

**James C. Thomson Jr. Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 3/19/1980**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** James C. Thomson Jr.  
**Interviewer:** Sheldon Stern  
**Date of Interview:** March 19, 1980  
**Place of Interview:** Cambridge, Massachusetts  
**Length:** 45 pages

**Biographical Note**

Thomson was a speech writer and assistant to Chester B. Bowles and others at the U.S. Department of State (1961-1965), and later became an East Asian specialist at Harvard and a professor emeritus of history, journalism, and international relations at Boston University. In this interview, he discusses conflicting policies on China, the Chinese food crisis and the “Food for Peace” campaign, and Sino-Soviet relations, among other issues.

**Access**

Open in part.

**Usage Restrictions**

Copyright of these materials has passed to the United States Government upon the death of the interviewee. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

**Copyright**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be “used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.” If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview**

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any

concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

**Suggested Citation**

James C. Thomson Jr., recorded interview by Sheldon Stern, March 19, 1980, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

Oral History Interview

Of

James C. Thomson Jr.

Although a legal agreement was not signed during the lifetime of James C. Thomson Jr., upon his death, ownership of the recording and transcript of his interview for the Oral History Program passed to the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

The following terms and conditions apply:

1. The transcript is available for use by researchers.
2. The tape recording shall be made available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.
3. Copyright to the interview transcript and tape is assigned to the United States Government.
4. Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request for a fee.
5. Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the John F. Kennedy Library.

James C. Thomson Jr.—JFK #2

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Progressive policies in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs
2	The Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs after Chester B. Bowles
5	Congressional relations on Cold War issues
7	The Sukarno foreign aid controversy
8	Thomson's criticism of an economic determinist outlook towards Asia
9, 25, 28, 33	Bowles' stance on U.S.-China relations compared to Walt Rostow
13	Ideological allies among the State Department staff
14	The 1961 Laos settlement between China and the United States
15	The political advantages of recognizing the Communist nation of Mongolia
16	The "China-lobby" and its influence
18, 22	President John F. Kennedy's (JFK) stance on China
19, 27, 30, 32	The Chinese food crisis and the divisive "Food for Peace" campaign
20, 35	JFK's flexible, accommodating personality
23, 26, 42	The State Department's stance on Sino-Soviet relations
29, 36	Theories on the Chinese food crisis and expansionism
36	U.S. involvement in relations between China and Taiwan
40	Question of China's membership to the United Nations (Chi-Rep)
41	The "two-China" plan ("One China-One Taiwan")
44	Bowles' stance on the 1962 Sino-Indian border war

Second Oral History Interview

with

James C. Thomson, Jr.

March 19, 1980  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

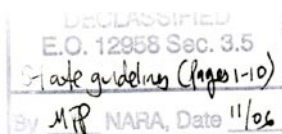
By Sheldon Stern

For the John F. Kennedy Library

THOMSON: ...the interest was the Far East and China especially. And it was worked out that rather than going with Chet [Chester B. Bowles], which Chet completely understood since he knew it [India] was not my central interest at all, never had been, is not now, and never will be. My decision not to go to New Delhi with him was totally understood and my decision to work with Roger [Roger Hilsman] as a sort of roving troubleshooter, staff assistant, I mean a special assistant, who was not Joe Neubert [Joseph W. Neubert]. Joe Neubert was his real special assistant, and there was a staff assistant. As you know there were all these hierarchical titles. I said sure and what he thought I had—on which he was moderately wrong—was smarts about Capitol Hill, as well as China. Since I had, after all, served with Congressman Bowles on the Hill.

[-1-]

So I was to run sort of a small troubleshooting operation, an early warning system, to help Roger deal with the Hill. Also to help Roger deal with what he regarded were still enclaves of old hard-line Dulles [John Foster Dulles] types within the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, of which there certainly were several enclaves. So we were going to have as outsiders the fun of transforming antique policies and bringing a progressive new look, a new Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] view to that region.



So, just about July—everything that I recall in these transitions, including the one to the White House that comes in a while after your time to the Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] White House seems to come in July—but there was a good-bye party for Bowles in June. And I composed an irreverent poem in which, curiously, the target of one’s wit, my wit, to the extent that it was witty, was McGeorge Bundy. I almost remember the final stanza of the poem. “...And so you’re off to Delhi Monday, in hope sic transit Gloria Bundy.” [Laughter] I don’t know why Mac was our target at that point but he was....Because he’d been rather helpful to me. I’d gone to see him right after Bowles was fired to have my first deep conversation with him—did I report this last time?

STERN: No, no you didn’t.

THOMSON: After the Thanksgiving massacre, those of us who had

[-2-]

remained had decided to remain loyal to Chet in adversity; we were few in number but good people: Sam Lewis [Samuel W. Lewis], maybe Brandon Grove [Brandon H. Grove, Jr.], I can’t remember, and myself, maybe a couple others. But I, on my own with no one’s permission made an appointment in December after the November massacre to go and see McGeorge Bundy in the White House basement—a place I had never been, I think; at least I’d never been to his office—and I said, “Look, I have decided to stay with this man and I intend, since I respect him and the President, I respect both of them, to do everything possible to make this job work but you have to give me some idea as to how to make it work best.” I learned later that Mr. Bundy was—we had a very long and, I would say, frank discussion—and I learned later that Mac had thought well of this young man who had taken the initiative to come and say, “What’s up with my boss because I want to help him out.”

Mac told me at that point what he thought Chet’s great assets were, which is, I would say, not in Mac’s words but to paraphrase: his ability to communicate to underdeveloped people. It was a roving ambassador stance that he had a marvelous quality—as Mac would use the word marvelous—to get a clear message across and to establish trust with all those little people

[-3-]

who lived in far off places and were not white-skinned. And that it was in a sense an ideal assignment for him if he would take it and run with it and that he could use, obviously, all the academic, intellectual-staff-type gopher help that people like myself and others could give him. So it was an encouraging encounter. I—at least Mac swayed me—I wasn’t going to leave, but Mac made me feel that there was a real job. Anyway, how did I get on to that?

I moved into a little office off Hilsman’s front office, one door, two doors down the corridor. I’m positioned in an office right next to the last remaining headquarters of the American wing of SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization]. In the front room of my office with an ancient and absolutely incompetent secretary was a very nice man, whose

name I've forgotten, who was a career foreign service officer who was the SEATO desk person. And all the flags of SEATO embellished the front room. And there was a second room, and that was me. So I had to walk through this rather armed camp every time I came and went to Hilsman's office for secret conclaves.

