would be that it . . . it's worth the trip.

MacDonald: Well, it's worth the trip if I can do the trip.

President Kennedy: Yeah, but, well, you have to make a judgment about whether these trips are worthwhile or those speeches are worthwhile.

MacDonald: Well, it's—

President Kennedy: [*laughing*] OK.

MacDonald: It isn't just that, Mr. President.

President Kennedy: I understand. Oh, I understand. But I just wanted to be sure that you knew about it.

MacDonald: The spirit is willing—

President Kennedy: OK.

MacDonald: —and of course—

President Kennedy: Yeah, I know.

MacDonald: I think this will be nice.

President Kennedy: OK. Well, in any case—

MacDonald: You really want me to call you tomorrow?

President Kennedy: Well, no. But I think it would be worth doing.

MacDonald: Well, how about in the afternoon or night tomorrow?

President Kennedy: Yeah. Can you come down tomorrow?

MacDonald: Well, late afternoon, maybe. Yes.

President Kennedy: You mean when you get finished?

MacDonald: Well, I figure that I could get out of here by about four, five o'clock in the afternoon—

President Kennedy: Yeah. That's fine. Good.

MacDonald: All right.

President Kennedy: OK. I'll call you. I'll give you a call in the morning. You can get a hold of [*unclear*] Atkinson.

MacDonald: All right.

President Kennedy: OK. Bye now.

The President went to the Mansion and had some ice cream sent up. He was settling into his evening's activities when his brother called with bad news. The deal with Barnett was off. For the next two hours, he was on the telephone with Robert Kennedy and deputy press secretary, Andrew Hatcher. At one point the President even roused Theodore Sorensen from his hospital bed to draft a speech he could use if he decided to call in troops.

Ultimately, the President decided to federalize the National Guard, an eventuality already under consideration. At 11:50 P.M., he sent word to the Secret Service that he wanted to be notified when the Justice Department had sent over the proclamation, which he intended to sign that night. At 11:58 P.M., Kennedy sat down with Norbert Schlei, head of the Office of Legal Counsel, in the Oval Room of the family quarters and signed Proclamation 3497, which ordered those who were obstructing justice in Mississippi "to cease and desist therefrom and to retire peaceably forthwith." He then signed an executive order placing the Mississippi National Guard units under federal control. Kennedy inquired whether these docu-

ments were the same as those Eisenhower had signed in 1957 in the Little Rock case. Schlei said they were, noting the wording had been improved. As Schlei prepared to leave, Kennedy tapped the table, pointing out that it had belonged to General Ulysses S. Grant. Not wanting to antagonize the South, Kennedy advised Schlei not to mention Grant's table to the press.

The South was already agitated. As Kennedy directed the drawing up of the proclamation, Governor Barnett attended an Ole Miss football game at Jackson Memorial Stadium, where 46,000 fans cheered not only for their beloved university against the Kentucky Wildcats but also for their Governor. It was then that Barnett, responding to the chant of "We want Ross," strode onto the floodlit field, stepped to the microphone, and declared, "I love Mississippi. I love her people. I love our customs."

Just after midnight, President Kennedy went to sleep. The crisis he had predicted that fall was starting, but it was starting in Oxford, Mississippi, not West Berlin.

Sunday, September 30–Monday, October 1, 1962

After attending mass at St. Stephen's Church, the President hosted a lunch for the British foreign secretary, Lord Home, at the White House. The Anglo-American agenda was full. But Berlin, the Congo, and Cuba dominated the conversation. The discussion continued for a while after lunch.

For the moment, Mississippi was the most dangerous place in the world for the federal government. After the British delegation left, Kennedy turned his principal attention to the problem of safely registering an African American, James Meredith, at the all-white University of Mississippi in Oxford. Governor Barnett had come up with a new plan for ending this stalemate peacefully. He proposed that Meredith be brought to the campus surrounded by a large group of federal agents. Barnett was looking for a dramatic way to save face. The defenders of a white Ole Miss would attempt to stare down Meredith but would then retreat in the face of a much larger force. The Attorney General, to whom the Governor had suggested the "show of force" scheme, turned it down. Robert Kennedy then threatened Barnett with making public that the Governor had been negotiating with the Kennedy brothers behind the backs of the segregationists. The Attorney General's threat resulted in a new Barnett scheme. He suggested that the federal government sneak Meredith onto the campus that afternoon. Barnett would then announce in a speech that he had