A 1000 DAYS USSR - Kennedy

p.301 .... Khrushchev, who had given up on Eisenhower after the U-2 incident and the collapse of the Paris summit in May 1960, seized several opportunities to semaphore his hopes for Kennedy. His messages to Harriman and others after the election were followed by a Pugwash meeting on disarmament in Moscow in December. ...

.... Later Khrushchev's warm congratulatory message to Kennedy at the inaugural and his release of the RB-17 fliers a few days after

p.302 - an act deliberabely postponed, as Khrushchev made clear to Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson, to benefit the Democrats rather than the Republicans - reinforced the sense that Moscow desired, in the phrase of the moment, a reduction of tensions.

A 1000 DAYS USSR - Missile Power

p.302 .... Success in developing the hydrogen bomb and surpassing America in long-range missiles gave the Soviet leaders confidence in their own technological prowess as well as, for the first time in the history of the Bolshevik Revolution, assurance against foreign attack. ...

A 1000 DAYS ussr - Cuba, policies

p.303 ... World wars and "local wars" he (Khrushchev) categorically rejected as leading directly or progressively to nuclear holocaust. "Wars of liberation or popular uprisings" were quite another matter. He defined "national-liberation wars" as those "which began as uprisings of colonial peoples against their oppressors (and) developed into guerrilla wars." "What is the attitude of the Marxists to such uprisings?' he asked. "A most favorable attitude," he replied. ". . . The Communists support just wars of this kind wholeheartedly and without reservation and they march in the van of the peoples fighting for liberation." He named Cuba, Vietnam and Algeria as examples and added that the "multiplying of othe forces of the national-liberation movement" in recent years stemmed largely from the opening of the new front against American imperialism in Latin America. As for "peaceful coexistence," this was, "so far as its social content is concerned, a form of intense economic, political and ideological struggle between the proletariat and the aggressive forces of imperialism in the world arena."

p.315 Khrushchev's January speech made emphatic the point often expressed by Eisenhower during his Presidency - the impossibility of total nuclear war as an intrument of rational policy.

p.314 He had no illusions about the difficulties of his quest. The Department had already balked, thwarted, exposed and broken a succession of able men imprudent enough to accept appointment as Secretary. "This place is a jungle - a jungle," McNamara himself cried in his first weeks.

p.319 Within the White House his directness, intelligence and decisiveness immediately won the complete and lasting confidence of the President. The Secretary also quickly achieved an effective relationship with Jerome Wiesner who had fought hard through the fifties to improve the state of American defense and whose work on the Gaither committee of 1957 had prepared the ground for McNamara's reconstruction of strategy now. McGeorge Bundy also kept an alert eye on the evolution of defense policy; and both Bundy's and Wiesner's hands were strengthened when Carl Kaysen, a Harvard economist who united cogency as a debater and intrepidity as an operator, joined the National Security Council staff. McNamara, Wiesner, Bundy and Kaysen worked well together (three were old friends from Cambridge). They gave the President confidence that he was in a position to control national strategy.

A 1000 DAYS Nixon

p.336/7.... Later that day, when Nixon saw the President and urged an invasion of Cuba, he also urged "a commitment of American air power" to Laos. According to Nixon's recollection, Kennedy replied, "I just don't think we ought to get involved in Laos, particularly where we might find ourselves fighting millions of Chinese troops in the jungles. In any event, I don't see how we can make any move in Laos, which is 5000 miles away, if we don't make a move in Cuba, which is only 90 miles away."°

° Richard M. Nixon, "Cuba, Castro and John F. Kennedy," Reader's Digest, November 1964.

p.337 .... Nehru. (The Indian leader had been skeptical about the American desire for neutralization until Galbraith assured him that Ametricans were practical men and did not set military value on the Lao, "who do not believe in getting killed like the civilized races.") The next day the Laotian government gratefully accepted the call. So did Souvanna, still on his travels, and even Souphanouvong. But fighting did not cease; and, according to reports reaching Washington on Wednesday, April 26, the Pathet Lao were attacking in force, as if to overrun the country before the cease-fire could take effect. On Thursday the National Security Counsil held a long and confused session. Walt Rostow has told me that it was the worst White House meeting he attended in the entire Kennedy administration.

Rostow and the Laos task force, supported by Harriman who was now on a trip of inspection in Laos, still urged a limited commitment of American troops to the Mekong valley. But the Joint Chiefs, chastened by the Bay of Pigs, declined to guarantee the success of o the military operation, even with the 60,000 men they had recommended a month before. The participants in the meeting found it hard to make out what the Chiefs were trying to say. Indeed, the military were so divided that Vice-President Johnson finally proposed that they put their views in writing in order to clarify their differences. The President, it is said, later received seven differrent memoranda, from the four Chiefs of Staff and three service secretaries. (It was about this time that a group of foreign students visited the Wh9te House and the President, introduced to a young lady from Laos, remarked, "Has anyone asked your advice yet?")

p.338 The military proved ono more satisfactory in explaining the proposals they were prepared to make. The President was appalled at the sketchy nature of American military planning for Laos - the lack of detail and the unanswered questions. One day they suggested sending troops into two airstrips in Pathet Lao territory; they could land a thousand troops a day, and there were 5000 enemy guerrillas nearby. Kennedy, after interrogation, discovered that the airstrips could only be used by day and that it would take a week or so for troops to reach them overland. He then asked what would happen if the Pathet Lao allowed the troops to land for two days and then attacked. The military did not seem to have thought of that.

