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Memorandum

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
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WORLD REACTION TO
THE ASSASSINATION OF
PRESIDENT KENNEDY

23 Nov 1963
(Information as of 0700 EST)

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS CODE WORD MATERIAL

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SC No. 06509/63

23 November 1963

WORLD REACTTON TO THE ASSASSINATION
OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY

(Information as of 0700 EST)

SUMMARY

The governments and the peoples of the world are expressing, from East and West alike, their shock and regret at the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Some governmental reaction has reflected concern over the impact the President's death may have on international relations--with Latin Americans, for example, wondering whether the Alliance for Progress may lose some of its impetus. Some African leaders noted President Kennedy's strong leadership for racial equality. The immediate reaction of TASS yesterday was to attribute the death to American right-extremists.

The scheduled joint US-Japanese economic and trade talks were perforce cancelled when the Cabinet-level US delegation ordered its plane home a short distance out of Honolulu. West German Chancellor Erhard has cancelled his scheduled visit to Washington. He was to have left Sunday. The UN observed a moment of silence yesterday and adjourned.

Soviet and satellite military activity is at normal levels. Shortly after the announcement of the President's death, certain elements of the Cuban armed forces were placed on a precautionary alert.

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Moscow promptly reported President Kennedy's assassination to its foreign as well as domestic audiences. Soviet reaction so far has been highlighted by broadcasts of official condolences at the highest level. Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the official Soviet head of state, have sent wires to President Johnson expressing heartfelt sympathy to the American people for the loss suffered by the "heinous assassination." Foreign Minister Gromyko also sent a telegram to Secretary Rusk. In an unusual gesture, Khrushchev and Madame Khrushchev wired personal condolences to Mrs. Kennedy.

Pravda reportedly remade its frontpage of 23 November to carry a column and a half of biographic information on the late President, together with a two-column picture. Pravda recalls his speech of last June at American University as marking a new, favorable phase in US-Soviet relations. Pravda also carried a TASS report noting that Dallas commentators "are linking this crime with the activity of ultrarightwing organizations." President Kennedy's steps in the direction of improving the international situation are said to have met with "sharp attacks from the American wildmen."

Western observers in Moscow can recall no previous occasion when Soviet condolences on the death of a Western figure were so expressive and given such prominence by Russian media.

Khrushchev returned to Moscow from the Ukraine and, accompanied by Gromyko, went to the American Embassy to pay his personal respects to Ambassador Kohler. This gesture appears to have no precedent.

Moscow and other bloc media have so far avoided any public mention of Oswald. Intercepted Czechoslovak military communications refer to the President's killer as a "radical."

The US Embassy has reported that Oswald and family had difficulty obtaining Soviet exit visas. When he appeared at the embassy in the summer of 1961 seeking repatriation, Oswald stated that he was "disillusioned" with the USSR. He claimed that he had never applied for Soviet citizenship.

Moscow and satellite radios have apparently dropped scheduled programming and featured solemn music interspersed with news. Several East European leaders, including Tito and Ulbricht, sent official condolences to President Johnson.

The news of Kennedy's death came too late for Peiping's morning papers, but Peiping radio has carried news reports of the assassination.

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WESTERN EUROPE

Expressions of dismay and sympathy came from virtually every government and political leader in Western Europe. Everywhere periods of mourning and memorial services have been announced, and flags will be flown at half staff. Communist party leaders joined in the lament over the President's passing.

The British royal court will go into mourning for a week, and a national commemoration service will be held. Queen Elizabeth sent messages to Mrs. Kennedy and to President Johnson, and Prime Minister Douglas-Home cabled Johnson his assurances of friendship and support. Sir Winston Churchill said that the act had "taken from us a great statesman and a wise and valiant man... Those who come after Mr. Kennedy must strive the more to achieve the ideals of world peace and human happiness and dignity to which his presidency was dedicated."

The London Times said the event was "a shock great enough to shake the structure of the world." And it added, "Our hope in this moment must be that the Vice President will quickly be able to lay his hands on a helm that cannot be left unheld even for a moment."

Canadian Prime Minister Pearson told the Commons that "the world can ill afford at this time to lose a man of his courage." Opposition leader Diefenbaker echoed this sentiment.

In France, President De Gaulle, said, "President Kennedy has died like a soldier under fire, doing his duty in the service of his country. In the name of the French people, as always a friend of the American people, I salute this great example and this great memory."

West German Chancellor Erhard, whose trip to the US is cancelled, will hold a special meeting of the Cabinet on Sunday in commemoration of the President.

Erhard cabled Mrs. Kennedy that "Only our heirs will be able to realize fully what tragic loss your country and the whole of humanity have suffered." More than 60,000 West Berliners stood

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silently in the rain before the city hall as the Freedom Bell tolled. Mayor Brandt observed, "America has lost its President and a tortured mankind has lost a man of whom so many people believed that he would show the road toward a just peace and a better life in the world." He added that Berlin now put its confidence in President Johnson, who came to Berlin a few days after the wall was built.

