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Excerpts from Secretary Rusk's Conversation with President Chiang Kai-shek April 16, 1964:

The Secretary said he would like to comment on the question of possible operations against the mainland which the President had raised. He would like to repeat his opening remark that we were at the beginning of a period of great change and could not be certain what the outcome would be. But his judgment today would be that in the face of the large Chinese Communist forces on the mainland the GRC could not establish itself militarily on the mainland without large-scale assistance from other countries, particularly the United States, and involving U.S. military forces and possibly nuclear weapons. He said, if he had to make a judgment today — who knows what might happen in six months — he would say that Khrushchev would have to support Mao. This could lead to the whole Northern Hemisphere going up in flames.

Nevertheless, the Secretary said it was essential to follow most closely the Sino-Soviet dispute because of its implications for the security situation in Asia, as well as Europe, Africa and Latin America. If either Khrushchev or Mao should die, the situation could change suddenly and dramatically. There might be a complete reshaping and realignment of the situation.

The President said that he was opposed in principle to the use of nuclear weapons, particularly in settling the China problem. He didn't want to give the impression that he was advocating immediate action against the mainland. He had a concept he would like to explore. It was not his intention to request U.S. aid to go back to the mainland right away.

The Secretary said it was important for the United States and the GRC to keep in close touch in assessing the situation so as not to miss an opportunity which might be provided by the rapidly changing situation. Think of the difference if the free world had done what was needed in China in 1931! Subsequent history would have been entirely changed.

The President said, as he had stated, he had a concept as to how to proceed against the China mainland which he would have read in English translation (see Document B attached).

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