For all their differences, the military left a predominant impression that they did not want ground troopsat all unless they could send at least 140,000 men equipped with tactical nuclear weapons. By now o the Pentagon was developin g what would become its standard line in Southeast Asia - unrelenting opposition to limited intefvention except on the impossible condition that the President agree in advance to every further step they deemed sequential, including, on eccasion, nuclear bombing of Hanoi and even Peking. At one National Security Council meeting General Lemnitzer outlined the processes by which each American action would provoke a Chinese counteraction, provoking in turn an even more drastic American response. He concluded: "If we are given the right to use nuclear weapons, we can guarantee victory." The President sat glumly rubbing his upper molar, saying nothing. After a moment someone said, "Mr. President, perhaps you would have the General explain to us what he means by victory." Kennedy grunted and dismissed the meeting. Later he said, "Since he couldn't think of any further escalation, he would have to promise us victory."

The Chiefs had their own way of reacting to the Cuban fiasco. It soon began to look to the White House as if they were taking care to build a record which would permit them to say that, whatever the President did, he acted against their advice. This had not yet been identified as a tactic, howevet, and in April 1961 their opposition to limited intervention had a powerful effect. As Robert Kennedy said, "If even the Marines don't want to go in!" Immediately afterward, the President enoountered equally formidable opposition from congressional leaders. In New York that night for a speech, he gathered other opinions. General MacArthur expressed his old view that anyone wanting to commit American ground forces to the mainland of Asia should have his head examined. He added that, if we intervened anywhere in Southeast Asia, we must be prepared to use nuclear weapons should the Chinese en ter in force. And there always remained the difficulty of justifying intervention against communism in Laos while rejecting it against communism in Cuba.

p.339

General Lemnitzer had already gone to Laos, where he joined Harriman. Once on the spot. Lemnitzer endorsed the case for the more limited commitment. When I returned from my post-Bay of Pigs trip to Europe on May 3, the President said, "If it hadn't been for Cuba, we might be about to intervene in Laos." Waving a sheaf of cables from Lemnitzer, he added, "I might have taken this advice seriously." But he was determined to avert total collapse. He had, I believe, been prepared to undertake limited intervention in Laos before the Bay of Pigs, and he did not altogether exclude it now. Once again he ordered troops on the alert. At Okinawa 10,000 Marines were ready to go. Kennedy told Rostow that Eisenhower could stand the political consequences of Dien Bien Phu and the expulsion of the west from Vietnam in 1954 because the blame fell on the French; "I can't take a 1954 defeat today."

A 1000 Days

ADVISERS - Military
Nixon - J. F. Dulles
J F K's Methods

pp.339/40

... The Laos crisis of 1961 differed greatly from the Dien Bien Phu crisis of 1954, when vague and menacing statements by the Vice-President, the Secretary of State and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff heightened both popular and international tensions without leading to any useful result. Instead, Kennedy made quiet but hard military preparations, let the Russians know about them and let them know at the same time that there was an honorable alternative to fighting. The outcome was to halt the imminent communization of Laos.

Underscoring mine

This was a first experiment in Kennedy diplomacy under pressure, and it was marked by restraint of manner, toughness of intention and care to leave the adversary a way of escape without loss of face. Khrushchev, for his part, found himself involved with a group of local communist militants whose actions he could not entirely control and whose allegiance he sought in the struggle for the international communist movement. But he did not want war, and, once he believed that Kennedy would fight if pushed too far, he retreated to negotation, confident that history would eventually deliver what opposition had temporarily denied. In retrospect, the Laos crisis of 1961 seems in some ways a dress rehearsal for the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

A 1000 DAYS BAY OF PIGS - Consequences - USSR - Methods

p.343 .... And on May 12, he had received an unexpected reply from N. S. Khrushchev to his letter of February 22, reopening the question, presumed dead after the Bay of Pigs, of a meeting in Vienna in early June.

p.346/7.... As a Senator Kennedy had repeatedly emphasized the gravity of the stakes in Berlin. In July 1960 he predicted on Meet the Press that by the next January or February Khrushchev would "face the next President of the United States with a very difficult decision, perhaps even an ultimatum on Berlin." He added: "We should make it very clear that we are not going to concede our position on Berlin, that we are going to meet our commitment to defend the liberty of the people of West Berlin, and that if Mr. Khrushchev pushes it to the ultimate, we are prepared to meet our obligation."

p.347/8.... Kennedy himself, with characteristic detachment, used to wonder later what had gone wrong in the spring of 1961. He thought at times that the March and May messages calling for an increased American defense effort might have / sounded too threatening. It is possible that the acceleration of the Minuteman and Polaris programs had unintended effects in Moscow and that, as Kuznetsov had warned Wiesner and Rostow at the Pugwash meeting, the Soviet leaders now saw no choice but to match the American build-up. In addition, Harriman in his March debut as roving ambassador had said that "all discussions in Berlin must begin from the start." This was a move to disengage Kennedy from the concessions the Eisenhower administration had made in 1959 and even more from the ones we had been informed Eisenhower was ready to make at the 1960 summit meeting in Paris; but Moscow no doubt read it as a hardening of American policy. Yet at the same time the Soviet signals were not, seen from Washington, very encouraging. Khrushchev's truculent speech of January preceded Kennedy's defense messages by many weeks; and his decision to move against West Berlin had ample explanation in his own problems and ambitions.

