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September 4, 1961

TO: The Secretary
Alexander Stevens

THROUGH: n/s

FROM: ED - Berlin Cleveland

SUBJECT: The President's Speech at the United Nations General Assembly

In the meeting which Alexander Stevens and I had with the President at Hyannis Port on August 5, we discussed the overall United States strategy at the Sixteenth Assembly, looking toward the preparation of a possible Presidential speech at the General Assembly. At that meeting, we indicated that a possible theme for his speech would be the building of international institutions and the strengthening of the United Nations. We had in mind that a number of specific topics such as disarmament, outer space and economic development and others would be discussed within this general framework.

Since that discussion, a number of critical events have occurred which, I believe, require that the President's speech be recent.

1. Berlin

In the first place, on Berlin we confront the danger of all nations that the impasse may be broken only by nuclear war. In our judgment this issue will have to be discussed by the President more fully than might otherwise have originally been the case, and that our opening posture must take account of the fact that Berlin will be, in fact if not in name, foremost on the agenda. We should point out that the violence that Khrushchev's doctrine has done to self-determination and to his self-professed belief in co-existence, and that the US must put its weight behind the principle that change must come about not by Khrushchev's belligerence but by negotiations for an equitable accommodation.

2. Disarmament

Secondly, we had in mind that the substance of the U.S. disarmament plan would be unveiled in the President's speech and that it would be discussed within the framework of strengthening international institutions. We continue to believe that the disarmament plan should be described in the President's speech and the entire plan

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circulated to the UN membership the following day.

3. Nuclear Testing

Thirdly, it is clear that in view of the Soviet decision to resume testing the President's speech will have to give greater emphasis to the testing question.

4. Strengthening the UN

Fourthly, it seems to me that it would be preferable now to place major emphasis on disarmament and to discuss generally certain of our contemplated initiatives in the field of outer space, in the peace and security field, and in the area of economic development within the framework of and as an adjunct to disarmament. We can stress that as the military apparatus of war is dismantling--moving toward the goal of a disarmed world--there must be stronger international institutions, with greater capacity to act, to keep the peace.

5. China

Fifth, in discussing the general lines of a possible Presidential speech with UNH, the general consensus was that there would have to be at least some reference to the China problem not necessarily in terms of the representation issue, but rather focusing on the unwillingness of the Chinese commists to believe in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We would use the Charter of the United Nations as a yardstick of evaluation of Chinese communist policy over the period of the last several years.

6. Colonialism

Finally, in view of the great interest in the question of colonialism, it was also our general feeling that this topic would have to be treated in a positive way. We should emphasize our backing for political freedom, economic growth, and self-determination.

In short,

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In short, the reality of the developments of the last few weeks should be portrayed more fully, even though it might mean only general reference in the President's speech of some of the initiatives we have developed. While stressing the theme of stronger international institutions in various appropriate ways, I believe that the President's speech should be a broadly ranged expression of the Kennedy administration policy toward the future of the world, the key role of the US in it, and a tour d'horizon of the major policy issues which if not resolved by peaceful means can bring about the destruction of civilization. Specific details of the initiatives would be incorporated in a follow-up speech at such time as the United States makes its statement in the general debate.

The President's speech would be as Chief of State, at the invitation of the United Nations, and we have given the Secretary General advance informal indication on a confidential basis of the possibility of the President speaking on Thursday morning, September 21. We have also requested the Secretary General on a contingency basis to make arrangements for the President to speak before the formal opening of the general debate (10:30 a.m., Thursday, September 21, rather than in the number 2 slot of the general debate).

I suggest that this matter be discussed with the President at the Tuesday afternoon meeting. If he agrees we could then prepare an initial draft along the above lines.

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