STERN: I discovered a memo from the nineteenth of August 1963. Let me read it to you because it bears on my question. "Mr. James C. Thomson, Special Assistant to Mr. Hilsman, has as one of his special responsibilities the

[-4-]

coordination of the Bureau's relations with Congress. Effective immediately Mr. Thomson will clear all outgoing correspondence to Congress and the staff of Congress." And there's obviously a good deal of material in your papers to suggest that this was a major preoccupation; I wonder if you could describe....

THOMSON: Oh, on that endless routing of correspondence for clearance—correspondence to Congress for clearance—I became the sort of a central port of call for Hilsman. And in due course I was asked maybe immediately by Roger Hilsman to have as a deputy, or at least a senior helper, a young woman from the White House staff who had been involved in the Kennedy campaigns back here and then with Harris Wofford [Harris L. Wofford, Jr.] briefly and elsewhere—Dierdre Henderson. So Dierdre and I with a certain amount of increasing mutual amusement discovered that we were the specialists on congressional relations for Roger Hilsman. And we've remained friends ever since. But it was a startling assignment for both of us in a sense. What we tried to do was inspect the boiler plate that regularly came out of the bowels of the department, and particularly FE [Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs], to see if: A) a more progressive Kennedy-Hilsman-Harriman [William Averell Harriman] stance was reflected in the response as opposed to the knee-jerk-Dulles-Cold War reaction, and also to see if we could lighten it and

[-5-]

freshen it a bit. These documents are congressional—responses to congressional inquiries are the worst kind of prose in government because they are guarded by everyone whose initials may appear on the document lest something slip that the enemy can use. As I did say on an earlier tape, in the Rusk [Dean Rusk] staff meetings we spent more time talking about Congress as an adversary than about the Russians or the Chinese. So I guess we were a routine clearance office. A lot of it was routine stuff; some of it wasn't. And when one felt strongly that the Assistant Secretary should not sign a document, that it should be redrafted, one made such a proposal to Hilsman. I just found—that's a leap forward—but I found that when I worked at the White House when I got on the phone and said, "We wonder if you have considered the following things," the people on the other end of the phone would face an interesting ambiguity that usually operated in your favor: Who is we? Has this young man talked to the President? Or is it Mac Bundy? Or is it just this kid? You used the ambiguous

“we” to good purpose often, to good effect often, because they erred by thinking, well if the White House says so, it must be the White House. Sometimes one is very careful and says, “I think that you have neglected the following factors,

[ -6- ]

but I have not checked it out with Mac and I’m sure he’s not discussed it with the President.”

Well, the same—on a much smaller scale—the same system might work in the Hilsman bureau; probably did.

STERN: I noticed you seem to have had a number of problems—there were a significant number of memos about foreign aid and the attempts to convince certain people, for example, Senator Morse [Wayne L. Morse], that it might be valuable to aid Taiwan and Saigon. And various other people....I’m not...There’s a considerable amount of material on anger in Congress over aid to Sukarno [Achmed Sukarno] given his drift to the left and that you seem to have been involved in a major way with all of those.

THOMSON: Well, Hilsman was trying very hard that summer, as I recall, to keep our hand in the game in Indonesia, not to let the US government overreact to Indonesian provocation—Sukarno’s provocations or the PKIs [Communist Party of Indonesia] provocations through Sukarno. And I remember meeting with oil company executives. One of my....One of the bases of my disbelief in the new left economic determinist critique of our Southeast Asian policies stems from meetings with oil company executives—Christian Herter, Jr. [Christian A. Herter, Jr.] and some others—urging them not to pull out of Indonesia

[ -7- ]

despite the difficulties we were having with the steps toward nationalization and certainly the contracts placed on them. They had no interest in keeping their goodies out there or extracting those goodies in those days. It was the politicians at State who were saying, “If we are going to keep any sort of relationship going with Indonesia and not force it, either reluctantly or jubilantly, into communist hands we have to keep things like the Peace Corps going, good diplomatic relations despite Sukarno’s rhetoric and some sort of American advisory military presence to keep up good relations with Indonesian generals and colonels and others and an economic presence.” And this is quite the reverse of the, of some neo-Marxist understandings, namely that our entire interests in Indonesia, much less Indochina, was based on our desire for the raw materials or economic exploitation. I never saw one iota of that. In fact we had to keep pushing business interests to keep “their hand in the game.” It was really quite an extraordinary discovery for me because I’ve always been open to the possibility of an economic determinist interpretation of foreign relations.

STERN: There was some of that about Vietnam later too.



THOMSON: Oh, yeah, and I never saw...

STERN: It never made any sense.

THOMSON: ...a touch of it. And the most highly classified

[-8-]

document or the most closed door discussion. Nothing to do with minerals, raw materials, markets.

STERN: If only it had been that simple.

THOMSON: If only.

STERN: Do you recall specifically, did you have any contacts with Senator Morse or with any other recalcitrant members of the Senate who were giving the administration a hard time on foreign aid, whether from the left of the right?

THOMSON: I never had to visit Senator Morse. I may have helped clear some letters to try to mollify him. I think he was fairly un-mollifiable. Morse and Gruening [Ernest Gruening] eventually became, by the time of the next summer—yeah, '64—...

STERN: '64.

THOMSON: ... major problems for me when I arrived at the Johnson White House but that was vis-à-vis Vietnam.

STERN: Weren't they the two that voted against the Tonkin Gulf Resolution?

THOMSON: Yes, yes. They weren't problems for me; they were problems for my bosses and one reason the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was not forced through in May or June of '64 was that it was felt that the filibuster by Morse and Gruening would produce more problems for us than anything we might gain by finally passing such a resolution. There was a resolution along those

[-9-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

lines prepared by Bill Bundy [William P. Bundy] already to go which was tabled until Tonkin allegedly happened.

STERN: I'd like to turn now to China as a general topic. Virtually all of the material which I've used for these questions comes from the classified section of your papers, so this portion of the interview will almost certainly be closed and I thought it would be important to mention that in terms of your own willingness to respond. Maybe....

THOMSON: My willingness to respond is limited only by my, by the lapse of time and my aging memory. There is nothing I would not be willing to disclose on an off-the-record basis, classified basis. Let me make that assurance.

