

A Tandem to the Moon?

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WASHINGTON
WHEN Congressman Olin Teague returned from a weekend of politicking in his home district in Texas recently, his first move was to fire off a rather testy letter to President Kennedy. The congressman wanted to know whether the President's speech before the United Nations proposing a "joint expedition to the moon" represented a change in national policy.

As chairman of the Manned Space Flight subcommittee of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics, Mr. Teague for two years had listened to administration officials justify the expenditure of billions of dollars on the basis that it was essential for the national prestige and perhaps indirectly for the national security to beat Russia to the moon. And it was on this basis that Mr. Teague had gone on the House floor and defended the lunar program, known as Project Apollo, in the face of rising misgivings among his colleagues about the cost—estimated conservatively to run at least \$20 billion—of landing a man on the moon in this decade. Now Mr. Teague had the uneasy feeling that the President, with a rhetorical flourish before the United Nations, had yanked the political rug right out from under him.

THE PREPARATIONS for the U.N. speech began early in September, when the President was being urged by some of his principal advisers to go before the General Assembly with a message of hope and peace that might offset some of the saber rattling and Congressional criticism that had followed the signing of the test-ban treaty. The President, however, was dissatisfied with the drafts of speeches that were presented to him, so much so that he was threatening not to appear before the General Assembly at all. What the President was looking for was a specific and dramatic proposal that would be sure to attract attention. That proposal apparently came on September 18—two days before the speech—

when James E. Webb, the shrewd and ebullient head of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, appeared at the White House for a conference with the President.

In recent weeks Soviet scientists had been dropping hints that they might like to discuss a co-operative moon effort with the United States. The hints were dismissed by the administration, including the President himself at a July 17 news conference, when they were passed on by Sir Bernard Lovell, the British astronomer who had been visiting Moscow. But the administration began to take the hints more seriously when they were renewed by the Soviet academician Anatoly A. Blagonravov during informal talks in mid-September with Dr. Hugh L. Dryden, Webb's deputy at NASA.

As they went over the draft of the United Nations speech, the President asked Mr. Webb how far he thought the United States should go in testing Soviet intentions. Mr. Webb, according to associates, suggested that the United States should "go all the way" and propose a joint expedition to the moon. Things moved swiftly after that—so swiftly that a day later, while the proposal was being incorporated in the final draft of the President's speech, Mr. Webb delivered a speech still pounding away at the theme of a competitive space race.

One of the main reasons Mr. Webb had gone to the White House was to enlist Presidential support in warding off a cut of several hundred million dollars that the House Appropriations Committee was threatening to make in the space budget. Such a cut—and a subcommittee has since recommended one of \$250 million—would presumably foredoom any chances of achieving a manned lunar landing in this decade. In addition to the budgetary difficulties, Project Apollo was running into engineering difficulties that made it seem increasingly doubtful that it would be able to meet the Presidential deadline. Not surprisingly, there is now widespread speculation

on Capitol Hill that the proposal for a joint expedition provided a convenient and timely way for the administration to get out of a commitment that in all likelihood would have been difficult if not impossible to fulfill.

This speculation was encouraged by the fact that a joint expedition presents such formidable political, engineering, and security problems as to seem like a pipe dream—particularly "in this decade," as President Kennedy put it. The space agency is already having such difficulties integrating the efforts of American contractors that Project Apollo engineers must shudder at the problems that would be posed in exchanging components with the Russians. A joint venture would also require a substantial lowering of the barriers of secrecy now surrounding space technology—a step that the United States might prove as reluctant as the Soviet Union to take, for it is becoming increasingly apparent that the technology will ultimately have military applications.

The practical problems standing in the way of a joint expedition are well known within the administration. As recently as his July 17 news conference, the President pointed out that the barriers of secrecy alone seemed to rule out a co-operative assault on the moon. A question inevitably arises therefore, concerning the administration's sincerity in proposing a co-operative effort with the Soviet Union, if by a "joint expedition" it meant something more than a co-operative exchange of scientific information about the moon.

NOW THAT the proposal has been made, however, the White House is proving unusually sensitive to suggestions that it has altered its course on the moon race or is trying to back out of its 1961 commitment of a lunar landing by 1969. When a reporter, on the day after the United Nations speech, wrote a story raising such suggestions, he was given an early-morning scolding by the White House Press Secretary in a long-distance call from Newport. It was Mr. Salinger's contention that the idea of a joint expedition was not new, and as proof he disclosed that back in 1961, in Vienna, Mr. Kennedy had suggested to Mr. Khrushchev:

"Let's go to the moon together."

