Articles

“Gentlemen, You Are Tramping on the Sovereignty of This Great State”: Revisiting the 1962 University of Mississippi Desegregation Crisis

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要旨

1962年9月，ミシシッピー州北部オックスフォードにあるミシシッピー大学へ，ジェームズ・H・メレディスという名の一人の学生が，初の黒人学生としての入学を果たした。この入学は，なにもメレディス本人の勇気によってのみ果たせたものではなく，時のジョン・F・ケネディー大統領政権によるキャンパスへの連邦軍投入，そして二つの尊い人命を失った結果，可能となったのである。

この「ミシシッピー大学事件」（ないしは「メレディス事件」とも呼ばれる）に際しては，州知事ロス・R・バーネットを中心としたミシシッピー州政府が，メレディス入学に対する徹底した抵抗を見せたものの，最終的にバーネットによる州権論の援用――すなわち，連邦政府と自州民との間に州の権限を差し挟み，連邦裁判所によるメレディス入学命令を効力の及ばないものとする，「インターポジション」理論の展開――は，連邦軍に象徴された連邦政府の圧倒的な力の前に崩れ去ることとなる。同時にまた，1950年代なかばよりアメリカ南部社会を嵐の中に巻き込んできた，黒人による公民権運動史の文脈において，この「ミシシッピー大学事件」は，合衆国憲法で保障された黒人の市民的諸権利行使への抵抗手段として，州権論を持ち出すことの非有効性を，ミシシッピー州のみならず南部諸州へ知らしめることともなった。

「ミシシッピー大学事件」から40年の歳月が流れようとしている今日，ジョン・F・ケネディー大統領図書館（マサチューセッツ州ボストン）から公開された大統領執務室における録音テープ，ならびに本稿執筆者自身によるミシシッピー州でのオーラル・ヒストリー・インタビューの一部を基に，「ニュー・フロンティア」を標榜する一方において，南部が抱える人種問題への介入に踏み切れないでいる若き合衆国大統領ケネディーと，人種差別主義者としての面子を保ちながらも，武力を伴う形での連邦政府との全面衝突をなんとしても避けたいと願うミシシッピー州知事バーネットとの間に繰り広げられた，舞台裏での駆け引きを描き出すことを，本稿執筆における目的とする。

なお本稿は，1999年度および2000年度東海大学学部等研究教育補助金個人研究プロジェクト（「1950－60年代アメリカ深南部州における公民権と州権――ミシシッピー州主権委員会の史的考察を中心として」）における，研究成果の一部でもある。

> "[Y]ou know what I am up against, Mr. President. I took an oath . . . to abide by the laws of this state. . . . I'm on the spot here."
> —Mississippi Governor Ross R. Barnett[1)]

> "[T]he problem is, Governor, that I['ve] got my responsibility just like you have yours."
> —President John F. Kennedy[2)]

Almost four decades ago as of this writing, inauguration morning in Washington, D.C., dawned clear but extremely cold on January 20, 1961. For nearly all spectators who gathered to observe the inaugural activities taking place on the grandstands raised on the east front of the Capitol, "the striking contrast" presented by the outgoing and incoming presidents was evident. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the seventy-year-old outgoing Republican president who was a product of the rural Midwest, was the oldest man ever to have served in the office of presidency. In contrast, John F. Kennedy, the thirty-fifth incoming Democratic president, was from the urban East, and being only forty-three years old, he was the youngest man ever to have been elected to the nation's highest administrative office. "[T]he touch has been passed," as Kennedy appropriately proclaimed in his inaugural address, "to a new generation of Americans." "We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom, symbolizing an end as well as a beginning, signifying renewal as well as change," so the new president's short, but nevertheless eloquently rhymed, inaugural address began. Summoning his fellow Americans to greatness and reminding them of their obligations, Kennedy concluded his address with the following famous phrase, on which he had worked and reworked as the president-elect: "And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."[3)]

Only a day after Kennedy's inauguration, true to the young president's words, a black veteran of the United States Air Force set out to do what he could do for his country, for his native state, and for his own race. The veteran was James H. Meredith, a twenty-seven-year-old native of Attala County, Mississippi. Serving for the Air Force for almost a decade from 1951 to 1960, including three years in Tokyo, Japan, Meredith was in the military "to preserve and protect the rights and privileges of democracy" which he himself "didn't in fact enjoy." When he got out of the Air Force and came back to his native state, where racial segregation and discrimination were kept intact, he was determined to do everything that he could do to right the wrongs for himself and for his fellow black Mississippians. Soon, breaking down the high wall of the state's white supremacy became his "absolute conscious decision."[4)] Meredith eventually chose the University of Mississippi, one of the state's most visible symbols of white supremacy, to test his resolve. On January 21, Meredith wrote to Registrar Robert B. Ellis at the university to request an application for

admission.[5] And that was the beginning of a subsequent "test of the federal government's resolve and a state's will to resist," which eventually developed into "one of the crucial events in the American civil rights revolution."[6] The scene of the event was the 114-year-old all-white University of Mississippi, better known as Ole Miss, in the picturesque college town of Oxford, Lafayette County, whose history extended through the Reconstruction period when the state was under federal military occupation.