STERN: Okay. I'd like to sort of set up the initial part of my first question on the whole issue of China in the Kennedy Administration, so we'll be going back now to the Bowles period as well and through the whole period. In a sense there are three memos that set it up I think in a very clear way, one by Bowles written in March of '62—although you may well have written this yourself—which basically had five or six points: one, that we must assume that Red China is here to stay; two, that we must discard the anti-China obsession; three, that we need to make long-term plans to encourage moderates in China; to open relations and ways of doing that would be to normalize trade; recognize Outer Mongolia; and most

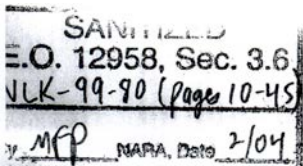
[-10-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

importantly to emphasize economic as opposed to military assistance in Asia. That I think is a pretty clear summary of the kind of things that Bowles was thinking. Compare that to a memo written in the same year—in November of '62 by Walt Rostow [Walt Whitman Rostow]—in which he comes to the following four conclusions: one—and I'm going to quote—the Chinese are, "...disillusioned, discontented and lethargic" and barely have the will to complete their daily survival tasks; but the leadership in China has lost its élan and its confidence; three, this crisis, caused by the failure of the Great Leap Forward, reflects the possibility of a real internal collapse; and four, the end of the regime is a real possibility which the United States must encourage without, of course, the use of troops. I thought these two things couldn't possibly be more of a dramatic contrast to the kinds of positions that existed in the Kennedy Administration. I even wonder how people like Bowles and Rusk could even talk to each other given the fact that their positions are so dramatically different. The State Department's more or less official position certainly leaned toward the Rostow position. Although it's not quite as—well, I perhaps betray my own values by saying rigid—for example in a May 1962 State Department planning paper—policy planning paper—which emphasizes almost to the exclusion of

[-11-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**



anything else, "...Chinese expansionism, the need to emphasize military measures in Asia..." And has virtually nothing to say, for example, of the potential of a Sino-Soviet split, which I thought was striking. It begins to appear a little later but even then only in the most halting way. I wonder—and this has been a very long question—if you can just begin to relate what it was like to function in a context, on an issue of this sort which obviously was very close to your own major interest in which there was a diametrically opposed, dramatically opposed position within the administration and, of course, by implication, where you thought the President really stood?

THOMSON: Well, for the record have you had a chance to see an article that I wrote for the *China Quarterly* in—I think it's called—April-June 1972.

STERN: I think I did, yes.

THOMSON: Which was called "The Making of U.S. – China Policy 1961-1969: A Case Study in...." something or another. There I speak to a number of questions that you've just raised. I think I do it with some documents at hand. Illicitly. And probably more accurately than I will talk at this moment. If one came out of Harvard University with John Fairbank [John King Fairbank] as a mentor and with one's adolescence spent watching the Chinese Revolution and studying it one found the State Department's official view of the 1950s absolutely intolerable and wrong, wrong-headed and a self-fulfilling prophesy

[-12-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

that would get us into absolutely unnecessary trouble. You're juxtaposition of the Bowles and Rostow memos is very shrewd. There were many factions at work, many viewpoints at work. Many viewpoints being pressed within that administration and what one found as a young post-Ph.D. practitioner was allies. One looked around, talked around, went to meetings and discovered those whose views conformed to one's own and also discovered adversaries if not enemies or very wrong-headed people if not adversaries or enemies.

STERN: Did you find for example that you would sort of inherit enemies simply because people identified you with Bowles?

THOMSON: I'm sure that was true. I think I inherited at my rather junior level, people who undoubtedly thought I was not of sound views. My association with Bowles made me unsound by definition to some, to the leftovers of the Walter Robertson [Walter S. Robertson] era. My arrival as a Harriman advisor and then Hilsman appointee made me unsound to those who regarded both men as soft on Asian communism. And what you found, as I said before, is a network, not a large bunch but a handful of trusted people. Allen Whiting [Allen S. Whiting] whom I had never known but met when he was in INR [Bureau of Intelligence and Research] running an Asian Communist

region, which went all the way to Vietnam to North Korea and Mongolia including terra incognita called China. Whiting and I became very close friends on intellectual issues also socially close. Michael Forrestal [Michael V. Forrestal] who had no China

[-13-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

background, had, let's say, the instinct to share our views and the bad guys were quite voluble. All the way from leftover hacks, who I won't name at this very moment to moderately demented academicians like Walt Rostow, who had a fix on China—going back to the book he had written on China which he cited frequently—a book very out of date called, *Prospects for Communist China*, that several other people helped him write. I don't think he ever had another thought about China after that book which wasn't bad at the time but was rapidly out of date.

STERN: That was published in the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] administration wasn't it?

THOMSON: Yes, that was published when he was at M.I.T. [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], mid-fifties. I found, incidentally, the same thing in terms of what the hell's going on in Laos. I would find that the chief Laos desk person spoke boiler plate out of a different era but that lower down on the desk were some younger bloods who happened to read more and think more deeply. The same with Vietnam.

STERN: If I can just digress for a second in terms of bringing Laos up, I would assume that your position, Bowles' position, must have been enhanced somewhat by this sort of tacit cooperation between the United States and China in the Laos settlement. This....at least you could make the argument that you see that they are reasonable, they are willing to move in the direction of cooperation.

[-14-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

THOMSON: It enhanced only a slight bit. Of course, the Laos settlement came about with a number of people being dragged in kicking and screaming; and I mean American diplomats. The acting head of FE, when Harriman was in Geneva as I may have said on a previous occasion. Who was the Russian delegate in Geneva? Pushkin [Georgi M. Pushkin], not the playwright. This man later became the Ambassador to Afghanistan and I can't remember his name but they sent him out to Kabul. But when Harriman sent yet another suggestion one time that we give on a certain point to the communist side or sides, the head of FE said that the next telegram from Harriman is going to be signed Pushkin. Which was pretty close to charging treason. Not a nice thought. So there were a lot of people out to get other people and a lot of people thinking we were

giving away the crown jewels. The Laos settlement itself you say may have given us a little more clout. I'm not at all sure. I think the hardliners thought that we gave away Laos. In the long run, of course, Laos was not ours. It never would have been. So we had these alliances and we worked to avert bad things from happening in China. And we tried to push whenever we could for good things to happen and one of the good little projects on which we never got anywhere was recognition of Mongolia which from '61 onward had come up regularly to the desk of Dean Rusk and regularly been artfully shoved aside. Mr. Rusk

[-15-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

would keep it there for some weeks and then ask it back to be updated and retyped because times had changed. The idea of recognizing Mongolia was quite simply, was majorly symbolic. It was to show that we did not have a racist or geographic division between our ability to deal with one kind of Communist and another kind of Communist. That we could in fact have peaceful coexistence with Asian Communists if they shaped up in their behavior. The Mongolians had signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty initially. There were all sorts of reasons besides

STATINTL:

recognizing Mongolia. They were good members of the world community, though Communists. Could we not demonstrate through recognizing Mongolia that even Asian Communists could be acceptable in our new world order. Well we never proved that point to this very day. But there were a lot of other problems including Sino-Soviet relations vis-à-vis Mongolia.

