

JFK Meeting Tape 41

Date: 1962-10-27

Participant: John F. Kennedy

Participant: Llewellyn E. Thompson

Participant: C. Douglas Dillon

Start Time: 16:00

Place: Cabinet Room

SCROLLER TITLE: "Let's Not Kid Ourselves"

SCENE SETTER: Moscow had publicly proposed a trade of Soviet missiles in Cuba for NATO missiles in Turkey, and President Kennedy recognized Washington's likely need to accept the terms. With a potential U.S. strike on Cuba just days away, the window for solving the crisis through diplomacy was closing.

Llewellyn E. "Tommy" Thompson: Mr. President, if we go on the basis of a trade, which I gather is somewhat in your mind, we end up, it seems to me, with the Soviets still in Cuba, though, with planes and technicians, and so on, even though the missiles are out. And that would surely be unacceptable and put you in a worse position.

President Kennedy: Yeah, but our technicians and planes and guarantees would still exist for Turkey. I'm just thinking about what we're going to have to do in a day or so, which is 500 sorties in seven days and possibly an invasion, all because we wouldn't take missiles out of Turkey. And I . . . We all know how quickly the—everybody's courage goes when the blood starts to flow, and that's what's going to happen to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]. When they start with these things, and they grab Berlin, everybody's going to say, "Well, that was a pretty good proposition."

Let's not kid ourselves that we've got . . . That's the difficulty. Today it sounds great to reject it, but it's not going to, after we do something.

End of excerpt 1.

President Kennedy: [*impatiently*] The point of the matter is [Nikita S.] Khrushchev is going to come back and refer to his thing this morning on Turkey. And then we're going to be screwing around for another 48 hours. I think that what we've got to do is say that we've got to make the key of this letter the cessation of work. That we're all in agreement on. There's no *question* about that. Then the question is whether Turkey's in or just Cuba. Otherwise, he'll come back and say, "Well, we're glad to settle the Cuban matter. What is your opinion of our proposal about Turkey?"

So then we're on to a Monday afternoon, and the work goes on, and we haven't had a chance to specifically get his good faith on the cessation of work. We haven't got an answer to *that* question. So I think we ought to make that the key question . . . is the cessation of work. Then if we get the cessation of work, we can settle the Cuban question and do other things. Otherwise, he can hang us up for three days while he goes on with the work.

C. Douglas "Doug" Dillon: Three weeks.

End of excerpt 2.

CITATION: "Executive Committee Meeting of the National Security Council on the Cuban Missile Crisis on 27 October 1962," Tape 41, John F. Kennedy Library, President's Office Files, Presidential

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