As for the President, he saw no sense in meeting Khrushchev unless something of substance was likely to result. When the Attorney General made this point to the Soviet Ambassador, he was given to understand that progress was entirely conceivable on Laos and on the test ban. Beyond these specific problems, the President was attracted by the meeting as offering an opportunity to define the framework for future American-Soviet relations. Kennedy saw the world as in a state of uncontrollable change, rushing in directions no one could foresee. The equilibrium of force, he believed, was now roughly in balance between the United States and the Soviet Union - if not in the sense of numerical parity, at least in the sense that neither could hope to destroy the other and emerge unscathed; and the overriding need, he felt, was to prevent direct confrontations between Russian and American power in the chaotic time ahead. He intended to propose, in effect, a standstill in the cold war so that neither great nuclear state, in the inevitable competition around the planet, would find itself committed to actions which would risk its essential security, threaten the existing balance of force or endanger world peace. In particular, if, as Ambassador/Thompson's dispatches forecast, Khrushchev meant to get tough over Berlin, Kennedy wished to make clear, in a favorite Washington phrase that spring, that Khrushchev must not crowd him too much.

p.350 .... De Gaulle commented that Khrushchev had been threatening action on Berlin and laying down six-month deadlines for two and a half years. Surely if he planned to go to war over Berlin, he would have done so already. He recalled his own remark to Khrushchev that, while it was too bad that Berlin was situated in the Soviet zone,

there it was, and its future could be solved only within a framework of general detente and disarmament.

The problem, Kennedy said, was whether Khrushchev really believed in the firmness of the west; even President de Gaulle himself had re-cently questioned whether the United States was ready to defend Paris at the risk of the obliteration of New York. .... De Gaulle added that the west could not win a military victory in Berlin; Khrushchev must be made to recognize that fighting around Berlin would mean a general war. The General insisted again that this was the last thing Khrush-chev wanted.

p.351 .... We must make our policy clear by action, Kennedy said, and Khrushchev must understand that, if necessary, we would go to nuclear war.

p.356 In asides intended for Vienna, he affirmed "strong hopes" for a test ban agreement in Geneva and a cease-fire in Laos. He was going to Vienna, above all, he said, so that he and Khrushchev could understand each other's purposes and interests and therefore avoid the "serious miscalculations" which had produced the earlier wars of the century.

A 1000 DAYD ADVISERS

p.352 As they prepared to break up, de Gaulle paused, charmingly cited the prerogatives of age and ventured to suggest that the President not pay too much attention to his advisers or give too much respect to the policies he had inherited. In the last analysis, the General said, what counted for every man was himself and his own judgment. He was expounding, of course, the Gaullist philosophy of leadership. His counsel, after the Bay of Pigs, fell on receptive ears.

pp.359/74

Kennedy now expressed his hope that the meeting would lead to a better understanding of common problems. To his mind, the question was how two great nations, with different social systems,confronting each other across the world, could avoid head-on collision in an era of great change. Khrushchev went instantly on the offensive. The Soviet Union, he said, had tried for a long time to develop friendly relations with the United States. But it refused to do so at the expense of other peoples because agreements of this sort would not bring peace. America must understand that communism has won its right to grow and develop. The premise of John Foster Dulles's policy had been the liquidation of communism; this philosophy could never lead to good relations. He would not hope to persuade the President of the merits of communism, Khrushchev said, any more than he expected the President to waste time trying to convert him to capitalism. But de facto recognition of the existence of communism was indispensable.

Kennedy observed courteously that Americans were impressed by the economic achievement of the Soviet Union; it was a source of satisfaction to the whole world. But, as he saw the problem, it was not that the democracies were trying to eliminate communism in areas under communist control, but that the communists were trying to eliminate free systems in areas associated with the west. Khrushchev brusquely rejected this. It was impossible, he said, for the Soviet Union to implant its policy in other states. All the Soviet Union claimed was that communism would triumph; this was not propaganda but a scientific analysis of social development. Communism was superseding capitalism today as capitalism had superseded feudalism in the past. Changes in social systems were bound to come, but they would be brought about only by the will of the people themselves. The Communists believed in their systems, as the President believed in his. In any event, this was a matter for debate, not for war. The Soviet desire for general and complete disarmament proved its intention not to resort to arms.

The great need, Kennedy commented, was for each side to under- / p.360 stand the other's views. The American position was that people should have freedom of choice. When communist minorities seized control against the popular will, the Chairman regarded this as historical inevitability; we did not, and this brought our two nations into conflict. Obviously we could not avoid disagreement, but we could avoid the direct confrontation of our military forces. Our interest here was to make clear why we were concerned about what the communists called inevitability.

This led Khrushchev into a sententious discourse on intellectual freedom. Did the United States, he asked, plan to build a dam against the development of the human mind and conscience? The Inquisition had burned people but could not burn their ideas, and eventually the ideas prevailed. History must be the judge in a competition of ideas. If capitalism could insure a better life, it would win. If not ,communism would win; but which would be a victory of ideas, not of arms.

To this Kennedy responded that the two powers shared the obligation to conduct the competition of ideas without involving vital national interests. Khrushchev said sharply that he hoped he had misunderstodd this remark. Did the President hold the Soviet Union responsible for the development of communist ideas? Did he mean that communism should exist only in countries already communist and that, if it developed elsewhere, the United States would be in conflict with the Soviet Union? This view was incorrect; and, if that was really the way the United States thought, conflict could not be avoided. Ideas did not belong to one

nation. Once born, they grew. No immunization was possible against them. The only rule was that they should not be propagated by arms nor by intervention in the internal affairs of other countries. He could guarantee that the Soviet Union would never impose ideas by war.