STERN: Of course you also had to contend with the immense—still I think during the Kennedy Administration—the still immense influence of the so-called China lobby. The fact that any effort towards softening the hardline position would immediately....And of course the Mongolian thing did that with Representative Judd [Walter H. Judd] and all the others virtually having apoplexy over it.

THOMSON: Yes, Walter Judd was defeated fairly early in this game—

[-16-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

though he was around for a while—by Don Fraser [Donald M. Fraser] from Minnesota. But he was around as a central lobbyist and one of my more nauseating sessions in FE was a briefing session with former Congressman Judd because he was about to go to Asia and I wanted to get the most up-to-date information and some of my colleagues, who at this time will be nameless—who had been cited, at least one of them, by Judd as a Communist—as had I, I learned later or as a fellow traveler. Mac

Bundy once handed me—no, he didn't hand me a piece of paper he read—a piece of paper saying that it was alleged that blah, blah, blah and the source was Judd and I said nonsense. Nonetheless these people were fawning over this absolutely unswayable bad guy to show him how reasonable we were and how wonderful he was and how happy we were that he was taking this trip. So there was some degree of recognition obviously of the existence of a dying China lobby. I think it was always overestimated in our collective—in our official view. I think that Tom Dodd [Thomas J. Dodd], who had not been an original member, was one of the last of the effective China lobbyists. So was Hickenlooper [Bourke B. Hickenlooper] in a different way. But most of the others, if you look at the list, were on the wane but they left a sense of clout that we overestimated throughout....

STERN:           What about the President?

[-17-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

THOMSON:       And we tested that sense of....We proved that the clout had been over estimated—I leap ahead now—by the Hilsman China speech of December '63.

STERN:           Do you think the President was too cautious in terms of this problem?

THOMSON:       I've heard from others, if not from you, that the President told Dean Rusk to stand firm on China. That's what Mr. Rusk now alleges to some interviewers. I heard from others around the President, Dick Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin] being one of them that, when at a lunch I said to him, "When the hell are we going to—he was still at the White House—do anything about China? Moving towards a rational policy?" He said, "It's on the agenda but the President can't do it till the second term." Michael Forrestal is another person whose views were similar to that. The second term. The margin of the first-term victory had been too thin and Eisenhower and Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] had both declared to the President-Elect one is told that—particularly Eisenhower—that China would be a trip-wire issue as far as speaking out. So the President, I'm sure, gave moderately different messages to different people. He certainly did not urge or encourage China initiatives. He did not encourage increased hostility toward China. There was, as I recall, a successful effort made to reduce the polemics in the Warsaw talks: to try to talk substance, not to respond to every one of their harangues with an equal and opposite harangue.

[-18-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

And there was in '62, I was told—I was not really involved in reading the stuff—an effort to reassure the Chinese through Warsaw that we would not give any support or

encouragement to a Chinese nationalist threat to the Fukien province if the Chinese Nationalists were to try to launch a drive across the straits. There was, furthermore, a big question—not so big as it turned out—raised as to whether or not—in China’s food crisis of ’62—I believe it was spring, which may have....it could have been ’61 but I think it was...

STERN: I was going to ask you about that.

THOMSON: ...it was ’61. Whether or not we would permit the licensing of food shipments to China. As I recall, there was a decision that became sort of an indecision that if a legitimate grain-shipping outfit requested a license we would look favorably on giving a license, but one or two outfits that came our way seemed to be covers for uncertain, unknown speculators and when the Presidential statement at a press conference was made a very brief paragraph or sentence, it was minimal. We kept the door open. And at some point along the way there we sort of said that on humanitarian terms we might send them doctors—public health—medical supplies—medical supplies not people yet. And the Chinese of course regarded this as a massive dose of condescension and frontally rejected us in their rhetoric. So there was a sense of flexibility but no push from on high.

[-19-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

And we learned time and again that Mr. Rusk, on the way to the President, was a Gibraltar-like roadblock. Proposals died on his desk. And as I say, Mr. Rusk now claims that this was his private order from the President. He seems not to know a lot of things and he could have made this up. It was certainly his temperament to act this way.

STERN: I’m inclined on the basis of the number of things that I’ve seen to think that Rusk’s basic argument about Kennedy’s encouragement is essentially true. I think that...

THOMSON: Kennedy’s encouragement of Rusk to stand firm?

STERN: Right. I think that what Kennedy did was often to encourage different people along very different lines.

THOMSON: Well, that’s the famous Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt]...

STERN: Right, exactly.

THOMSON: ...tactic and it probably is presidential in many other forms.

STERN: And I think as a result someone like Rusk or Hilsman for that matter could have the impression...

THOMSON: Yes.

STERN: ...that they essentially had the President's support and then they go gung ho to justify this position.

THOMSON: Yes.

STERN: But in reality he's also pursuing his option in the other direction and I think, often, had not really made up his mind.

THOMSON: Well, I would add to the fact that presidents consciously keep their options open by giving some-what different messages to different people. I would add to that the human fact that people tend to hear what they want to hear...

STERN: Sure, absolutely.

THOMSON: ...And it's the ear of the listener that's as much a factor here as the voice of the speaker.

[-20-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

STERN: It's very striking, I think for example, in Hilsman's claims about the December '63 speech. How did he get the authorization from Kennedy? He claims it was sort....they just sort of communicated.

THOMSON: Almost osmosis.

STERN: That's right. And he may be right. It's hard to say because I think, and I've indicated before, I think Kennedy did tend

[Interruption]

Anyway Kennedy and I think you're right, it certainly was not unique to Kennedy but he could get people on very different sides of this issue who had the strongest possible feeling that they knew the President was behind them and it is, of course, one of those great unanswerable questions as to where he would have gone and how he would have moved had, for example, he been reelected by a large margin.

THOMSON: This by the way is why rhetoric is not...

