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FOREIGN REACTION TO THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION

SUMMARY

World reaction to the assassination and succession still is developing and deepening as shock lessens.

Nations first reacted by relating events to their own preoccupations and predicaments. Concern was expressed for the continuation of programs close to themselves. In Latin America it was the Alliance for Progress. In Africa it was the fate of the civil rights movement. In Western Europe and the USSR it was the future course of Soviet-American relationships and the prospects for peace.

President Johnson's address to Congress, therefore, was praised widely for its confident tone and pledge to continue Kennedy policies -- policies almost universally regarded as good.

One of the conspicuous notes was the degree to which U.S. policy and President Kennedy's leadership and personality were viewed as vital to the cohesion and forward movement of the Free World.

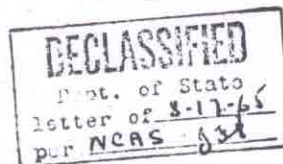
Another development was the prompt acceptance of President Johnson as a capable man committed to continuing Kennedy policies and competent to fill the office in his own right.

Assessment of the new President acknowledges that he has still to be tested by international events. Yet there is high regard and sympathy for him almost everywhere and expectation that he will achieve a "style" of his own.

Among the qualities most often attributed to him are skill in leadership, politics and negotiation. There is strong emphasis on his record as a leader of Congress.

He is regarded as fully informed, a man of action, pragmatic and capable of acting with moderation. It is widely noted that he comes from a Southern state and his civil rights advocacy is considered courageous. Speculation is that he will be more sympathetic

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to business interests, somewhat more conservative, and more willing to compromise domestic issues than his predecessor.

A widespread attitude of wait-and-see does not imply criticism. There is some uneasiness among sophisticated observers who are aware of the complexities and difficulties the President faces with Congress. However, this is balanced by the Johnson reputation for accomplishment.

Allies in Western Europe are beginning to speculate that they will have an enlarged role in the Western coalition. In Britain, the assassination brought into sharp focus the degree to which the British had come to depend upon the President for leadership in world affairs. In France there is a disposition to see de Gaulle as the "Last Great Captain" of the West and to say that he has new opportunities and responsibilities to assert his leadership. But most Frenchmen feel de Gaulle has shown his solidarity with the President. A meeting between them is taken for granted although the question of when and where is subject to debate.

Moscow has joined in encouraging the President to continue Kennedy policies. Only after several days did the Soviets hedge softly by stating that some points of the Kennedy program "were never approved by us." However, the Soviets considered the "dominant line" in Kennedy's foreign policy was "concern for averting a world thermonuclear war." This seems to be a Soviet effort to make U.S. policy conform to what the Kremlin says it is.

The most damaging aspect of world reaction is to the image of the United States as a nation of laws and morality. The murder of Oswald before television cameras was incredible to foreign observers. There has been wild speculation in both the Free World and the Communist world about elaborate plots. The confusion of events was made to order for the Communist propagandists. The alleged plots now are seen everywhere as racist and rightist.

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