Kennedy quoted Mao Tse-tung's remark that power came out of the end of the rifle. Khrushchev blandly denied that Mao ever said this; Mao was a Marxist, and Marxists were against war. Kennedy repeated that Khrushchev must understand the American views; if our two nations failed to preserve the peace, the whole world would be the loser. "My ambition," Kennedy said, "is to secure peace." The greatest danger was the miscalculation by one power of the interests and policy of another.

p.361 The word "miscalculation" irritated Khrushchev. It was a vague term, he said, and it suggested to him that America wanted the Soviet Union to sit like a schoolboy with hands on the top of the desk. The Soviet Union held its ideas in high esteem and declined to guarantee that they would stop at the Russian frontier. He did not understand the American theory of what Russia had to do to maintain the peace. The Soviet Union was going to defend its vital interests, whether or not the United States regarded such acts as miscalculations; it did not want war, but it would not be intimidated either. Of course war would be fatal; both sides would lose equally and be punished equally. But the west should put the word "miscalculation" into cold storage, for its use did not impress the Soviet Union at all.

By "miscalculation," Kennedy patiently explained, he meant the difficulty of predicting what any country might do next. The United States itself had made misjudgements, as when it failed to foresee Chinese intervention in the Korean War. The purpose of the meeting, as he saw it, was to introduce precision into each side's assessments and thereby minimize the risks of misjudgement. Khruschev, retreating to jolliness, commented that, if the meeting succeeded, the expenses of bringing it about would be well justified. If it failed, not only would the money be wasted but the hopes of the people of the world would be betrayed.

It was time for lunch. The conversation had been civil but tough. Khrushchev had not given way before Kennedy's reasonableness, nor Kennedy before Khrushchev's intransigence. Badinage took over again at the luncheon table. Noticing two medals on Khrushchev's chest, Kennedy asked what they were. The Soviet Chairman identified them as Lenin Peace Medals. The American President observed, perhaps a trifle grimly, "I hope you keep them."

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p.362 Kennedy and Khrushchev strolled in the garden for a moment after luncheon. Then they resumed the discussion. Kennedy restated his thesis: change was inevitable, but war would be catastrophic in the nuclear age; both sides must therefore take care to avoid situations which might lead to war. As for miscalculation, every leader had to make judgments; he himself had miscalculated about the Bay of Pigs. He had to estimate what the Soviet Union would do, just as Khrushchev had to estimate about the United States. If we could only reduce the margin of uncertainty in such calculations, then our two nations might survive the period of competition without nuclear war.

p.363 All right, said Khrushchev, but how could we work anything out when the United States regarded revolution anywhere as the result of communist machinations? It was really the United States which caused revolution by backing reactionary governments; look at Iran, look at Cuba. Fidel Castro was not a Communist, but American policy was making him one. Khrushchev himself had not been born a Communist; the capitalists had converted him. Kennedy's assumption that revolution was

the consequence of intervention was dangerous. And, after all, it was the United States which had set the precedent for intervention.

Kennedy disclaimed any brief for Batista; as for Iran, if the Shah did not improve conditions for the people, change would be inevitable. This, he protested, was not the issue. The issue was the disruption of the existing equilibrium of power. The Castro regime was objectionable, not because it expelled American monopolies, but because it offered communism a base in the western hemisphere. The Soviet Union, he said pointedly, did not tolerate hostile governments in its own areas of vital interests; what would Khrushchev do, for example, if a pro-American government were established in Warsaw? The United States did not object to the Marxist governments of Guinea or Mali. If governments ruled in the interest of wealthy minorities, of course they were doomed; but social changes must take place peacefully and must not involve the prestige or commitments of America and Russia or upset the balance of world power.

He now brought up Laos. Past Amerucan policy there had not always been wise. The Pathet Lao had certain advantages; they received supplies and manpower from North Vietnam; moreover, they stood for change. Kennedy noted that he himself had been elected President as an advocate of change. The solution was to let a neutral and independent Laos decide its own future; and the problem was to make the cease-fire work by setting up a mechanism for its verification.

Khrushchev, displaying no great interest in Laos, preferred to revert to the question of reactionary regimes. Our two sides differed, he said, in our understanding of what popular or anti-popular movements were. We should both agree not to interfere and to leave it to the people of the country. The worst thing for the United States to do, he warned, was to start guerrilla warfare against / regimes it did not p.364 like; no undertaking was more hopeless than guerrilla action instigated from outside and not supported by the people. He did not know, Khrushchev went on, whether the balance of power was exact, but no matter; each side had enough power to destroy the other. That was why there should be no interference. But the United States supported colonial powers, as in Africa, and then was surprised when the people turned against it. Kennedy pointed out that the United States had in fact backed liberation movements in Africa and hoped that the number of independent African states would increase. Khrushchev replied with scorn that the American policy was uneven, its voice timid. It might endorse anti-colonialism for tactical reasons, but its heart was with the colonialists. Why not adopt the Soviet policy of tolerance and noninterference?