Adenauer observed that Kennedy "gave his life for freedom and peace. I know that all Germans share these sentiments."

Italian Christian Democratic leader Moro expressed his grief at the death "of the main architect of the courageous and renewing policy carried out by the US the last few years."

Pope Paul today said a mass for the repose of the President's soul, and in a special broadcast, voiced the hope that the death "may not do harm to the American people, that it may strengthen their moral and civil sense by reinforcing their sentiments of nobility and concord."

Dutch Premier Marijnen said the murder was a disaster for international politics and would have far-reaching consequences.

The conservative Svenska Dagbladet in Stockholm wrote that "The mourning for Kennedy is so great because he was in many respects ahead of his time." The Washington correspondent of the Swedish radio reported that the style, tactics, and political climate in Washington will undergo a change, and wondered how it would effect the interplay between East and West.

On the radio, Norwegian Premier Gerhardsen remarked that "In a strange way we felt secure with President Kennedy in the high and important post he held. We trusted him, and we believed in his desire for justice and peace, as well as in his ability to smooth international disputes."

The Portuguese radio said that President Kennedy had recently taken a special interest in Portuguese affairs, discussing the problem of African colonies with Foreign Minister Nogueira and praising the role of the Azores in Operation Big Lift.

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LATIN AMERICA

Most Latin American governments have declared one or more days of mourning in homage to President Kennedy, reflecting in part the widespread public and official sympathy--and concern--throughout the area arising from his death. The leaders in various countries have emphasized Kennedy's special interest in Latin America and his effort to promote the Alliance for Progress.

Venezuelan President Betancourt declared that "Latin America loses the United States President who has made the greatest efforts toward solution of its economic and social problems," a comment which was reiterated in similar form by other political leaders in this country. The Chilean Foreign Minister pointed out that Kennedy had shown "special concern for the situation of the people of Latin America" and had attempted to promote "the improvement of their social and economic conditions." In addition to noting Kennedy's "vision of a better future for Latin America" through the Alliance for Progress, the Panamanian Foreign Minister specifically commented on the President's "clear understanding of Panama's problems."

President Oswaldo Lopez of Honduras, with whom the United States suspended diplomatic relations following the recent military coup in that country, was among the chiefs of state who declared days of official mourning and expressed sympathy for the "irreparable loss." No reaction is yet available from the de facto military-civilian regime in the Dominican Republic, with which the United States also suspended relations recently.

The Cuban radio has treated the development in factual terms and no officials of the Castro regime have thus far made comments. According to an intercepted Cuban message of 22 November, the Eastern Naval District recalled all units "due to the death of President Kennedy."

TS
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Communist elements in the hemisphere have not yet reacted to the death of President Kennedy. Senator Salvador Allende, extreme leftist leader of the Socialist

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Party of Chile, who is pro-Communist and pro-Castro, expressed his sympathy and recognized Kennedy's "stand against threat of war and in behalf of peace...." Allende was the runner-up presidential candidate of the Communist-Socialist Popular Action Front in 1958 and will probably be its candidate in the elections scheduled for 1964.

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ASIA AND AFRICA

Aside from expressions of shock and sorrow, the despatch of condolences, and the institution of various forms of mourning, there has as yet been little significant comment from the capitals of Asia and Africa.

In the Near East, the Turkish President and Premier both emphasized President Kennedy's fight for peace, and they stressed US-Turkish solidarity. The Premier of Israel called the President a "firm friend of Israel." President Nasser of Egypt described the late President as struggling for his people, for peace, and for humanity. The Shah of Iran ordered all flags in the country to be flown at half staff.

In India, both President Radhakrishnan and Prime Minister Nehru were "deeply shocked." The Pakistani Foreign Minister called Mr. Kennedy "a courageous and dedicated leader who cherished the ideals of progressive thought with unwavering conviction."

In Southeast Asia, Cambodia declared a period of national mourning. Indonesian President Sukarno said President Kennedy had been striving for the growth of the American state. Philippine President Macapagal, who will attend the President's funeral, said the President had "put new firmness in the struggle against communism and the advancement of freedom and equality as a way of life for all mankind."

In Japan, the Foreign Ministry held an emergency conference to study measures to be taken by that country. Prime Minister Ikeda, in a message to President Johnson, commented on the late President's success in implementing "vigorous policies." Commentary from South Korea stressed Mr. Kennedy's efforts on behalf of world peace and the solidarity of the Free World in the struggle against communism, and condemned political terrorism as "the enemy of democracy."

In Africa, the Presidents of Algeria and Senegal both suggested that the assassination was the result of President Kennedy's efforts in the field of desegregation. The President of Senegal stated "We African Negroes will mourn for him because he worked for our dignity."