[END OF SIDE ONE]



[-21-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

[BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE]

THOMSON: ...or the Secretary of State but in this case the President to say something in public, either in a speech or in a press conference that is favorable to your cause, to your viewpoint, to your stand on an issue which is being fought out within the government. You advance quite far and you get the little flunkies many of whom are not so little, but are very well informed—to go to work. You say, “Here is the President’s policy as stated in yesterday’s press conference. Let us go together with, go to work with position papers on how to implement it.” This is what we did....tried to do with Johnson. On a number of occasions I was closer to his speeches than I was to Kennedy’s but, this stuff is not unimportant.

[-22-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

STERN: What about the Sino-Soviet...

THOMSON: Internally—just to finish that—it’s not so unimportant internally, in terms of bureaucratic politics of getting decisions made and implemented.

STERN: Right. What about the implications of the Sino-Soviet split. Hilsman mentions in a memo you wrote in January of ‘62 in which you recorded your first sense that it was making its way into the, into the thinking of the State Department. Yet I must say from the documents that I went through it only began in the most fragile way to appear. They just didn’t see the potential in the split.

THOMSON: There was a man named Mose Harvey—first name is M-O-S-E, last name Harvey, in Policy Planning [Policy Planning Council] and I think his training had been more Soviet than Chinese—but Mose Harvey had put together an enormous document that was discussed at the Secretary’s Policy and Planning meeting in January of ‘62 and there, as the principals so to speak whoever they are—sat around the Secretary’s table, I did hear the, as I put it, the snap, crackle, and pop of minds unfreezing. Even Rostow who was present talking about, “My goodness, that means that when we face communism in a third country we may face two or three

[-23-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

brands of communism in that country and we can work our will, our ideas among them, separating one off from another,” et cetera. It was a....That’s the meeting about which I wrote the memo. And I gave a copy to Harriman, the original I think to Bowles, but Hilsman was the recipient, or, was reminded of it and if he was present. How did it affect policy? Not for a while, and it came awful late in terms of the academics early understanding of Sino-Soviet split or its....Both the beginnings of its actuality and its ultimate probability.

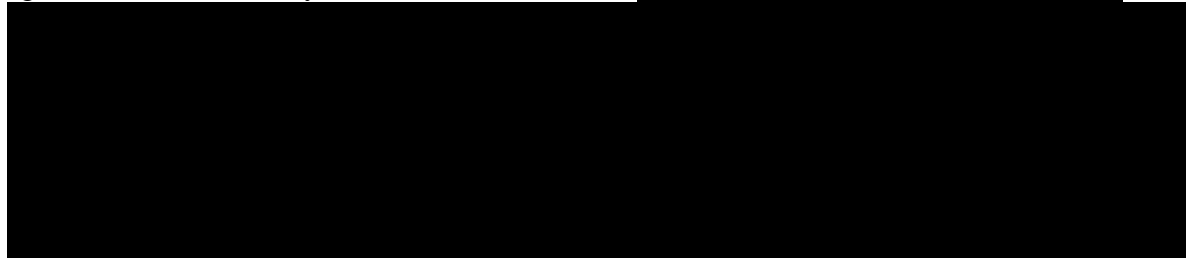
STERN: All right.

THOMSON: But the people keep doing what they’ve always been doing unless instructed otherwise. The Thai desk officer is trying to keep Thailand in our warmest possible embrace and regards everything from Cambodia to China and Burma as enemies to our policy of keeping Thailand as a bastion. Doesn’t understand, doesn’t get the message why because he’s not instructed. Also, because the ambassador in Bangkok is a spokesman, is a lawyer for his client who happens to be the Thai regime at that moment in power. Once had a....I had a number of fascinating times with the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] when—especially I was at the White House—when people like Bill Colby [William E. Colby]

[-24-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

thought I was important and brought me over for very super-secret dinners to meet with their agents from hither and yon. When there was the



a State’s desk officer and ambassador unless he was innovative, normally felt he couldn’t do without jeopardizing his career.

STERN: Along those lines I think it’s striking that Bowles frequently requested memos, studies, research, to plan for options. In other words, he assumed that the present situation was not unchangeable in any particular issue, on any particular issue relating to any particular country and in his book, for example, he’s very critical of Rusk, saying that Rusk refused to think about the future and would essentially manage crises as they occurred and then as soon as they could be put behind and then wait until the next one. Bowles felt this was a

[-25-]

completely...

THOMSON: Well, I think you're entirely right in your view of their, of these two different chemistries. The collectivity that we built up after World War II, the bureaucracy, the free world versus....Saw the world in terms of free world versus the Communist world and the major effort throughout—and I'm telling you, sort of the most obvious things—was to maintain stability in all areas where your friends were in charge. That is a static view, not only of politics, but of human nature. And it constantly gets us into trouble. And Bowles understood that the world was not static, never would be, never has been, and so on. Mr. Rusk, who was a static person, a rigid person, never seemed to understand it and he had many, many people throughout that establishment who were very much like him and stayed that way largely to keep their jobs. If you could inherit the policy towards Thailand and hold the job for two years and the policy was intact after two years, you might be promoted to a better desk job; if a lot of things changed they might look at who had screwed up and it might be you.

STERN: I wonder if we could get back for a minute to something you mentioned briefly to—the food for China issue. I found a very substantial amount of material on the.... suggesting that it was a major preoccupation of

[-26-]

yours for some time and I was hardly surprised at the division that developed on the issue. Essentially you found Bowles, Carl Kaysen, James Symington [James W. Symington] was it? Yes, wasn't his first name James?

THOMSON: Yeah, right.

STERN: James Symington, George McGovern [George S. McGovern], George Ball [George W. Ball], and Harriman in favor of in some way opening this route to China. Against it Rostow, Foy Kohler [Foy D. Kohler] and Rusk. And I thought it was a fascinating example of the way in which an issue of this sort gets entangled in factions, in ideology, everybody trying to assert that the president is really on their side, although he was not very definitive one way or the other, very much the way we were talking about it before. And particularly of course Bowles urging not only that we find some route....Most likely as I found, ruling out the idea of giving the Chinese food because he felt that would be seen as offensive and condescending, but instead finding some way of selling it to them and in addition admitting Chinese technical and medical students and then essentially, of course, the whole purpose of this would be to encourage a softening of the anti-American position in China. How did this particular issue, from your point of view, fit into the context of the—

[-27-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

if I could simplify it by saying—the Bowles versus Rostow position.