Ten days later, on January 31, sending his application to Ole Miss, Meredith enclosed a letter addressed to Registrar Ellis, notifying the all-white institution that he was "not a white applicant" but was "an American-Mississippi-Negro citizen." "With all of the presently occurring events regarding changes in our old educational system taking place in our country in this new age," Meredith wrote in his letter, "I feel certain that this application does not come as a surprise to you." "I certainly hope," he concluded, "that this matter will be handled in a manner that will be complimentary to the University and the state of Mississippi."[7] The application from Meredith did in fact come "as a surprise" to both Registrar Ellis and Ole Miss, and that certainly ensured that the university officials would handle his application "uncomplimentarily."

Meredith's application was subsequently turned down twice by the university authority on the grounds that he did not, and in truth could not, submit the required six letters of recommendation from alumni since no white graduate would dare to write one for him. On May 31, backed by Attorney Constance Baker Motley of the Legal Defense and Educational Fund at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Medgar W. Evers, field secretary of Mississippi's state NAACP, Meredith filed a class action lawsuit at the United States federal district court located in the state's capital city of Jackson.[8] Asserting that racial bias had been the sole ground for Ole Miss' rejection of his applications, Meredith sought a preliminary injunction for his immediate admission to the university, as well as a permanent court order which would prohibit the institution from discriminating against any future black applicants in its admission policies. After a series of ensuing legal battles, Meredith appealed the district court's decisions, which ruled in favor of the University of Mississippi, to the United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans, Louisiana.[9]

In the meantime, as the Mississippi legislature convened in January 1962, Governor Ross R. Barnett entered the second half of his term as governor. Though the state briefly stood at bay with a possible constitutional predicament over the well-publicized Freedom Riders' "invasion" in the spring and summer of 1961, Mississippi remained "sovereign and segregated" as the governor himself had avowed two years earlier in his inaugural address. From a humble beginning on a small farm in Leake County, Mississippi, Barnett attended local public schools and went on to graduate from Mississippi College. After working for two years as principal of Pontotoc High School in north Mississippi, Barnett entered the University of Mississippi Law School. Upon graduation, he began his law practice in Jackson in 1926 and subsequently became the senior

partner of a large law firm in the capital. A man with "a mixture of flamboyance and down-to-earth seriousness," Barnett seldom failed in attracting and fascinating people around him with his "energy, rhetoric, and antics."[10]

During the 1959 gubernatorial election, though racial segregation in Mississippi's public schools remained intact, all three major Democratic candidates vigorously hammered down on segregation. Among them, the one who "could crack the loudest segregation whip" was Barnett, who was running for the third time to attain the governor's office.[11] In announcing his candidacy for the governorship, Barnett proclaimed in early 1959:

> I am a vigorous segregationist, [and] I will work to maintain our heritage, our customs, constitutional government, rights of the states, segregation of the races . . . The next governor will be confronted with some of the most complicated problems since the era of Reconstruction following the War Between the States. I owe allegiance only to my God, my conscience, my family, and the good people of my native state.[12]

Without any Republican challenge, in the Democratic primaries held during the summer of 1959, Barnett defeated the two other major contenders with the strong backing of the Citizens' Council—the most vocal and widespread segregationist group in the South, whose first chapter was organized in Sunflower County, Mississippi, in the wake of the United States Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. Barnett himself had been an active member of the Jackson Citizens' Council since its inception. The durable relationship between Barnett and the Council became evident when the governor-elect's first post-election public appearance took place at a meeting sponsored by the segregationist organization. On the evening of September 8, Barnett appeared in the Victory Room at the Heidelberg Hotel in downtown Jackson. For the occasion, nearly a thousand attendees bought the $25-a-plate meals to help finance the activities carried out by the Citizens' Council.[13] "Friends," the elated governor-elect spoke to the appreciative audience, "I'm a Mississippi segregationist, and I am proud of it."[14]

While the state lawmakers were considering three new additional measures to strengthen voter qualifications in the 1962 legislative session, aiming at discouraging the foreseeable voter registration drives by civil rights activists in the state, the United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals struck a blow at Mississippi, that would soon invite an all-out constitutional crisis over black civil rights. On June 25, 1962, reversing the lower federal court's rulings, the Fifth Circuit affirmed that Meredith had been denied admittance to the all-white University of Mississippi solely because of his race, and it directed Federal District Judge Sidney C. Mize of Mississippi to order the university to accept Meredith.[15] In the court's majority opinion, Judge John Minor Wisdom, a native of New Orleans, sharply criticized the lower court's mishandling of the case and declared:

"A full review of the record leads the Court inescapably to the conclusion that from the moment the defendants discovered Meredith was a Negro they engaged in a carefully calculated campaign of delay, harassment, and masterly inactivity."[16] The day of the appeals court's judgement happened to be Meredith's twenty-ninth birthday.[17]

Though the Fifth Circuit ruled that Ole Miss must accept Meredith as its first black student, the grave question, as in the case of the 1957 Little Rock, Arkansas, school desegregation crisis, remained unanswered: who would enforce the federal court order? Earlier in May 1954, standing on the floor of the United States Senate, Mississippi Senator James O. Eastland proclaimed in the immediate aftermath of the Supreme Court's *Brown* decree that "people [in the South] will not change [their racial] views which have been instilled into them for generations, merely on the strength of a few words by a court." "It will take force to bring compliance with the decision of the Supreme Court. [But] [w]here is that force? The Court cannot supply it," the Mississippi senator asked.[18] In the fall of 1957, the Court truly could not "supply" the force, but President Eisenhower, with much reluctance, eventually took on the task instead, and his popular campaign slogan, "I Like Ike," was replaced overnight by the chants of "I Hate Ike" in Little Rock.

It should be noted that both President Kennedy and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy were also reluctant participants in the Mississippi desegregation ordeal of 1962. After his brother's death, Robert Kennedy recollected in a December 1964 oral history interview: "What I was trying to avoid basically was having to send troops and trying to avoid having a federal presence in Mississippi."[19] "His consuming fear," Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., also remembered, "was a mini-civil war with GIs and Mississippians shooting each other down."[20] President Kennedy shared the same thoughts with his younger brother. Meanwhile, Meredith, the central figure in the desegregation controversy, had a different perspective. "I knew that the Kennedys would do nothing on my agenda [if] they were not forced in[to] a position to do [something]," Meredith recalled three decades after his ordeal:

> It was my experience in the military that made [the desegregation of] the University of Mississippi possible. Most people don't know what I really did at the University of Mississippi. What I really did at the University of Mississippi was to force the federal government to employ its troops on my side against the Mississippi troops. That's what I did, and that's what I set out to do—to force the Kennedy administration in[to] the position where they [had] to use the armed force[s] for my purpose. . . .
>
> I knew that that had to happen in order for me to be successful [in desegregating the university].[21]

On the evening of September 13, just a few hours after Federal District Judge Mize ordered

Ole Miss to admit Meredith immediately, Governor Barnett went on statewide television and radio to speak to his fellow Mississippians on the state's "greatest crisis since the War between the States." "We must either submit to the unlawful dictates of the Federal Government," the governor reminded the people, "or stand up like men and tell them 'NEVER!' " "I have made my position in this matter crystal clear," he went on, "[and] I have said in every county in Mississippi that no school in our state will be integrated while I am your Governor. I repeat to you tonight—NO SCHOOL WILL BE INTEGRATED IN MISSISSIPPI WHILE I AM YOUR GOVERNOR." Then, "in obedience to [the] legislative and constitutional sanction" of the state, Barnett interposed "the rights of the Sovereign State of Mississippi to enforce its laws and to regulate its own internal affairs without interference on the part of the Federal government." "Let us meet this crisis with dignity, courage and fortitude," the governor concluded, "and show to the world that we are people of honor, that we do not, we will not surrender to the evil and illegal forces of tyranny."[22] Thus, having invited the nightmarish repetition of the Little Rock crisis, Barnett marked a fatal point of no return. Wiping sweat from his brow following the broadcast, the governor realized that better than anyone else. Five days later, Barnett called the state legislature into its first special session of the year. Summoned by the governor, four representatives led by House Speaker Walter Sillers introduced House Concurrent Resolution No. 2, which pledged the legislature's "full support in the staunch stand" taken by Barnett.[23]

The nature of the constitutional federal-state conflict over Meredith's attempt to desegregate Ole Miss was relatively clear, but the politics was not. In Washington, while President Kennedy and his advisors were determined that Meredith should eventually attend Ole Miss, they were also desperate to find a way to avoid direct military involvement in Mississippi by the federal government, which would certainly cost the president southern Democratic support that he needed in Congress and might even ruin his bid to be renominated as the party's presidential candidate in 1964. Thus, Kennedy preferred a political solution. In the meantime, Governor Barnettin Jackson, more than anyone else, did not wish to invite the same federal intervention that had unfolded in Little Rock just five years earlier with a bloody federal-state military confrontation. But at the same time, the governor could not simply retreat from the battlefield without a fight and let Meredith attend Ole Miss. Barnett wanted a political solution, too, and he turned to his advisors for any feasible suggestions to break the impasse. Among those counselors, Thomas "Tom" Watkins, a Jackson attorney and one of the citizen members of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission that was created by the state legislature in 1956 as Mississippi's "segregation watchdog" executive agency, played an important role as a conduit between Barnett and the Kennedy administration. This secret arrangement was made through the influence of Senator Eastland, powerful chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee.[24]

