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Info

FROM: THE WHITE HOUSE

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 222308Z OCTOBER (WHITE HOUSE MESSAGE)

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FOR S/S DUTY OFFICER SECRETARIAT

ATTENTION: MR. LITTLE FROM SITUATION ROOM, CITE CAP 5497-62

MY DEAR FRIEND

AMBASSADOR BRUCE CALLED TO SEE ME THIS MORNING AND GAVE ME EVIDENCE OF THE SOVIET BUILD UP IN CUBA. I QUITE UNDERSTAND HOW FIERCELY AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION WILL REACT WHEN IT KNOWS THESE FACTS. I HAVE THIS MOMENT RECEIVED THROUGH OUR TELEPRINTER THE TEXT OF YOUR PROPOSED DECLARATION TONIGHT. LET ME SAY AT ONCE THAT WE SHALL OF COURSE GIVE YOU ALL THE SUPPORT WE CAN IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL. I HOPE THAT YOU WILL PROVIDE US IMMEDIATELY WITH THE BEST LEGAL CASE THAT CAN BE MADE IN SUPPORT OF THE BROAD MORAL POSITION SO THAT OUR REPRESENTATIVE CAN WEIGH IN EFFECTIVELY. OF COURSE THE INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS WILL TAKE THE POINT THAT A BLOCKADE WHICH INVOLVES THE SEARCHING OF SHIPS OF ALL COUNTRIES IS DIFFICULT TO DEFEND IN PEACE TIME. INDEED QUITE A LOT OF CONTROVERSY HAS GONE ON IN THE PAST ABOUT ITS USE IN WARTIME. HOWEVER, WE MUST REST NOT SO MUCH ON PRECEDENT AS ON THE UNPRECEDENTED CONDITION OF THE MODERN WORLD IN A NUCLEAR AGE.

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IF, AS I ASSUME, THE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION IS VETOED THE ONLY APPEAL IS TO THE ASSEMBLY. WHAT THE RESULT WILL BE THERE NO ONE CAN TELL BUT I DOUBT WHETHER THEY WILL BE IN FAVOR OF ANY CONCLUSIVE ACTION OR EVEN IF THEY ARE I DO NOT SEE HOW THEY WILL ENFORCE IT. WHAT I THINK WE MUST NOW CONSIDER IS KHRUSHCHEV'S LIKELY REACTION. HE MAY REPLY EITHER IN

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-2- 222308Z OCTOBER (WHITE HOUSE MESSAGE) FROM THE WHITE HOUSE

WORDS OR IN KIND OR BOTH. IF HE CONTENTS HIMSELF WITH THE FIRST HE MAY DEMAND THE REMOVAL OF ALL AMERICAN BASES IN EUROPE. IF HE DECIDED TO ACT HE MAY DO SO EITHER IN THE CARIBBEAN OR ELSEWHERE. IF HE REACTS IN THE CARIBBEAN HIS OBVIOUS METHOD WOULD BE TO ESCORT HIS SHIPS AND FORCE YOU INTO THE POSITION OF ATTACKING THEM. THIS FIRE-FIRST DILEMMA HAS ALWAYS WORRIED US AND WE HAVE ALWAYS HOPED TO IMPALE THE RUSSIANS ON THIS HORN. NO DOUBT YOU HAVE THOUGHT OF THIS BUT I WOULD BE GLAD TO KNOW HOW YOU FEEL IT CAN BE HANDLED. ALTERNATIVELY, HE MAY BRING SOME PRESSURE ON THE WEAKER PARTS OF THE FREE WORLD DEFENSE SYSTEM. THIS MAY BE IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA, IN IRAN, POSSIBLY IN TURKEY, BUT MORE LIKELY IN BERLIN. IF HE REACTS OUTSIDE THE CARIBBEAN - AS I FEAR HE MAY - IT WILL BE TEMPTING FOR HIM TO ANSWER ONE BLOCKADE BY DECLARING ANOTHER. WE MUST THEREFORE BE READY. ANY RETALIATORY ACTION ON BERLIN AS ENVISAGED IN THE VARIOUS CONTINGENCY PLANS WILL LEAD US EITHER TO AN ESCALATION TO WORLD WAR OR TO THE HOLDING OF A CONFERENCE. WHAT SEEMS TO BE ESSENTIAL IS THAT YOU AND I SHOULD THINK OVER AND DECIDE IN WHAT DIRECTION WE WANT TO STEER THINGS WITHIN THE ALLIANCE AND ELSEWHERE. WE SHOULD TAKE COUNSEL AS SOON AS WE HAVE THE RUSSIAN REACTION.

WHILE YOU KNOW HOW DEEPLY I SYMPATHIZE WITH YOUR DIFFICULTY AND HOW MUCH WE WILL DO TO HELP IN EVERY WAY, IT WOULD ONLY BE RIGHT TO TELL YOU THAT THERE ARE TWO ASPECTS WHICH GIVE ME CONCERN. MANY OF US IN EUROPE HAVE LIVED SO LONG IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE ENEMY'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS OF THE MOST DEVASTATING KIND THAT WE HAVE GOT ACCUSTOMED TO IT. SO EUROPEAN OPINION WILL NEED ATTENTION. THE SECOND, WHICH IS MORE WORRYING, IS THAT IF KHRUSHCHEV COMES TO A CONFERENCE HE WILL OF COURSE TRY TO TRADE HIS CUBA POSITION AGAINST HIS AMBITIONS IN BERLIN AND ELSEWHERE. THIS WE MUST AVOID AT ALL COSTS, AS IT WILL ENDANGER THE UNITY OF THE ALLIANCE.

WITH WARM REGARD, HAROLD MACMILLAN.

JT/21

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