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31 March 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Director for Central Reference

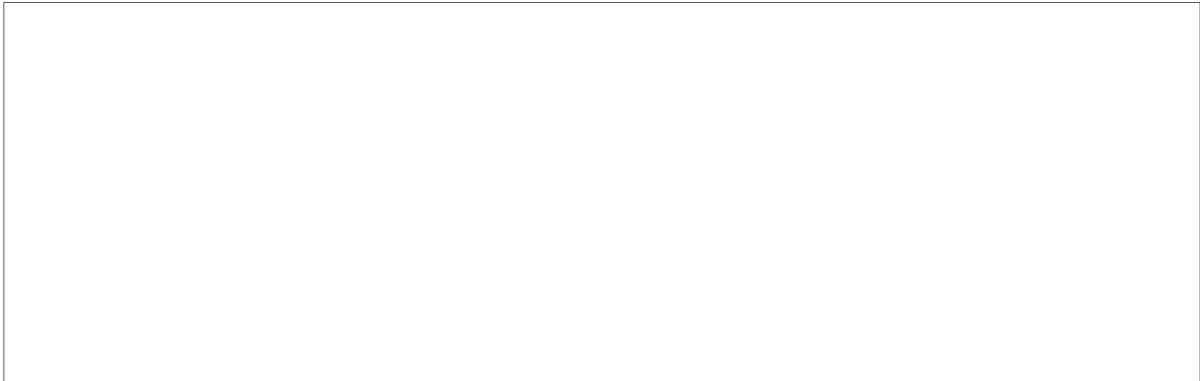
SUBJECT: Project WALNUT

Reference: Your letter of 26 March 1959

1. Members of my staff and I have carefully considered your letter on the compatibility of the WALNUT system and its impact on the functions of the USIB Committee on Documentation. First pressures considered, let me assure you that the substance of your letter was thus more satisfactorily dealt with than would have been possible in a brief direct discussion. However, I shall be glad to meet with you after my return from abroad toward the end of April, if the problem is not solved to your satisfaction.

2. While it is our intention to support your work with the Committee on Documentation in every way possible, we do not believe that your or our purposes will be served by having the Committee judge WALNUT in the context of systems compatibility. The reasons are these:

a. All pertinent documentation, including COMINT-D-26, clearly deals with reference facilities or positive intelligence information. It is our role in the community to procure such information and pass it on to customers, including primarily the CIA Library, for use and retrieval by them. We do not process it for retrieval by subject, except for the few reports with counterintelligence content.

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(b)(3)

3. It is becoming clear to IBM, as their representatives discuss the potential of WALNUT devices with other potential users in and outside the government, that the machinery may well be applied to positive information retrieval problems. We are not experts in this area and cannot participate in the systems studies which would have to be conducted to explore this potential. On the other hand, we would like to cooperate with the intelligence community in making our knowledge of WALNUT available in preparation of such work.

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4. As a first step, I would like to suggest that Mr. Walter Jessel, perhaps jointly with IBM personnel, rebrief your Committee on the present status of WALNUT for their information and possible interest. Perhaps a full day seminar, of the type arranged for the Philco computer, is called for. In the process, as much technical detail as you may wish may be furnished on the potential compatibility of the machinery with any other now in existence or planned.

5. May I add, incidentally, my appreciation of the constructive cooperation of OOR in the enterprise. Even at this early stage, the test demonstrates how closely processing techniques, speed, and qualified feedback are interwoven with the key problems of reports quality and operational coverage. I am following the progress of the test with great interest and hope that it will continue to enjoy your full support.

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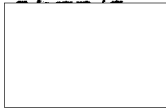
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S/

RICHARD M. BIBSKILL, JR.
Deputy Director
(Plans)

cc - ID/I



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