On the afternoon of September 20, Meredith was brought to the University of Mississippi campus by Attorney John Doar from the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department and

James P. McShane, chief of the executive office of United States Marshals. Earlier on that same day, the Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning voted to invest Governor Barnett "with the full power, authority, right and discretion" of the board "to act upon all matters pertaining to or concerned with the registration or non-registration, admission or non-admission, and/or attendance of James H. Meredith" at Ole Miss, designating the governor as the official successor of Ellis, registrar at the University of Mississippi. Inside the University Continuation Center building on campus, Meredith appeared before Registrar Ellis and Governor Barnett and quietly told the two men what his intended business was: "I want to be admitted to the University." Ellis, who did not waste his time, began to read the board's decision to transfer its authority to the governor. Following the registrar, Barnett then read his brief proclamation, refusing the admission of Meredith to Ole Miss.[25)]

Three days after this first confrontation took place, President Kennedy called Barnett to express his apprehension over the Meredith matter. "I am concerned," the president said on the phone, "about this situation down there." "Oh, I should say I am concerned about it, Mr. President. It's . . . a horrible situation," the governor answered. By then, Watkins had already become a crucial link between the two administrations, and he had even suggested to Attorney General Kennedy that they play a farcical drama where the marshals would escort Meredith to Ole Miss and, upon the lead marshal's drawing his gun, Barnett and other state officials would step aside to let Meredith register. Informed by President Kennedy that Watkins and the attorney general were not making as much progress as he had expected to break the deadlock, Barnett began to make a plea for the president's understanding on the phone: "[Y]ou know what I am up against, Mr. President. I took an oath . . . to abide by the laws of this state. . . . I'm on the spot here." "[T]he problem is, Governor," Kennedy also gave vent to his sentiments, "that I['ve] got my responsibility just like you have yours." At the end of their five-minute conversation, as if to try to put away the grave problem that he had just talked about with the president, Barnett abruptly, but sincerely, added: "I appreciate your interest in our poultry program and all those things." Laughing softly, but wryly, the president simply replied: "Okay, Governor. Thank you."[26)] The governor's last utterance might have made the president wonder why the Mississippi governor could possibly mention his state's livestock business in the midst of the constitutional crisis.

On September 25, Doar and McShane escorted Meredith to the office of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning located on the tenth floor of the Woolfolk State Office Building in downtown Jackson. As the three men approached the board's office, Governor Barnett stood in the doorway. After studying Meredith and the two white federal officials seriously for a few seconds, Barnett mischievously asked them: "Which one of you gentlemen is Mr. Meredith?" While Meredith flashed a little grin, the two white men showed no amusement. Then, Doar vainly tried to hand the governor an order from the Fifth Circuit Court to prohibit him from interfering with Meredith's enrollment at Ole Miss. In response, Barnett began to read a

proclamation directed to Meredith that, in essence, confirmed his previous position. "I, Ross R. Barnett, Governor of the State of Mississippi," the governor concluded, "do hereby finally deny you admission to the University of Mississippi."[27] When Doar once again asked the governor to permit them to enter the board's office, Barnett launched into an extemporaneous speech, citing the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution: "I took an oath when I was inaugurated governor of this state to uphold and try to maintain and perpetuate the laws of Mississippi. . . . Gentlemen, my conscience is clear."[28]

Soon after the governor's tirade on the states' rights amendment, Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall of the United States Justice Department's Civil Rights Division called Watkins at the governor's mansion in Jackson. "[I]f there [is] to be any school integration in Mississippi," the governor's legal advisor painfully told the assistant attorney general, "it would have to be done forcibly." The next morning, Marshall again placed a call to Watkins in New York, who had flown from Jackson on the previous evening as the governor's emissary. Consenting to Marshall's general appraisal of the situation, Watkins told the Justice Department official that "the matter had gone too far" and suggested that federal officials " 'gently' attempt to push the Governor aside" on their "next effort to escort Meredith into the University," which was to be carried out later that afternoon. Watkins reiterated and made sure, however, that these officials "should use 'the mildest kind of force.'" "This would make the Governor's point," he further explained to Marshall, "and give him an out because the Federal Government would have forcibly brought about desegregation." The assistant attorney general immediately passed Watkins' suggestion on to Doar and McShane and instructed them "to make an effort physically to force their way onto the campus."[29] Thus, the plan for a farcical play was set at last, but both Watkins and Marshall had no idea that the play's leading actor—Governor Barnett—would not be able to show up on the stage that afternoon.

