

Meet Llewellyn Thompson—



Thompson's diplomatic achievements earned him the Rockefeller Public Service Award for 1962.

Our Expert on the Kremlin

STILL PALE and hesitant of step, United States Ambassador-at-large Llewellyn E. Thompson entered his bright, paneled office on the seventh floor of the New State Department Building facing the Lincoln Memorial.

It was a sunny Oct. 2, the second full day back on the job for our former ambassador to Moscow and now presidential advisor on Kremlin affairs. Six weeks earlier, while golfing during a Colorado vacation, he had been stricken by a kidney-stone attack and subsequently underwent surgery. He was ordered to maintain an "easy schedule."

Maryann Collison, his secretary, had such a routine charted. Ready were decoded overnight cables from U. S. embassies reporting on Soviet political moves throughout the world. Paramount were two pressure points: Berlin and Cuba. In the latter case, Soviet diplomats were going out of their way to deny that offensive missiles were being supplied to Castro.

With characteristic deliberateness, Thompson alternately puffed a cigarette, studied the cables, and moved them from one neat pile to another. Next on his agenda would be briefings from non-diplomatic sources, then a series of evaluation meetings with other State Department experts. But the routine day was short-lived. From the office of Secretary of State Dean Rusk came a cryptic message—a top-level conference had been called for 11:45 and, Thompson was told, "the President urgently requests your presence."

The Cuban crisis had erupted. U-2 aerial photographs had confirmed a build-up in offensive weapons on the island, and President Kennedy had set up a special nine-man executive committee which would decide on life-and-death counter-measures. Llewellyn Thompson's role would be to judge how the Kremlin would react; he would appraise the subsequent threats, guile, promises. For the next weeks, Thompson's "easy schedule" would consist of 18-hour days divided between stark meeting rooms at the State Department and the Oval Room in the White House.

For career diplomat Thompson, such a regimen came as no innovation. As chief negotiator for the Austrian peace treaty, he once lost 17 pounds in 11 days of hard bargaining with the Russians. Duty at posts ranging from a stuffy little office in Ceylon to the imposing Spaso House, our ambassador's residence in Moscow, has given him an ulcer which, he says, gets little rest "between bland sandwiches taken at my desk at lunch and rich foods at evening diplomatic dinners."

In pin-stripe dress, deferential poise, and precise speech, Thompson fits the public image of a