

Bundy: Well, then, we better board. . . .

Dillon: We've got to board this one.

Bundy: We've got to board this one, if we board somebody else's.

McNamara: Well, there will be ships we won't . . . There will be tankers we didn't board. It will turn out to be a variety of factors.

Bundy: It would look pretty awful to me if we board a British tanker, and not this one.

Robert Kennedy: A Russian tanker . . . I think that they're going to [*unclear*].

Theodore Sorensen: If it's important to board a Russian ship, and it seems to me it is, this may be the *best* chance you'll have with them. They'll never let you board a ship that really has something serious on it.

President Kennedy: Well, they're not sending anything serious right now. It seems the serious ones [Soviet ships] were turned around. Quite obviously the most [*unclear*].

I think the whole problem is to make a judgment of Khrushchev's message to me last night combined with—in which he said they're not going to do it—they're going to take action if we do—combined with what is happening at the U.N. and so on. Now, unless there is something . . . Unless more time is going to make it more likely that we're going to get something out of either the U.N. or Khrushchev, then I suppose you have to grasp the nettle. I don't know whether 48 hours, having let this go through, having this [ship arrive in Cuba] tomorrow, then announce in Cuba that we've let it go through. An American ship accosted . . .

McNamara: But I think it's such an obvious reason for letting it go through that it would not weaken our position to have them announce it went through, Mr. President.

Robert Kennedy: You could not pick up the other one [the *Grozny*]?

McNamara: Well, we can pick it up. But it can be done in less than 48 hours. It can't be done in less than 24, I would think.

Robert Kennedy: You couldn't pick it up this afternoon?

McNamara: No, sir.

President Kennedy: Well, this ship won't be in till tomorrow. We have our test case then tomorrow.

Robert Kennedy: Well, what time of day? We don't know definitely what time tomorrow.

McNamara: No, but I think . . . We can't pick it up except at a considerable distance from Cuba.

Unidentified: That's crazy.

President Kennedy: Now they've [the *Bucharest*] already wired back