In accordance with the Watkins-Marshall plan, Doar and McShane brought Meredith to the Ole Miss campus for his third attempt to register. But this time, the party was met by Lieutenant Governor Paul B. Johnson, Jr. "We're going in," McShane told the lieutenant governor, wasting no time, but Johnson simply replied: "You aren't." Then, the chief marshal unsuccessfully tried to elbow the lieutenant governor aside, and at one point, even shook his fist at him. Notwithstanding this "show of force" on the part of the Kennedy administration, Johnson, who was not privy to the plan devised by Watkins and Marshall that same morning, "refused to be budged." Governor Barnett, who arrived late at the university due to mechanical trouble with his airplane, congratulated Johnson for having "stood tall" against the federal "tyranny."[30] In a sense, the lieutenant governor was a thoroughly unprepared stand-in, who was suddenly drawn into the center of a very important scene without having been told in advance that there was a major change in the script. After this third confrontation, Marshall called Watkins once again and asked him what went wrong with their script. The governor's advisor wryly explained that the federal

officials did not use "a large enough show of force." Perplexed, Marshall asked Watkins "what show of force would be enough."[31]

While the lieutenant governor's defiant stand would later assure his ascent to the governor's office, Barnett began to lose his nerve. On September 28, the Fifth Circuit Court convicted Governor Barnett of contempt of the court and levied a fine of $10,000 a day. Having "stood tall" on the Ole Miss campus, Lieutenant Governor Johnson also became a subject of the court's conviction, and his fine was set at $5,000 a day. When the appeals court found both Barnett and Johnson guilty of contempt of court, the state legislature adopted a resolution, protesting against "the tyrannical effort of the federal government." Sensing an imminent possibility of the use of federal force by the Kennedys and "speaking for peace-loving, law-abiding citizens of the State of Mississippi," Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 108 resolved: "We do hereby deplore and condemn the use of Federal force in any form and in an unconstitutional and illegal attempt to subjugate free American citizens and to subordinate constitutional government to the dictates of an organized, militant, and self-serving minority." Both Houses of the state legislature hurriedly voted for the resolution, and after its adoption, certified copies of the resolution were immediately sent to the Kennedy brothers.[32]

Still hoping to resolve the Meredith crisis without employing federal forces, President Kennedy called Barnett on Saturday, September 29, to discuss a new behind-the-scenes proposal, which Watkins had just suggested to Attorney General Kennedy. According to the scheme, the Kennedy administration would announce that Meredith was going to the Ole Miss campus to be registered on Monday, October 1. On the basis of this announcement, Barnett and Johnson would be at the university to block Meredith's admission. And while the governor and the lieutenant governor would await the arrival of the Meredith party, federal officials were going to bring Meredith secretly to the state office building in Jackson to get him registered there. The theory behind of this "hidden ball trick" proposal was simple because it would enable Barnett to claim that the Kennedys misled him, which in turn would allow him to save face. Enthusiastic about this new proposal, throughout Saturday afternoon and well into the early evening, the governor spent most of his time trying to talk some of his intransigent advisors into accepting the plan. However, by the time he left the Veterans Memorial Stadium in Jackson later in the evening after attending the Ole Miss-Kentucky football game, Barnett "had lost his own resolve to honor" the trick plan.[33]

Just before kickoff, as Governor Barnett and his wife appeared at their spectator box and waved to the crowd, over forty thousand people who packed the stadium began to cheer, waving their Confederate battle flags. At halftime, in response to the endless chants of "We Want Ross" coming from the spectators, Barnett dutifully went down to the middle of the field. There, in the glare of a spotlight, the governor spoke into a microphone with his right fist clenched and held high above his head: "I love Mississippi! I love her people [and] our customs! I love and respect our heritage!"[34] The governor did not utter a single word of "segregation," "integration," "states'

rights," or "federal encroachment," but his message was clear. Moreover, Barnett was more than just the governor of the state of Mississippi on that evening, becoming a symbol of the white South—a personification of the cherished "southern way of life." In place of the rendition of "Dixie," the Ole Miss band began to introduce the new state song, "Go Mississippi," which was designated as the official state song during the 1962 regular legislative session on May 17—the eighth anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Brown* ruling. "Go, Mississippi, you cannot go wrong, . . . Go, Mississippi, let the world know, That our Mississippi is leading the show," the words reverberated through the stadium.[35)]