THOMSON: Well, let me begin by just saying that personally I was a China kid looking since '49 for a way to get the two countries back together as I have said in earlier conversations. Therefore, I was looking for any and all possible leverages, put it another way, a small camel's nose, any possible camel's nose, to push up that rigid tent of containment and isolation, to start things going. And when China seemed to be having real food problems—and I think it was—here was the most recent camel's nose, the most available one, the most apolitical one. And we believed in people being fed, traditionally, rather than starving them into submission. So, I became sort of the holder in the Bowles camp of documents and promoter in the Bowles camp of that small cause. If we could open that door, maybe someday we could open some other doors. It did work exactly as you describe it. We should somehow punish them into submission, particularly if their government is as fragile as Walt Rostow, they were people who were as depressed as Walt Rostow felt they were. All of which is nonsense; there's no evidence that any of that was true. I checked such things out with our best intelligence people, meaning people who shared my views. [Laughter]. I say that only in part

[-28-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

jokingly, but I have to say that the ones I trusted were the ones who looked at the data with a cast of mind that I would say was more dispassionate, and less cold wary, cold warish. People who wanted to bring China down to its knees and force its collapse, I thought had no future because I was convinced. Although Mr. Rusk once talked about the possibility of China as it had historically—he read, I think, a book on China, a history book. That adds, doesn't it? I heard him say at a staff meeting, \_ traditionally is divided into the north China and south China and we should look into regionalism which is such as Chinese phenomenon developing into warlordism. He said, we should have some studies into the possibilities of warlordism coming back with north of the Yangtze [Yangtze River] and south of the Yangtze being two separate nations. Well, yawn, yawn. This goes....I won't even go into why it's wrong but it wasn't going to happen, even in great adversity, you could have civil tumult as you did later in the cultural revolution and aftermath but the curious thing about the China food issue was not merely that I and some of us saw it as a camel's nose, it is of course that the opposition saw it as a camel's nose...[Laughter]

STERN: Exactly.

THOMSON: ...and that's not so curious. So we knew we were

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

fighting about real things rather than just a small humanitarian gesture.

STERN: Virtually all the memos, everybody on every side, was in favor of the humanitarian issue; that is, everybody said of course we should help people out, but, but. And the buts of course became determining.

THOMSON: Yeah, now the interesting point—and here I leap forward—is that after...is that sometime in that period Rostow did communicate with Bowles at least orally on this subject. Now I may be confused, because it may have come later, but Rostow basically came up with the slogan, now whether he even put it in writing I don't know, "Food for Peace." That was Chinese could get food if they would leave their neighbors alone in Southeast Asia. If they pull out their support from all these insurgencies—Vietnam, Laos, et cetera—then in exchange for peace, which they will provide by ceasing their support of revolutionary baddies, we'd give them food. And the phrase was, "Food for Peace." At least colloquially, whether he ever put that in writing, which would have been an ironic use of the term...

STERN: Yes, indeed.

THOMSON: ...and not appropriate for publication perhaps because it would have destroyed our other program, McGovern's program. I don't know. But it was—you're quite

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

right to latch on to it. I know I had a big folder in my papers, much too big.

Now, there is another codicil or corollary or something to this subject that is that even the good guys—let's say, those in favor of détente with China—split on Mr. Bowles' obsession with the food issue, the China food issue. And I think they were right and I think he was wrong, ultimately. Mr. Bowles who spent as do too many people, too much time looking at maps that did not have the topography clearly defined, had a strong belief, conviction, which we could not shake, that the Chinese unless fed somehow by their own means which seemed totally inadequate or by massive external sales or gifts would spill out. Now, he would look at the map and say, "Where can they spill?" And he would look to the north and the west and he would see that's all arid and bad and no one would go and he would look to those warm, sunny valleys of the south and say, "They will march into Indochina." Burma, which had produced rice in immense proportions in the 1930s has to this very moment never got back to that level of production because Burma is a noncountry. It

stopped. It is committed to no progress, period. Maybe the answer for us all. Unless we do this, the Chinese will spill out and take over the world. So in a sense he was an alarmist of....By his own indirect route, the

[-31-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

Rostovian of the Rostovian persuasion.

STERN: That's a strange kind of joining there.

THOMSON: There sure was and I would then go to my pals at State Intelligence and CIA and elsewhere who really looked at Asian food and population demographics and they would say, "That makes no sense. Makes no sense in terms of Chinese needs, capabilities, the amount that it would cost them to try and take over Indochina in order to get some rice out of Indochina. It is far beyond their....it would cause them far more harm than they now have." Furthermore, another word you used earlier—this was recurrent in our discussions and our combat, our internal polemics—was expansionism. Are the Chinese expansionists or aren't they? I basically belonged to the school—always have because I studied a lot of Chinese history—that believes that the Chinese are not, in current times, meaning since the 1790s or well before that, expansionists. They achieved the limits of their natural frontiers long ago. There are a few places that are up for grabs, like Tibet, but that had been Sinofied, Chinese-ized long, long ago, I mean, quite a while ago and some endless Sino-Soviet dispute about the Soviet far east which they claimed for political reasons they were not going to take it but there were some frontiers that are hard to....And there's the

[-32-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

Sino-Indian frontier. But the rest, which is the British imposed McMahon line and all that stuff. But by and large the Chinese are sedentary, at home folks. And further point on which many of us agreed, the Chinese, that the governance of China is such a total full time twenty-eight hour a day job that no sane government—and none of us ever believed the Chinese were insane—even though their committee, their internal squabbles could afford adventurism, so expansionists versus nonexpansionists. And I think Bowles was a crypto-expansionist in his view of China. Walt Rostow was a firm believer in Chinese expansionism and the knee-jerk dummies who knew nothing, just looked at maps with a great big red arrow coming down from Moscow, as Joe McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] used to do it in charts, at hearings and in his combat with Murrow [Edward R. Murrow], and as the Pentagon often does, with big red arrows. Even Hilsman would tell us why Vietnam was important in the early times of my relationship with Mr. Hilsman. Here were the three valleys, that traditionally troops could come through and....You gotta watch out. This is why Laos is

important, this is why... whatever else. We moved from food, but I wanted to tell you that these things get complicated and even within the two opposing camps there are major disagreements.

[-33]-

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

Whiting and I—and Whiting actually was my mentor, my teacher on this subject as were friends at the CIA— thought that Bowles was pushing that unless China is fed, China will spill, warning much too hard, much too far and not helping his own case.

STERN: That's fascinating. I certainly can say that I saw a lot of material that suggests this very strongly, that there was a very long Bowles paper in which he argued, pointing to the Soviet experience, that the Russians had gotten into trouble about food because they mismanaged their economy. Because the Chinese were not doing that, he says, that it simply was a chronic shortage of arable land. This was therefore, a permanent crisis and one that would probably get worse over the next decade or two. Hilsman, on the other hand, in an INR study disagreed.