Kennedy brought up Khruschchev's pledge to support wars of national liberation in his speech of January 6. Was this noninterference? Obviously both nations were helping groups in other countries. The problem, while we backed our respective movements, was not to clash ourselves. Khrushchev vigorously defended his speech. If subject peoples, promised independence by the United Nations, were still denied their rights, how long were they expected to wait?m Wars of national liberation, he said, were "sacred" wars, and the Soviet was certainly going to support them. America itself had rebelled in this manner against Britain. Now it opposed other peoples who followed their example. The Tsars had denied the revolutionary American republic recognition for twenty-six years as an illegitimate regime. Now America refused to recognize China; "things have changed, haven't they?" The realistic policy for the United States would be to recognize China and admit it to the United Nations. Of course, this could not be done so long as

Chiang Kai-shek held his position, whether in Taiwan or the UN. If he were in Mao's place, Khrushchev added, he would probably have attacked Taiwan long ago.

Kennedy made once again the point about preserving the existing balance of power. The entry of additional nations into the communist camp, the loss of Taiwan - such developments would alter the equilibrium. But Khrushchev energetically rejected this conception. If some African country were to go communist, he said, it might add a few drops

p.365 to the bucket of communist power, were the/balance of power conceived as a bucket on each side. But it would also be an expression of the popular will; and any attempt to stop it from outside would bring about a chain reaction and possibly war.

Kennedy responded with equal force that, so far as Washington was concerned, countries with varied social systems could pursue independent policies, like India, Burma, Yugoslavia. But changes which altered the balance of world power were different; perhaps the Russians might agree if, for example, Poland should join the west. No doubt America supported some governments which did not represent the will of the people; but could the Chairman be certain about the result if the Poles were given a chance to express their free choice? He felt it time, Kennedy added, to discuss Laos and the test ban in detail.

Khrushchev affected outrage over Kennedy's reference to Poland, contending that Poland's electoral system was more democratic than that of the United States, where parties existed only to deceive the people. As for preserving the existing balance, if this were the premise of American policy, Khrushchev said he must doubt whether the United States really wanted peaceful coexistence or was seeking a pretext for war. After all, he said, the United States might occupy Crimea on the claim that this improved its strategic position. This was the policy of Dulles.

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p.366 For Kennedy the status quo was the existing (emphasis mine) balance of international force. This did not at all mean that he wanted to freeze the world in its social mold. On the contrary, he believed internal political and institutional change to be both inevitable and desirable. But his hope was that it would take place without transferring power from one block to the other and therefore without making either side feel threatened and constrained to resist change by force.

For Khrushchev, on the other hand, the status quo was something very different; it was in essence the communist revolution in progress (as he hoped) across the world. From this perspective Kennedy's conception of a global standstill was an attempt not to support but to alter the status quo; it was an attack on the revolutionary process itself. This idea of a dynamic or potential status quo was, of course, deeply imbedded in Leninist analysis. Reminiscing about Vienna three years later, Khrushchev complained to William Benton that Kennedy had "bypassed" the real problem. "We in the USSR," he said, "feel that the revolutionary process should have the right to exist." The question of "the right to rebel, and the Soviet right to help combat reactionary governments ... is the question of questions ... This question is at the heart of our relations with you. ... Kennedy could not understand this."°

° I am grateful to Senator Benton for letting me see the memorandum of his interview with Chairman Khrushchev on May 28, 1964.

Kennedy understood it well enough after Khrushchev's January speech, and he understood it very well indeed after the first day in Vienna. Khrushchev's response left nodoubt about the joker in the Soviet doctrine of coexistence: the idea of a dynamic status quo meant simply that the democracies had no right to intervene in the communist world, while the communists had every right to intervene in the democratic world. (Note: like Laos, Vietnam, Taiwan, Cambodia, Burma? Schaesinger is not honest here.) But Kennedy nevertheless felt that the offer of a standstill was worth the effort. Where he perhaps erred in was in beginning by engaging Khrushchev in abstract discussion. / Ideological debate was bound to be fruitless; Khrushchev was not likely to forswear the faith of a lifetime. Moreover, Khrushchev was a veteran dialectician. Though Kennedy held his own, he was fighting on his opponent's familiar terrain. He might have done better to seek the realm of concrete fact, the pragmatic rather than the ideological debating ground, and concentrate, as he had tried increasingly to do through the day, on particular situations in particular countries. But even this would probably not have made much difference. Khrushchev came to Vienna ready to collaborate on Laos and on nothing else; for the rest, he hoped to unnerve Kennedy and force him into concessions.

p.367

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They resumed their talks the next morning. The President began by saying that, if they couldn't agree on everything, at least they might be able to agree on Laos. Here after all was a land without strategic importance to either side but in which the United States had treaty commitments. America wanted to reduce its involvement in Laos, Kennedy said, and he hoped the Soviet Union would wish to do the same. Laos was not important enough to entangle two great nations.

p.368

Khrushchev responded that the Soviet Union had no desire to assume responsibilities in remote geographical areas. It was in Laos only at the request of Souvanna Phouma and the legitimate government. When Kennedy spoke of American commitments, he made a bad impression. What business did the United States have claiming special rights in Laos? If the President would pardon his bluntness, Khrushchev said, this policy stemmed from delusions of grandeur, from megalomania. America was so rich and powerful that it asserted rights for itself and denied rights to others. The Soviet Union did not agree and would not desist from helping other peoples to win their independence. If America really wanted to normalize the situation and avoid confrontations, it must renounce its claim to special rights.