It was true that the nation's eyes were fixed on Mississippi and that the state was "leading the show." But contrary to the words of the newly introduced state song, Mississippi was definitely "going wrong." Shortly after the enthusiastic crowd at the stadium was driven into a frenzy by his appearance, Barnett called Watkins' law partner, William F. Goodman, and simply told him: "I can't do it, I can't do it."[36)] The governor then placed a call to the Justice Department in Washington. The attorney general had gone home, but the governor's call was forwarded to his residence. Castigated by young Kennedy that he was breaking his word to the president, Barnett told the attorney general that he would have to call off the earlier proposal. President Kennedy was then phoned at the White House and informed by his brother that the deal was off. Upon hearing this, the president reluctantly signed the already prepared proclamation documents, federalizing the Mississippi National Guard and authorizing Secretary of Army Cyrus Vance to call out troops for sending them to Ole Miss if it became necessary. A few seconds before signing the documents, President Kennedy looked up at one of his White House aides and asked: "Is this pretty much what Ike signed in 1957 with the Little Rock thing?" Assured that it was, the president went on to subscribe his name to the documents.[37)]

While the Pentagon was busy notifying the Mississippi National Guard that it was now under the command of the federal government, Robert Kennedy and Barnett resumed their desperate search for a peaceful solution before the situation got any worse. At 10:45 A.M., on Sunday, September 30, the governor called the attorney general from his mansion in Jackson. The only person who accompanied him at this time was Watkins, and it was one of the rare moments during the previous few days when Barnett was not surrounded by a dozen of his advisors and insiders. In that quietness, the attorney general exploded a bombshell, informing the governor that the president might reveal the existence of their secret negotiations on national television. "The President is going on TV tonight," Kennedy broke the news, "[and] [h]e will have to say why he called up the National Guard; that you had an agreement to permit Meredith to go to Jackson to register, and your lawyer, Mr. Watkins, said this was satisfactory." Barnett was horrified at the ramifications of the president's possible revelation of their secret conversations and started begging for the attorney general's mercy: "Don't say that. Please don't mention it." At long last, almost thirty minutes after the conversation began, Governor Barnett agreed with Attorney

General Kennedy that Meredith would be brought to the Ole Miss campus later that afternoon and that Barnett would make a statement to the effect that he would "recognize the authority" of the federal government. The attorney general made sure that Barnett would issue his statement to "alleviate the situation" before his elder brother's appearance on television.[38]

Barnett and Watkins hurriedly set to write a draft of the governor's statement, but it was already 12:00 noon, and time was running short. An hour later, Barnett called Marshall at the Justice Department and "dictated the statement he intended to make." Around 6:00 P.M., Mississippi time, Attorney General Kennedy called the governor "to inform him that Meredith had arrived on the campus" of Ole Miss. The attorney general also asked Barnett to make some minor changes in his statement, but the perturbed governor answered that "he didn't have a pencil or . . . a secretary."[39] At 7:30 P.M., Governor Barnett, looking tired and strained, went on statewide television and announced that Meredith had already been placed on the campus of Ole Miss:

> Surrounded on all sides by the armed forces and oppressive power of the United States of America, my courage and my convictions do not waiver [*sic*]. My heart still says "never," but my calm judgement abhors the bloodshed that will follow. I love Mississippi. I love her people. I love those 10,000 good Mississippians in the National Guard who have now been federalized and requested to oppose me and their own people. . . . I know that our principles remain true, but we must at all odds preserve the peace and avoid bloodshed.[40]

"To the officials of the federal government," Barnett added, "I say: 'Gentlemen, you are tramping on the sovereignty of this great State and depriving it of every vestige of honor and respect as a member of the union of states. You are destroying the Constitution of this great Nation. May God have mercy on your souls.' "[41] Meanwhile, President Kennedy went on the air to deliver his address to the nation shortly after Barnett finished his statewide speech. While reminding American people at large that "our Nation is founded on the principle that observance of the law is the eternal safeguard of liberty and defiance of the law is the surest road to tyranny" and stressing that "[t]he law which we obey includes the final rulings of the courts," Kennedy conveyed his special appeal to "white Mississippi's sense of honor":

> You have a great tradition to uphold, a tradition of honor and courage won on the field of battle and on the gridiron as well as the University [of Mississippi] campus. You have a new opportunity to show that you are men of patriotism and integrity. . . . It lies in your courage to accept those laws with which you disagree as well as those with which you agree.[42]

"The eyes of the Nation and of all the world are upon you and upon all of us," the president concluded, "and the honor of your University and State are in the balance."[43] By the time Barnett went on the air, unknown to both the governor and the president, a large crowd gathered around the Lyceum—the university's administrative building—had already begun to throw bricks, bottles, and Molotov cocktails at the federal marshals on the campus of Ole Miss. As President Kennedy began his nationwide address to appeal to white Mississippians' "sense of honor," the marshals started to fight back by firing tear gas. During the night of terror, around midnight, realizing the gravity of the outcome of the federal-state confrontation at last, Barnett made his last desperate plea to the president on the phone:

> Barnett: Mr. President, please. Why don't you . . . can't you give an order up there to remove Meredith [from the campus]?
> Kennedy: How can I remove him, Governor, when there's a riot in the street . . . ? I can't remove him under those conditions.
> Barnett: Mr. President, people are wiring me and calling me saying, "Well, you've given up." I said, I had to say, "No, I'm not giving up, not giving up any fight. . . . I never give up. I have courage and faith . . . and we'll win this fight." You understand. That's just to Mississippi people.[44]

By the time some twenty-three thousand federal troops dispatched by the Kennedys began to arrive at the University of Mississippi just before 4:00 A.M., on the morning of Monday, October 1, the campus riots and the Kennedy administration's efforts to subdue the night of terror had brought two deaths. In addition, some two hundred rioters were arrested, only twenty-four of whom were identified as Ole Miss students.[45] At 8:00 A.M., escorted by a group of exhausted federal marshals, Meredith was finally registered, and he thus officially became the first black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi. President Kennedy made sure that Meredith would be accompanied by plainclothes marshals, not by army troops, to the registrar's office in an apparent attempt not to incite white Mississippians to further rebellion. Meredith met with no further resistance and hurried to his first class on American history.[46] Registrar Ellis, who quietly registered Meredith on that Monday morning, accurately assessed the desegregation crisis a quarter century after the incident:

> [T]he governor was so obsessed with the idea of maintaining "our way of life" that [eventually straitjacketed him]. . . . And with those two [incompatible] points of view [possessed by President Kennedy and Governor Barnett] and with the two political leaders trying to make [themselves] look as good as they could,

the situation just got out of hand.[47]

Before Meredith's eventual success in desegregating Ole Miss, no public school in Mississippi—neither its elementary and secondary schools, colleges, nor universities—had been racially integrated. But now, the absolute racial barrier in the state's educational system was finally broken. After all, the Meredith crisis was what Willie Morris, a Mississippi writer, aptly called "Echoes of a Civil War's Last Battle."[48] Subscribing to Morris' observation, Attorney Motley, who had represented Meredith in his long legal battle, once looked back: "What really happened in the Meredith case when the state [of Mississippi] decided to resist was that they were playing out the last chapter of the Civil War."[49] Be that as it may, just as the Old South did after the bloody Civil War, "Old Mississippi," too, as the future course of events would soon reveal, refused to go away gently.

Notes

* The author would like to express his gratitude for the assistance and friendship of James H. Meredith of Jackson, Mississippi.

1) Item #4A1, dictabelt #4A, transcript; item #2, audiotape #27, audiocassette, both in "Integration of the University of Mississippi," Presidential Recordings, President's Office File, John F. Kennedy Presidential Papers, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

2) Ibid.

3) Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 273-78. See also Theodore C. Sorensen, selected, "*Let the Word Go Forth*": *The Speeches, Statements, and Writings of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Delacorte, 1988), 12-15.

4) James H. Meredith, "An Oral History by James H. Meredith," recorded interview by Yasuhiro Katagiri, 11 Jan. 1994, B-M559mo, transcript, 14, Archives and Library Division, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

5) James H. Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1966), 54; Irving Bernstein, *Promises Kept: John F. Kennedy's New Frontier* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), 76.

6) David G. Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly: The Troubled History of Higher Education in Mississippi* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1990), 156.

7) Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi*, 57-58.

8) "Desegregation and Education," in *The Civil Rights Movement and the Law: A National Symposium* series, Univ. of Mississippi, 1989, videocassette.

9) Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly,* 162-67.

10) Cecil L. Summers, *The Governors of Mississippi* (Gretna, La.: Pelican, 1980), 129-30.

11) Erle Johnston, Jr., *Politics: Mississippi Style* (Forest, Miss.: Lake Harbor, 1993), x.

12) Erle Johnston, Jr., *I Rolled with Ross: A Political Portrait* (Baton Rouge, La.: Moran, 1980), 73.

13) William J. Simmons to "Dear Member," 31 Aug. 1959, folder 1, Citizens' Council Collection; "Barnett Praises Council Activity," *Citizens' Council*, Sept. 1959, folder 2, box 1, A. Eugene Cox Collection, both in Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State Univ., Mississippi State, Mississippi.

14) "Fighting Back, 1957-62," in *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years* series, Blackside, 1987,

videocassette.

15) Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly,* 162; Sansing, *The University of Mississippi: A Sesquicentennial History* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1999), 289.

16) Jack Bass, *Unlikely Heroes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 178.