The disclosure of this apparently casual comment, which drew no response one way or another from the Soviet leader, provides an interesting historical footnote on the Vienna conference. But it does little to clarify the present situation. For if the President was thinking in terms of

a joint expedition in June, 1961, why had he gone before Congress only a few weeks earlier with an appeal for "a great new American enterprise"? And why, all through the following two years, did he continue to ask Congress for billions of dollars for the specific purpose of beating the Soviets to the moon?

The Congo: Plugging A Sieve with Pinheads

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LEOPOLDVILLE
NO ONE HERE pretends to know what the future has in store for this astonishingly chaotic nation—if nation it can be called—but there seems to be general agreement that sooner or later the Congolese are going to be left to cope with it themselves, and that the decisive power will rest ultimately with the Congolese Army.

For the moment, tentative agreement seems to have been reached that will guarantee a U.N. force of five thousand troops at least through the first half of next year. Most of the cost of this will be borne by the United States, with some help from Belgium—a backslider up to now on the Congo Fund—and Britain. None of the African countries has offered to share in paying the expense, although Nigeria, Ghana, and Ethiopia still contribute troops. The French-speaking African states have contributed nothing except a vague promise of technical assistance. But in a year's time, whether funds are available or not, the U.N. force will probably be entirely withdrawn or else reduced to a token airborne police unit.

U Thant understandably wants the Congo to be responsible for dealing with its own anarchy. He feels that he cannot afford to let the U.N. be bankrupted in money and authority by the antics of this wretched country. The U.N. has been fighting for its life in the Congo. Thant, like most of his aides on the thirty-eighth floor of the U.N. Building, wants out.

The feeling is widespread. Many in Washington agree with Thant

that while the U.N. is an essential feature of this world, the Congo is all but superfluous. Dropping an expensive operation that cannot take two steps forward without taking one step back would save the United States money in this season of economies.

Here on the spot, however, the U.N. military commanders, who feel they have finally pacified the country by fighting both the tribalists and the U.N. civilian brass, would hate to see their efforts and their dead spent in vain. They realize that without a U.N. military presence here, the Congolese may soon be exercising their sovereign right to slaughter each other once again. American official thinking here is similar. It is argued that although the Congo is Belgium's moral responsibility, the Belgians seem interested only in getting a free ride from the United States and the United Nations for the return of Belgian business, in intriguing against the incursions of French finance, in steering this bankrupt country away from joining the stable French African-franc zone, and in sniping at America.

U.S. diplomats here feel that the argument of Washington budget cutters that Europe can be relied on to look after Africa is not realistic. Nowhere, they point out, is this more obvious than in the Congo, which without U.S. aid would presumably turn to Moscow. They insist that the cold war is being fought here as well as in Asia, and that the U.S. and the U.N. cannot just pull

out, willy-nilly. In his speech at the U.N. General Assembly on September 20, President Kennedy put this argument in its simplest form. "Let us finish what we have started," he said. On this basis the plea is a compelling one, but it is nevertheless difficult to see an indefinite prolongation of the U.N. presence here. Indeed, the notion of the Congo being a prize in the cold war seems highly questionable. The fact of the matter is that much of Africa is at the moment up for grabs, and, cold war or no cold war, there are no eager takers, East or West, immediately in sight.

Everyone, particularly the African and Asian diplomats, expects trouble if and when the U.N. troops depart. Except for General Joseph Mobutu, no one thinks the Congolese forces can handle the situation. Forecasts run from violent local disorders to chaos.

Next Step: A Junta

Any way one looks at it, the Congolese Army will in all likelihood soon be the only force for order in a country rent by politico-tribal hostility; it will also be the most powerful potential instrument for disorder. In the long run, it will probably become the government. Everything—the incompetence, corruption, and divisionism among the politicians, the 1960 precedent that rifles speak louder than demagogues, the tendency for the officer caste to get better and more efficient, the existence of an army that more or less does what it's told while the politicians circle and bark—all these factors suggest that the Congo is headed for a government by military junta. Since the most that can be asked from the Congo is peace and order, a military cabinet, perhaps with the honest, capable, hard-working President Cyrille Adoula as civilian chairman, might be the best solution.

Mobutu, a recent official guest of the United States on a tour, remains the unknown quantity. His arrogance still conceals a lack of self-confidence, but he has much more control of his officers than before. General Victor Lundula, who has recovered completely from the disgrace of backing Patrice Lumumba, seems loyal. Colonel Louis Bombozo, the rugged individualist who