

Unidentified: My bet is that the letter, the long letter last night, he wrote himself.

Rusk: And sent out without clearance.

Ball: Without clearance there, yes.

Thompson: The Politburo intended this one.

McNamara: You see, this completely changes the character of the deal we're likely to be able to make, and also, therefore, our action in the interim, in [*unclear*] has got to really keep the pressure on them, in this [*unclear*] situation.

Bundy: I agree. This should be knocked down publicly. A private . . .

Let me suggest this scenario. We knock this down publicly in the way we have just described, separating the issues, keeping attention on Cuba, with a four-point requirement involved, as expressed.

Privately, we say to Khrushchev: Look, your public statement is a very dangerous one because it makes impossible immediate discussion of your private proposals and requires us to proceed urgently with the things that we have in mind. You'd better get straightened out.

Dillon: This is exactly what I think.

Unidentified: Yeah.

Unidentified: And that's exactly right.

Unidentified: And we release the fact that there was the other letter?

Bundy: No, we don't. We say we are reluctant to release this letter which displayed the inconsistency in your position, but we don't have very much time.

At about this time, President Kennedy returned to the Cabinet Room.

McNamara: Our point, Bobby, is he's changed the deal. Well, almost before we even got the first letter translated, he added a completely new deal and he released it publicly. And under these circumstances we've . . .

Unidentified: What is the day he changed the deal?

McCone: What is the timing on this?

Robert Kennedy: What is the advantage? I don't know which, where you are 24 hours from now. So we win that argument. But before 24 hours—

McNamara: We incorporate a new deal in our letter.

Robert Kennedy: We give him four steps that he has to take: Stop construction; [*unclear*] his missiles so they can't be made alert . . .

McNamara: Remove the missiles.

Robert Kennedy: . . . have inspection sites and then have the inspections. Now the problem is going to be, not the fact that we have this exchange with him, in my judgment, but the fact that he's going to have a ploy publicly that's going to look rather satisfactory at the present.