Kennedy responded that the commitments had been made before he became President; why they were undertaken was not an issue here. Whatever had happened in the past, the issue now was to decrease commitments on both sides and get a neutral and independent Laos. Khrushchev doubted whether these commitments were altogether a legacy; after all, Kennedy had put the American military advisers into uniform and had ordered a landing of Marines. When Kennedy said that, though there had been speculation about sending Marines, no such order had been issued, Khrushchev replied that he was referring to press reports. The west, he added, was better than the Communists in making this kind of refined threat; and, if the United States sent in Marines, another Korea or worse would result. As for the Soviet Union, it would guarantee to exert every effort to influence the Laotian forces to establish a truly neutral government.

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Add TEST BAN

The next question was the test ban. There were two issues here, Khrushchev began: the number of suspicious events to be inspected, and p.369 the organization of the machinery of inspect. As for the / first, the Soviet Union considered three inspections a year sufficient; any more would constitute espionage. As for the control mechanism, the Soviet Union had originally been ready to accept a commission chaired by a representative of the United Nations. Now, after the unneutral behavior of the UN in the Congo, this was no longer possible. The only fair way was to establish a body made up of representatives of the three world groups - the Communists, the neutrals and the western states - empowered to adopt only decisions agreed upon by all. The work of other international organizations, Khrushchev added, should be organized along similar lines. In any case, Khrushchev continued, the test ban had little importance by itself; it must be linked with the general and complete disarmament. If the west would accept the Soviet disarmament plan, then the Soviet Union would drop the troika and the requirement for unanimity and agree to any controls. Let the disarmament negotiations include the test ban. If we pushed ahead, we could have general and complete disarmament in two years .

Kennedy asked whether Khrushchev really thought it impossible to find any person neutral between the United States and the Soviet o Union. Khrushchev replied that he did. But the troika, Kennedy said, meant a a veto over the inspection process; how could either he or Khrushchev assure his people that no secret testing was going on in the other nation? Khrushchev said irrelevantly, "But what about Allen Dulles? Isn't that secret?" Kennedy answered that he wished it were.

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p.370 After this unsatisfactory discussion, they turned to Berlin. Here Khrushchev, while still stopping short of bluster, displayed his greatest animation and intensity. The German situation, he said, was intolerable. It was sixteen years after the end of the war, and there was still no peace settlement. In the meantime, a rearmed West Germany had become predominant in NATO. This meant the threat of a third world war. Only the West German militarists would gain from further delay. He wanted to reach agreement with the west on a treaty, Khrushchev said; but, if the United States refused, the Soviet Union would sign the treaty alone. This act would end the state of war and cancel all existing commitments,including occupation rights, administrative institutions and p.371 rights of access. The treaty would establish a free city of / West Berlin. There would be no interference with its internal affairs or its communications, though agreement on access would have to be reached with the Democratic Republic. Western troops would be acceptable in West Berlin under certain conditions - and, of course, with Soviet troops too.

Kennedy, thanking him for stating the case so frankly, came back with equal frankness. This discussion, he said, raised not only legal questions but practical facts which affect American security. They were not talking about Laos any longer; Berlin was of primary and vital concern to the United States. We were not in Berlin on anyone's sufferance. We fought our way there, and our continuing presence rested on contractual rights. If we allowed ourselves to be expelled, American pledges and commitments would ever after be regarded as scraps of paper. Moreover, if we abandoned West Berlin, it would mean the abandonment of Western Europe, which America had deemed essential to its security in two wars. If Khrushchev agreed that the equilibrium of world power was more or less in balance, he must understand the consequences of his demand. America, Kennedy said, would not accept an ultimatum. He had not become President of the United States to acquiesce in the isolation

of his country - any more than Khrushchev would acquiesce in the isolation of the Soviet Union.

Khrushchev said that he understood this to mean the United States did not want a treaty. Misinterpreting Kennedy again, he declared that the invocation of national security could mean that Americans would wish to go on to Moscow too, since that would improve their strategic position. Kennedy responded sharply that the Americans did not wish to go anywhere, just to stay where they were. No doubt the current situation in Berlin was not satisfactory; but conditions were unsatisfactory all over, and this was not the time to upset the world balance of power. Khrushchev certainly would not accept a comparable shift in favor of the west. This was the basic question.

Khrushchev regretted that Kennedy did not get his point. All he wanted to do was to tranquilize the situation in the most dangerous spot in the world. The Soviet Union wanted to perform an operation - to excise this thorn, this ulcer - without prejudicing interests on either side. The treaty would not change boundaries; it would formalize them.

p.372 It would only impede those, like Hitler's generals now in NATO, who still wanted Lebensraum to the Urals. No force in the world could stop the Soviet Union from signing the treaty; no further delay was necessary or possible. And thereafter any infringement of the sovereignty of East Germany would be regarded as open aggression with all its consequences.

Kennedy said that the United States opposed any military buildup in West Germany which might threaten the Soviet Union. But Khrushchev's proposal would bring about a basic change in the world situation overnight. This was a most serious challenge. He had not come to Vienna for this; he had come in the hope of improving relations. The United States could not accept the abrogation by one nation of the four-nation agreement.

Khrushchev waved this aside as without juridical foundation and recalled Roosevelt's remark at Yalta that American troops would leave Europe after two years. Why did the United States want Berlin? To unleash a war? Berlin had no military significance. After a treaty, West Berlin would be accessible to all countries with which it had ties; the United States and the Soviet Union could develop guarantees jointly or call in the UN. But, if the United States tried to maintain its present position after a treaty, this would violate the sovereignty of East Germany and of the communist camp as a whole. Once the Berlin question was out of the way, the road would be clear for an improvement of relations. In any case, the Soviet Union intended to sign the treaty by the end of 1961. If America wanted war over Berlin, there was nothing the Soviet Union could do about it. Maybe he should sign the treaty right away and get it over; that is what the Pentagon had wanted. But madmen who sought war ought to be put in strait jackets.

