

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

S/S 7208680

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May 16, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT ^{THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN.}

Subject: Visit to the Soviet Union

Your trip to Peking made a visit to Moscow all but imperative from the Soviet point of view. Conscious of their own internal problems, the Soviet leaders appreciate our strength more than they admit. Consequently, you can approach your Moscow talks with a flexibility born of confidence.

Since they believe that the best defense is a strong offense, the Soviet leaders will probably attempt to employ in more refined form the kind of psychological equalizer so blatantly used by Khrushchev, with his running attack on the Captive Nations Resolution, during your visit in 1959. Recent events in Vietnam could provide such a peg.

The Soviet leadership has obviously examined the issue of postponing your visit in response to new US military actions vis-a-vis North Vietnam. Yet they have responded moderately to your May 8 speech, perhaps confident that the North Vietnamese (with Soviet support) can prevail in Indochina despite these new allied military moves and certainly concerned with the effect a Summit cancellation would have on other Soviet objectives. At the same time, we can expect that the Soviet leaders will want to create the impression that the US now owes them something in return.

Our immediate objectives are to:

- reach agreement or formally conclude agreements on specific, practical measures of direct mutual interest, including some, such as SALT, of global importance.
- explore means of dealing with major current problems, such as Indochina and the Middle East, including the need for mutual restraint in military and political commitments to third countries.

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-- explore long-range possibilities of mutually beneficial economic relations in ways which are also useful politically.

-- convey directly to the people of the Soviet Union a message on our motives and aspirations, both towards the Soviet Union and the rest of the world, including China and the countries of Eastern Europe.

The Soviet leadership probably hopes to:

-- circumscribe developing US relations with the People's Republic of China.

-- display a degree of super-power collaboration which would cause our friends and allies concern.

-- get us to acknowledge Soviet hegemony over much of Eastern Europe and renounce our interest in manifestations of dissident nationalism -- e.g., among the Ukrainians, the Balts, and the Jews, to name the most vociferous -- within the Soviet Union itself.

-- convey an impression of wider agreement than the probable results of the talks will justify, thus creating the image of a "spirit of Moscow" which they can cite to justify future uncompensated concessions to Soviet objectives.

Kosygin has shown himself to be an aggressive debater who, in order to put his interlocutor at a disadvantage, injects into his argument distorted "facts," supported by a considerable mastery of detail. He is, however, responsive to tightly reasoned arguments. With Brezhnev, strong logic and mastery of detail will be less important than the subjective impression he derives of his interlocutor. He is emotional, vain, still somewhat unsure of himself in dealing with Westerners, and most likely to respond to a highly personal approach.

Beyond the immediate objectives of the Summit are two critical areas where your visit will have a long-range impact on Soviet attitudes.

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We should:

-- convince the Soviet leaders that the United States remains firm, strong, and self-assured, and that we will maintain our position and meet our responsibilities in Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the world.

-- persuade the Soviet leadership that we have no designs on the structure of Soviet society itself, that we recognize the Soviet place in the sun, and that, if the USSR is willing to act responsibly, we can both work toward greater security for everyone.

I will be forwarding talking points and background material to you separately.


William P. Rogers

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