THOMSON: Well, I think Hilsman was right.

STERN: Yes, but that was not the case.

THOMSON: Hilsman was reflecting Whiting as well as some other people. In other words Roger was taking very...

STERN: Right

THOMSON: ...shrewd internal advice though Roger and Bowles were on the same side...

STERN: Yes, that's curious.

[-34]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

THOMSON: ...in the ultimate question.

STERN: Yet curiously the Rostow-Foy Kohler memos argue that the reason we should not sell food is...

THOMSON: Is 'cause they'd be mismanaged.

STERN: No, but it gets to the same point. It says because this would shorten their internal crisis and...

THOMSON: Right.

STERN: ...and put their aggressive foreign policy and expansionism back on track.

THOMSON: Right, right.

STERN: And yet in a curious sort of way.

THOMSON: Well, you've got about six variables...

STERN: That's right.

THOMSON: ...operating in at least two camps.

STERN: Do you think that Bowles was right in his argument that Kennedy was ready to support the sale except that it all got fouled up by the arrest of U Nu and the escalation of Chinese verbal attacks on the United States?

THOMSON: Well, here is a place where Mac Bundy would know more than I know, obviously, and as on all points. Marc Raskin [Marcus G. Raskin], whom you may or may not have interviewed, was on the Bundy staff at the time and was the Bundy sort of Food for China White House sitter-in-on a number of meetings I went to. He might have an answer to that; I don't know. My

[-35]-

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

impression was that the President was flexible. And so I shared Bowles' view. And had a legitimate, above-board feeler, paid an application and had the Chinese been, apparently, willing to accept it, we would have given the license.

STERN: There are some very nice memos, exchange between you and a person by the name of Diana de Vegh—I think that's how you pronounce the name—who took a lot of notes at some of the meetings, and some of them sound very amusing.

THOMSON: I think she was working for Raskin, perhaps. I'm not sure.

STERN: As I recall, that's right. And it was obvious that Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] was at that meeting in case when Kaysen, Symington, McGovern....The problem of course was not a lack of agreement on



whether or not it should be done, but whether it was politically possible and how it could be carried off without causing an explosion.

THOMSON: She's a very intelligent woman and worth talking to sometime. I mean she got married and divorced a Yale [Yale University] professor who now runs a foundation in New York.

STERN: Did the Chinese build up in June of '62 in Fukien province, did that hurt in terms of this issue specifically?

[-36-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

THOMSON: That was regarded entirely as a response, at least by my pals, as a response to what they thought was a buildup in Taiwan.

STERN: Taiwan, right.

THOMSON: They sensed a threat from Taiwan which they could have managed, but that's when we told them at Warsaw that we would not give any support to a Nationalist reinvasion and the whole thing calmed down. Have you looked at the Warsaw transcripts?

STERN: No, I haven't.

THOMSON: Well, there is a significant, as I said earlier, new use of the Warsaw talks at the point when we reassured the Chinese. And they pulled back.

STERN:  
STATINTL

THOMSON:

STERN:

THOMSON:

STATINTL That was '62, so I was still sort of in a free-form situation and Mr. Bowles had no line job. By the time I was with Hilsman I would....I had more, as we say,

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

need to know, but such information is passed around internally among people who trust each other when they talk about a serious long-term issue like China.

STERN: It was....

THOMSON: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
STATINTL [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

STERN: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

THOMSON: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

STERN: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

THOMSON: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
STATINTL [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

STERN: [REDACTED]

THOMSON: [REDACTED]

STERN: Wishful thinking.

THOMSON: Right.

STERN: Right. Can you recall at all the....Bowles' resistance in the appointment of Ambassador Kirk [Admiral Alan G. Kirk] to Taiwan in '62. As a matter of fact I saw some evidence that you, too, were not very happy about that appointment.

THOMSON: Admiral Kirk. I met the guy. He sort of came in, came out. It was not a moment in history that I recollect why we didn't want Mr. Kirk, Admiral Kirk. I think we probably thought that a real knowledgeable CHINAT [Chinese National] person like James Grant [James P. Grant] or Barnett [Arthur Doak Barnett] who knew the

[-39-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

history of CHINAT manipulation of Americans, which goes back many decades, would be better for our team—meaning the U.S.—than some military person who had a Russian experience, didn't he?

STERN: Yes, I think so.

THOMSON: And had a military background. I think the military look. Taiwan was always described as a floating aircraft carrier, so you put an admiral on it. That seemed to us, I suppose, mildly provocative in appearance. But he was not a significant figure coming or going.

STERN: What about the whole question of China's membership in the United Nations and the...

THOMSON: Chi-Rep [Chinese Representation].

STERN: Chi.... that's right, Chi-Rep.... and...

THOMSON: There was a...

STERN: Go ahead.

THOMSON: There was a very, very decent and quite enormous woman named Louise McNutt who for a decade in the fifties and maybe in the forties and certainly in the sixties was the FE desk officer for Chi-Rep at State. And her father had been high commissioner of the Philippines, Paul McNutt [Paul V. McNutt], who was with Roosevelt, a fairly distinguished guy. And Louise had one mission in life. An otherwise amiable woman of, as I say, vast proportions, and that

[-40-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

was to keep China out of the UN [United Nations]. And that was her annual assignment; well, not annual, it was every day of the year. And she and I used to joke about this, but it was a posture which was almost unchangeable, although some of us had ideas about modifying it, even had a two-China idea for a period of time which I now regard as a foolish one, but it was a step forward. To have two seats made available and if both parties would occupy, which we were pretty convinced they wouldn't, okay. If neither party would occupy, then we'd leave them both empty. But if we had two seats and then Taiwan took its and Peking sat out, we would have a little breathing spell. Now the prose of the times, which you have read and I have not, may differ from what I just told you but the two-China solution I eventually thought was no solution.

STERN: It's interesting you should say that, because in November of '61—I don't know if you recall this—apparently Bowles had asked you to do a study of this whole question and after reading it sent it back to you with a note saying that he didn't like it because it did not push the two-China idea strongly enough and then added, "Of course, we must not call it that." He asked you at that point to check, for example, to see if the Eisenhower Administration at some point made an official statement that our

[-41-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

policy is not to attack the mainland, et cetera. As a matter of fact, also he said, "Let's not call it two China, let's call it two nations." So...