It was not quite a tirade; it was too controlled and hard and therefore the more menacing. Kennedy replied that the United States did not wish to precipitate a crisis. The Soviet Union was doing so by threatening unilateral changes in the existing situation. Was this the way to achieve peace? If the United States surrendered to the Soviet demand, it would not be regarded as a serious country any longer.

Khrushchev became even harsher. The Soviet Union, he said, would never under any conditions accept American rights in West / Berlin after

p.373 the treaty. After all the United States itself had signed a unilateral peace treaty with Japan. The Soviet Union was determined to go ahead, and responsibility for subsequent violations of East German sovereignty would be heavy.

Kennedy replied that the United States did not wish to deprive the Soviet Union of its ties in Eastern Europe and would not submit to

the loss of its own ties in Western Europe. He had not assumed office to accept arrangements totally inimical to American interests.

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p.373 (see p.385) In between, they had snatches of private talk. Khrushchev said that he had read Kennedy's defense message and thought that in consequence the Soviet Union should perhaps increase its land forces and artillery. America, Khrushchev added, was run by monopolists and could not afford to disarm. ...

p.374 .... Bohlen and Thompson, who had been through such conferences before, thought the President overreacted. ...

p.385 (see p.373) .... Then early in July Khrushchev himself, citing Kennedy's call for a larger Amerian defense effort, announced a suspension of the partial demobilization of the Red Army and a one-third increase in Soviet military spending.

pp/386/7

.... Yet, as Chip Bohlen has often said, nothing would clarify more the discussion of policy toward the Soviet Union than the elimination of the words 'hard' and 'soft' from the language. People who had doubts about Cuba suppressed those doubts lest they seem 'soft'. It is obviously important that such fears not constrain free discussion of Berlin."

I had to see the President shortly before luncheon about other matters. As we finished, I handed him the memorandum, saying that he might want to look at it that afternoon on his way to Hyannis Port, where he had scheduled a meeting on Berlin the next day with Rusk, McNamara and General Taylor. But he chose characteristically to read the memorandum at once. His response was immediate. Agreeing that Acheson's paper was far too narrowly directed to military problems, he said with emphasis that Berlin planning had to be brought back into balance. Then he asked me to prepare an unsigned memorandum about the unexplored issues in the Berlin problem which he might use in his talks at the Cape. ... We quickly worked up an outline. Then, as Chayes and Kissinger talked, I typed. By furious effort, we got the paper to Hyannis Port in time.

The memorandum first identified certain issues omitted in the Acheson paper:

> 1. What political moves do we make until the crisis develops? If we sit silent, or confine ourselves to rebutting Soviet contentions (cf. the draft reply to the aide-memoire), we permit Khrushchev to establish the framework of discussion. As we do this, we in effect invite him to demand from us a definition of the guarantees we would find acceptable. This, of course, casts the U.S. as rigid and unreasonable and puts us on the political defensive.
>
> 2. The paper indicates no relationship between the proposed military action and larger political objectives. It defines an immediate casus belli; but it does not state any political objective other than present access procedures for which we are prepared to incinerate the world. It is essential to elaborate the cause for which we are prepared to go to nuclear war. Where do we want to come out if we win the test of wills? German unification, for example: what is our real intention with regard to this traditional objective?

p.389 While we were agitating the political side, McGeorge Bundy and Kissinger were bringing the President comparable questions about the state of military planning. McNamara had informed the White House early in May that existing plans in case of trouble in Berlin assumed almost immediate resort to nuclear war. In a pre-Hyannis Port memorandum of his own, Bundy now commented on the dangerous rigidity of the strategic war plan, pointing out that it called in essence for an all-out nuclear strike against the Soviet Union and left the President littl choice as to how he would face his moment of thermonuclear truth. Bundy suggested that Kennedy remand the war plan to McNamara for review and revision.

At the Hyannis Port meeting on July 8 the President made his dissatisfaction with the state of planning abundantly clear. On the diplomatic side, he decided to ask Acheson to try his hand at a "political program" for Berlin and instructed Rusk to produce a negotiat-

p.389 ing prospectus. On the military side, he asked McNamara for a plan which would pemmit non-nuclear resistance on a scale sufficient both to indicate our determination and to provide the communists time for second thoughts and negotiation before everything billowed up in nuclear war. The State and Defense papers were to be dalivered inxtex dayxx within ten days.

It did not, of course, prove that easy to reshape policy, but the meeting laid out the lines of battle within the American government for the rest of the summer. At first, Kennedy gained little ground/ When the National Security Council met on Berlin on July 13, Rusk reaffirmed the Acheson argument that we should not negotiate until the crisis became more acute. And Acheson himself, supported by Lyndon Johnson, now argued strongly for a proclamation of national emergency. This declaration became the symbol of the drastic reaction to the crisis. It implied an immediate expansion of the armed forces, an increase in the defense budget of perhaps $5 billion, standyby price and wage controls and new taxation. Though the proclamation would legally facilitate the calling up of reserves, its essential purpose was psychological. Only a response of this order, Acheson argued, could deter Khrushchev from irretrievable steps and make the American people understand the full gravity of the crisis.