17) Meredith, "An Oral History by James H. Meredith," 4.

18) *Congressional Record,* 83d Cong., 2d sess., 27 May 1954, 7256.

19) Edwin O. Guthman and Jeffrey Shulman, eds., *Robert Kennedy in His Own Words: The Unpublished Recollections of the Kennedy Years* (New York: Bantam, 1988), 160.

20) Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 319.

21) Meredith, "An Oral History by James H. Meredith," 10-11.

22) Ross R. Barnett, "A Statewide Address on Television and Radio to the People of Mississippi by Governor Ross R. Barnett, 7:30 P.M., September 13, 1962," 12-37-0-3-1-1-1 to 7-1-1, pp. 1-1-1 to 2-1-1, 4-1-1, 6-1-1, Records of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, Archives and Library Division, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi. The full text of the governor's address can also be found in the folder: "Barnett, Ross—Miscellaneous, 1962-1963," Godwin Advertising Agency Collection; and in folder 50, box 2, Kenneth Toler Papers, both in Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State Univ., Mississippi State, Mississippi.

23) *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi,* 1962, first extraordinary sess., 4; *Laws of the State of Mississippi*, 1962, first extraordinary sess., 18.

24) Paul B. Johnson, Jr., recorded interview by T. H. Baker, 8 Sept. 1970, AC 80-63, transcript, 13, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas.

25) Russell H. Barrett, *Integration at Ole Miss* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1965), 107-8; Erle Johnston, Jr., *Mississippi's Defiant Years, 1953-1973: An Interpretive Documentary with Personal Experiences* (Forest, Miss.: Lake Harbor, 1990), 150; Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi*, 188-89.

26) Item #4A1, dictabelt #4A, transcript; item #2, audiotape #27, audiocassette, both in "Integration of the University of Mississippi."

27) Horace H. Harned, Jr., "An Oral History with [the] Honorable Horace H. Harned, Jr.," recorded interview by Tom Healy, 3 Oct. 1978, vol. 355, transcript, 48, Mississippi Oral History Program, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, Univ. of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi,* 196.

28) "Fighting Back," in *Eyes on the Prize.*

29) Burke Marshall to Robert F. Kennedy, memo, 27 Sept. 1962, folder: "Telephone Transcripts, Sept. 27, 1962," box 20, Burke Marshall Papers, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

30) *Memphis (Tenn.) Commercial Appeal,* 27 Sept. 1962.

31) Marshall to Kennedy, memo, 27 Sept. 1962.

32) *Journal of the Senate of the State of Mississippi,* 1962, first extraordinary sess., 42, 44; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi,* 1962, first extraordinary sess., 30; *Laws of the State of Mississippi,* 1962, first extraordinary sess., 29-30.

33) Sansing, *Making Haste Slowly,* 186-88.

34) "Fighting Back," in *Eyes on the Prize.*

35) *Jackson (Miss.) Clarion-Ledger/Daily News,* 30 Sept. 1962; *Mississippi Official and Statistical Register,* 1996-2000, 489-90.

36) Erle Johnston, Jr., "An Oral History with Mr. Erle Johnston," recorded interview by Yasuhiro Katagiri, 13 Aug. 1993, vol. 276, pt. 2, transcript, 8, Mississippi Oral History Program, Center for Oral

History and Cultural Heritage, Univ. of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

37) Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 659.

38) "Telephone Conversation between Attorney General and Governor Barnett, Governor Barnett Called Sunday 12:45 p.m., September 30, 1962," folder: "Telephone Transcripts, Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 1962," box 20, Marshall Papers.

39) "Additional Conversation with Governor on September 30, 1962," folder: "Telephone Transcripts, Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 1962," box 20, Marshall Papers.

40) Ross R. Barnett, "Statement of Governor Ross R. Barnett," folder: "Legal Briefs," box 170, Paul B. Johnson Family Papers, Archives and Manuscript Department, William D. McCain Library and Archives, Univ. of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

41) Ibid.

42) *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1962* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1963), 726-28.

43) Ibid., 728.

44) Item #4F1 and #4F4, dictabelt #4F, transcript; audiotape #27, item #2, audiocassette, both in "Integration of the University of Mississippi."

45) Mississippi State General Legislative Investigating Committee, *A Report by the General Legislative Investigating Committee to the Mississippi State Legislature concerning the Occupation of the Campus of the University of Mississippi, September 30, 1962, by the Department of Justice of the United States*, 1963, 5, in the author's possession; Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 217; John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1994), 141.

46) Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 547; Williams, *Eyes on the Prize*, 217.

47) "Fighting Back," in *Eyes on the Prize.*

48) "At Ole Miss: Echoes of a Civil War's Last Battle," *Time*, 4 Oct. 1982, 8, 11.

49) Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 122.