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STATINTL

The Status of Mr. Bowles

President Kennedy moved quickly to scotch reports that Chester Bowles was on the way out as Under Secretary of State. Published accounts that he would be offered a roving ambassadorship brought White House denials and an immediate luncheon invitation from the President. After the luncheon, associates of Mr. Bowles said any differences with Mr. Kennedy had been straightened out. We hope so.

The reports apparently came from excellent sources, and there must have been a basis for them that cannot be eliminated by White House action. They implied the excuse for transferring Mr. Bowles was that he is a poor administrator in an administrative post. Mr. Bowles was represented as believing, however, that this was a pretext for removing him from the field of policy-making.

It is particularly disturbing that the story about Mr. Bowles should be linked with the rumored resignation of Allen Dulles, head of the Central Intelligence Agency. As Marquis Childs reported, if Mr. Bowles and Mr. Dulles were to go at the same time "it would convince conservatives that the President was trying to steer a middle course between 'liberal' and 'hard-line' factions in the shaping of foreign policy."

Mr. Bowles and Adlai Stevenson, United States Ambassador to the United Nations, take a view of foreign affairs that is opposed by certain conservative elements in Congress and the State Department. Mr. Bowles properly opposed sending United States troops to Laos, despite the fact most Administration leaders favored intervention. He was right in opposing the Cuban invasion. He is right in advocating negotiations over Berlin. And he and Mr. Stevenson are right in their concern over our dead-end China policy.

But there are powerful groups who think Mr. Bowles is wrong. Could it be that these groups demanded the sacrifice of Mr. Bowles in return for the resignation of Mr. Dulles, whose retirement has been forecast ever since the Cuban fiasco? Mr. Dulles has extremely influential conservative friends in Congress; have they been demanding Mr. Bowles's removal?

Were President Kennedy to accede to such a deal, he would go far toward convicting his Administration of being a mere policy broker between contending points of view, with no basic philosophy of its own. Mr. Bowles is not necessarily the best man available for purely administrative duties, but his ideas are badly needed in the Administration and so is