These attitudes xixx disturbed the White House group. On the problem of xxgxkixx negotiation, Henry Kissinger observed to Bundy that it was wrong "to have refusal to negotiate become a test of firmness. . . . Firmness should be related to the substance of our negotiating position. It should not . . . be proved by seeming to shy away from a diplomatic confrontation." If Khrushchev would not accept a reasonable proposal, this, in Kissinger's view, was an argument for rather than against our taking the initiative. Any other course would see us "jockeyed into a position of refusing diplomatic solutions," and, when we finally agreed to discussion, as we inevitably must, it would seem an American defeat. Diplomacy, Kissinger concluded, was the "necessary corollary to the build-up."

ADVISERS - Kissinger - Berlin - "Get tough" (1961)

p.390 Kissinger, in further comment on the proclamation, argued that the Soviet oUnion would be more impressed by a broad and sustained improvement in American military readiness than by a single dramatic gesture, especially one which made us appear "unnecessarily bellicose, perhaps even hysterical." Moreover, if we declared the emergency now, we used up a measure which would be more effective if taken as a response to clear-cut Soviet provocation. Ted Sorensen, summing up the position of the White House staff in an able memorandum, pointed out that the declaration of national emergency might well "engage Khrushchev's prestige to a point where he felt he could not back down from a showdown, and provoke further or faster action on his part in stepping up the arms race." It would also, Sorensen feared, "arouse those at home and abroad who are fearful of 'rash' and 'trigger-happy' actions by the United States."

pp.390/1

The President was meanwhile fighting his way through the thicket of debate to his own conclusions. Cuba and Laos had been ~~xx~~ side issues. But Berlin threatened a war which might destroy civilization, and he thought about little else that summer. Stewart Udall, trying to talk to him about conservation, remarked, "He's imprisoned / by Berlin." One afternoon, after a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the President talked at some length with James Wechsler of the New York Post. Only "fools," Kennedy said, could cling to the idea of victory in a nuclear war. A once-and-for-all peace seemed equally unlikely. But he still hoped to arrive at a point where both the Soviet Union and the United States would accept the premise that the only alternatives were authentic negotiation or mutual annihilation. What ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ worried him was that Khrushchev might interpret his reluctance to wage nuclear war as a symptom of an American loss of nerve. Some day, he said, the time might come when he would have to run the supreme risk to convince Khrushchev that conciliation did not mean humiliation. "If Khrushchev wants to rub my nose in the dirt," he told Wechsler, "it's all over." But how to convince Khrushchev short of a showdown? "That son of a bitch won't pay any attention to words," the President said bitterly on one occasion. "He has to see you move."

pp.391/8
This meant that the United States would not give way and, if the Soviet Union persisted in its determination to destroy the freedom of West Berlin, we would be prepared to go to war, even to nuclear war. But, while Kenndy wanted to make this resolve absolutely clear to Moscow, he wanted to make it equally clear that we were not, as he once put it to me, "war-mad." He did not wish to drive the crisis beyond the point of no return; and therefore, while reiterating our refusal to retreat, he rejected the program of national mobilization and sought the beginnings of careful negotiation. Ted Sorensen now prepared a draft for a Berlin speech along these lines, and Kennedy began to work it over. Then on the night of July 25 television cables were installed in the presidential office, and the President made his report to the people.

"We cannot and will not permit the Communists," Kennedy said, "to drive us out of Berlin, either gradually or by force." To be ready for any contingency, he would seek an additiona. $3.25 billion for the defense budget, call up certain reserve and National Guard units, procure new weapons and enlarge the program of civil defense. But, if our military posture had to be defensive, "our diplomatic posture need not be. . . . We do not intend to leave it to others to choose and monopolize the forum and the framework of discussion. We do not intend to

p.392 abandon our duty to mankind to / seek a peaceful solution." We recognize, Kennedy said, the historical Russian concern about Central and Eastern Europe, and "we are willing to consider any arrangement or treaty in Germany consistent with the maintenance of peace and freedom, and with the legitimate security interests of all nations." We o were determined to search for peace "in formal or informal meetings. We do not want military considerations to dominate the thinking of either East or West. . . . In the thermonuclear age, any midjudgment on either side about the intentions of the other could rain more devastation in several hours than has been wrought in all the wars of human history."

The White House group rejoiced at the speech. But for some reason the press, playing up the military points and almost ignoring the passages about negotiation, made it appear a triumph for the hard line. (Note: But Kennedy had eliminated anything to negotiate except Khrushchev's surrender.) In Russia Khruschev read it, or affected to read it, in the same way. He happened at the moment to be at Sochi conferring with John J. McCloy about disarmament. On the day before the speech, he was in a jolly mood, comparing the exchange of diplomatic notes to kicking a football back and forth and adding that this would probably continue until a treaty was signed and the Soviet Union kicked a different kind of ball. The next day he told McCloy emotionally that the United States had declared preliminary war on the Soviet Union. It had presented an ultimatum and clearly intended hostilities. This confirmed, Khrushchev said, the thesis of his January speech that the capitalist world had lost confidence in its capacity to triumph by peaceful means. The President, he added, seemed a reasonable young man, filled with energy and doubtless wishing to display that energy; but, if war occurred, he would be the last President. However, Khrushchev concluded, he still believed in the President's good sense. After thunderstorms, people cooled off, thought problems over and resumed human shape.

The storms were apparently not quite over when Khrushchev replied in a televised broadcast on August 7. Though his tone was considerably higher-pitched than Kennedy's, the two speeches none the less bore