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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Sunday, November 26, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Pres file

C. Roberts called me earlier in the evening about this item. On an off-the-record basis I did everything I could to turn him away from it. Specifically, I said that we by no means believe we were yet out of the woods in the Middle East; we had no response or offer to discuss ABM's and ICBM's; and there was no evidence that the Soviets were actively helping in Vietnam.

WWR

LETTER

632
NEW YORK, NOV. 26 (REUTERS)--NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE REPORTED TONIGHT
THAT PRESIDENT JOHNSON RECENTLY RECEIVED A SECRET CONCILIATORY
LETTER FROM SOVIET PREMIER ALEXEI KOSYGIN, AND THIS
ENCOURAGED JOHNSON TO SEEK A U.S.-SOVIET SUMMIT MEETING

THE MAGAZINE SAID THE LETTER EXPRESSED ALARM OVER THE STATE OF
SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS AND INDICATED A DESIRE TO IMPROVE THEM.
(THE REPORT COULD NOT IMMEDIATELY BE CONFIRMED. THE
PRESIDENT TOGETHER WITH WHITE HOUSE OFFICIALS TONIGHT WAS EN
ROUTE BACK TO WASHINGTON AFTER SPENDING THE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
ON HIS TEXAS RANCH).

NEWSWEEK SAID JOHNSON PARTICULARLY WANTED A MEETING WITH
COMMUNIST PARTY CHIEF LEONID BREZHNEV "WHO IS NOW RECKONED
TO BE THE FIRST AMONG EQUALS IN THE SOVIET HIERARCHY."
(MORE) BH/MJL 6: 52P

FIRST ADD NEW YORK LETTER X X X HIERARCHY."

THE MAGAZINE REPORT SAID KOSYGIN IN DISCUSSING THE
MIDDLE EAST IN HIS LETTER "REFRAINED FROM THE USUAL SOVIET
PRACTICE OF REFERRING TO ISRAEL AS AN 'AGGRESSOR' AND
DID NOT BOTHER TO RAISE THE LONG-STANDING SOVIET DEMAND
THAT ISRAEL PAY REPARATIONS TO THE ARABS.

"MORE SIGNIFICANT YET, THE SOVIET PREMIER ENDORSED ONE OF MR.
JOHNSON'S MAJOR PROPOSALS FOR BRINGING PEACE TO THE MIDDLE
EAST--AN AGREEMENT BY THE SUPERPOWERS TO LIMIT THE
SHIPMENT OF ARMS TO THEIR ALLIES IN THE REGION," THE REPORT
SAID.

NEWSWEEK DID NOT INDICATE WHAT OTHER TOPICS IF ANY WERE
TOUCHED ON IN THE REPORTED LETTER.

HOWEVER, IT COMMENTED "A SUMMIT TALK, BESIDES CLEARING
THE INTERNATIONAL AIR, WOULD LARGELY BENEFIT LBJ IN AN ELECTION
YEAR."
(MORE) BH/MJL 6: 58P

SECOND ADD NEW YORK LETTER X X X YEARS."

THE MAGAZINE CONTINUED "THE PRESIDENT'S POPULARITY ROSE
MARKEDLY AFTER HIS GLASSBORO TALKS WITH KOSYGIN LAST SUMMER.
SOVIET DIPLOMATS IN WASHINGTON SAY THEY'RE IN
FAVOUR OF A JOHNSON-BREZHNEV SUMMIT. THEY HOLD THAT NO
PROMINENT GOP (REPUBLICAN) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WILL BE
ABLE TO DO MORE THAN LBJ TO END THE VIETNAM WAR.

"IN FACT MOST REPUBLICANS, THE SOVIET ARGUE, MAY WELL
ADVOCATE ESCALATION, THEREFORE, MANY POLITICAL ANALYSTS
MAINTAIN, THE SOVIETS WOULD PREFER TO SEE LBJ REMAIN IN THE
WHITE HOUSE."

THE MAGAZINE NOTED THAT "ONCE BEFORE, SOVIET LEADERS HAVE
PLAYED U.S. DOMESTIC POLICIES--IN 1960 KHRUSHCHEV
ALLOWED HIS TIMING OF U-2 PILOT FRANCIS GARY POWER'S
RELEASE TO BENEFIT JOHN F. KENNEDY."
BH/MJL 7: 01P