MEMORANDUM FOR

THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Action on

In March and April 1962, the question of ________ became active. The principal sources of concern and advocacy were three.

First, there was _________. He had become deeply bothered by the gradual deterioration ________ relations, and he was persuaded that the principal cause of this difficulty lay in the failure of the United States to meet the hopes of _________. He foresaw that with the ending of the struggle ________ would become not less but more difficult, and he believed, as Ambassadors ________ have characteristically believed, that a major improvement could be accomplished if only the United States would respond to the interests and desires ________

The second main source of interest was in the Pentagon; it derived initially from a concern for practical relations with ________ in such fields as ________

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By ________, NARA, Date 1/21/91
McNamara in descending order of enthusiasm) joined in recommending
that a serious approach be made.

The third substantial voice raised on this side of the argument was
that of General Taylor. In a visit in the latter part of
March, he was deeply impressed by the unanimity with whom he talked, in passionate commitment.

Many others, at other times, have shared these same concerns
about our relations and had asked whether some new
relation might not be worth seeking. At the
President's direction members of the staff had encouraged Paul
Nitze's inquiries earlier in the winter, and the President himself
had written a most tentative letter of explanation to
at the turn of the year. A cool response had
discouraged the White House, but there was general recognition
that the matter should in fact be reviewed once more.

Among those who believed that the subject should be reopened, there
was some difference on ways and means. There was little support
for an immediate decision to provide information

Most of those urging a new departure believed that we should initially
seek an agreement in which Assistance
would be dependent upon still further
concessions. But one of those in favor of a change in policy, Secretary Dillon, argued powerfully that it would not be possible to make a step-by-step set of bargains. He believed that the whole question should be opened by the President himself on the broadest possible basis, with the US laying out as part of a comprehensive package.
The President read and heard the arguments. He talked individually with Taylor; he also heard.

Mr. Kennedy made his decision firmly -- in a sense he simply never unmade it.

There were other elements in the decision.
he would have had to overrule the Secretary of State -- which he did not often do. These considerations could well have been overbalanced if there had been a great end in view; each of them after all had a minor counterbalance of its own.

But no one could offer him a solid and substantive return for this major change in policy, with all its evident disadvantages. No one could tell him that

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Among those who greeted this decision with approval, and with a renewed awareness of the practical clarity of the President's mind, there was little delight. The problem remained, and the effort would almost surely continue in some form -- with or without It was no answer. but what could be done?

Clear answers to this question had not emerged in early May. But a few preliminary points were plain:
Finally, we must increasingly press upon all our friends a deeper understanding of nuclear weapons as they look in the 1960's: numerous, deadly, and indivisible in their impact; costly, complex, and rapidly obsolescent in their technology; dangerous in their diffusion, and increasingly useless except in the single great goal of deterrence.

Above and beyond these immediate actions, we must persevere on the broader course of assisting and encouraging the movement toward European integration and Atlantic partnership. If that movement goes forward, the disadvantages of an unaided effort can be contained and limited; we can still make progress toward our basic goals, despite that effort. And in the degree that the forces making for European integration and Atlantic partnership prevail, come to recognize that she can play a larger role by assisting than by hindering the prosecution of this basic policy. At least this course seemed -- in May of 1962 -- to offer a better chance of promoting US objectives than any other at hand.

McGeorge Bundy