THOMSON: By the way, while you—I'll get my background—but while you mention Eisenhower, it was a curious moment that may be lost to your oral history and other documents. When Christian Herter—and I was working with

Bowles in Congress—said, “From now on we shall hold”—this is Secretary of State Herter “From now on we shall hold Moscow accountable for all Peking’s behavior.” This was an amazing interval of total folly because those of us who knew anything about the Sino-Soviet relationship going way back, knew that Moscow had very little control of any sort much of the time, over Peking’s behavior at all. And it was a great step backward. I think it was swallowed up but somewhere as a footnote to history it should be remembered as another American folly.

But back to Bowles’ sending back the memo. That’s very interesting. That makes me feel better.

STERN: [Laughter]

THOMSON: Yes, there were alternative phrases, “One China, One Taiwan” would have been perhaps a more palatable phrasing in some quarters; not in China, not in Taiwan.

STERN: It was, of course, something that simply could not work. At least not....Neither side would accept it.

[-42-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

THOMSON: I had, incidentally, helped Bowles write an article for *Foreign Affairs* he wrote in April 1960 called “Our China Problem Reconsidered.”

STERN: Yeah, that’s in your papers.

THOMSON: And I think that...

STERN: Kennedy read that.

THOMSON: ...came out before “One China, One Taiwan” subtly.

STERN: Right, and I think personally that Kennedy leaned in that direction.

THOMSON: Yeah.

STERN: If it could work.

THOMSON: Yeah.

STERN: Practically speaking.

THOMSON: And if I were to reread it, which I hope I don't have to, I think I would regard it as wishful thinking of the time and a non....a loser as a proposition.

STERN: Yes, but I've certainly also seen evidence that, for example, Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] was very much in favor of it at the UN and a number of other major people at the UN, including Ambassador Yost [Charles W. Yost]—various people who saw it as a potential solution and were very frustrated in their...

THOMSON: Well, it was another camel's nose. If you can create two seats, maybe you can start some communication. Food was one, Chi-Rep was another. Some new formula and then you get to the possibility of trade, but that came much later.

[-43-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

STERN: How did the—if we can move on for a moment—but how did the...

THOMSON: Oh, also, someday we will get to, you and I will get to ending the passport ban on travel to China.

STERN: Ah, yes, I, as a matter of fact, I'm going to be doing an interview with Abba Schwartz [Abba P. Schwartz].

THOMSON: Good. He was much involved.

STERN: How about the Sino-Indian border war in October/November of '62? The evidence I saw suggested to me that it was very damaging to your efforts, that it tended to shore up the position of the Rostow crowd: See, there they are again, those damned aggressive Chinese.

THOMSON: Well here again you have to divide up my side.

STERN: Right.

THOMSON: Because although Mr. Bowles who was, I think, in his, in a previous incarnation a Hindu—I mean, his favorite country in the world is India—and his great overview of that part of the world was printed in *Look* or *Colliers* or both, *Saturday Evening Post*; it was the race between China and India, these two models, the totalitarian versus the democratic. Bowles was of course appalled by the Chinese threat to India. Alleged, alleged threat. I did some close checking with my China friends in the intelligence end and you cannot stress too much how good some of those

[-44-]

**Approved For Release 2000/08/10 : NLK-00-017-1-1-3**

people were. And they were telling me, we are overreacting, the Chinese are teaching the Indians a small lesson. It's about the McMahon line, it's about something the British did long ago. And who pushed too far and cause the other side to respond is very unclear. Here Allan Whiting was a major instructor in my thinking at the time. But Allan is not....He is only one person. There were a lot of super people working with him then. Harriman, I think, became very anti-Chinese until people like Whiting got to him. Bowles, I think, was of the same persuasion. So it was a setback until we could figure out more clearly what the Chinese were up to. And the Chinese pulled back, of course. A unilateral declaration of peace confirmed the judgments of these analysts as opposed to the cosmic thinkers.

STERN:           Right.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-45-]

James C. Thomson, Jr. Oral History Transcript – JFK #2  
Name List

**B**

Ball, George W., 27  
Barnett, Arthur Doak, 39  
Bowles, Chester B., 1-4, 10, 11, 13, 14, 24-28, 30,  
31, 33-37, 39, 41-45  
Bundy, McGeorge, 2-4, 6, 7, 17, 35  
Bundy, William P., 10  
Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 13  
Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, 2, 5

**C**

Colby, William E., 24

**D**

de Vegh, Diana, 36  
Dodd, Thomas J., 17  
Dulles, John Foster, 2, 5

**E**

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 14, 18, 40, 42

**F**

Fairbank, John King, 12  
Forrestal, Michael V., 13, 18  
Fraser, Donald M., 17

**G**

Goodwin, Richard N., 18  
Grant, James P., 39  
Grove, Brandon H., Jr., 3  
Gruening, Ernest, 9

**H**

Harriman, William Averell, 5, 13, 15, 24, 27, 45  
Harvey, Mose L., 23  
Henderson, Dierdre, 5  
Herter, Christian A. Jr., 7, 42  
Hickenlooper, Bourke B., 17  
Hilsman, Roger, 1, 2, 4-7, 13, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24,  
33, 34, 37

**J**

Johnson, Lyndon B., 2, 9, 22  
Judd, Walter H., 16, 17

**K**

Kaysen, Carl, 27, 36

Kennedy, John F., 2, 3, 5, 7, 10-12, 16-18, 20-22,  
27, 35, 36, 43  
Kirk, Admiral Alan G., 39, 40  
Kohler, Foy D., 27, 35

**L**

Lewis, Samuel W., 3

**M**

McCarthy, Joseph R., 33  
McGovern, George S., 27, 30, 36  
McNutt, Louise, 40, 41  
McNutt, Paul V., 40  
Morse, Wayne L., 7, 9  
Murrow, Edward R., 33

**N**

Neubert, Joseph W., 1  
Nixon, Richard M., 18  
Nu, U, 35

**P**

Pushkin, Georgi M., 15

**R**

Raskin, Marcus G., 35, 36  
Robertson, Walter S., 13  
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 20, 40  
Rostow, Walt Whitman, 11, 13, 14, 23, 27, 28, 30,  
33, 35, 44  
Rusk, Dean, 6, 11, 15, 16, 18, 20, 25-27, 29

**S**

Schlesinger, Arthur M. Jr., 36  
Schwartz, Abba P., 44  
Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, 4  
Stevenson, Adlai E., 43  
Sukarno, Achmed, 7, 8  
Symington, James W., 27, 36

**W**

Whiting, Allen S., 13, 33, 45  
Wofford, Harris L. Jr., 5

**Y**

Yost, Charles W., 43