

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Sunday, November 26, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

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

632  
LETTER

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 NEXT SPRING.

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 1963 KHRUSHCHEV ALLOWED HIS TIMING OF U-2 PILOT FRANCIS GARY POWER'S RELEASE TO BENEFIT JOHN F. KENNEDY."

BH/MJL 7: 01P