MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Nixon
                  Amb. Walter Stoessel, U.S. Ambassador to the USSR
                  Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
                     to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Thursday, February 7, 1974
                  11:13 a.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office

[Pictures were taken standing and sitting.]

The President: The thing I suggest -- as you well know, the Soviets basically believe in dealing at the highest levels. It will be difficult for you. Dobrynin gets in here and you don't get in there. Keep your ear to the ground, and see if you can figure out after Brezhnev who. I've been reading about his illness in Cuba and he drinks and plays too much. Let's be sure we are on top of his health situation, and who in the hierarchy is on the way up. We want someone in the job who feels like Brezhnev.

I know their goals are to do us in, but we are on a course with the Soviets, both of us with our eyes open. If they push us, we will reciprocate. We are working on this trade thing. To those who squeal about detente, say the President is standing like a rock on our course. When you see the leaders, pass on my personal warmth and friendship -- which is real. I want to continue this way and I will keep my commitments -- but my problems in delivering are harder than theirs, internally and with our allies. Tell them we won't be influenced by political conditions. Frankly, the Jewish behavior on MFN has been disgraceful and I will not knuckle under.

If they question my survival, reassure them.

Above all, let's build on what we have. It's a fragile thing. It depends on the leadership, it depends on China. When we talk about the possibility of war, the casualty figures -- 70 million -- are incomprehensible.

B. Scowcroft

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Pour it on the personal things -- without being soft. Neither of us will let social contacts substitute for solid substance. We must be frank. As you read Stalin's perception of Western leaders, they look for flaws in the opposition. They must be under no illusion. Vietnam was important, not for its own sake, but for us to come out as a respected nation. You know these things, but you can say I told you to pass these on.

Your analysis of the personalities and who is next is most important. CIA is doing this but they are never right.

Tell your staff to get acquainted with them. It's hard, but go to parties and get what we can.

Stoessel: It is a tough assignment to pick out a successor.

The President: The top four or five -- who are the group.

Stoessel: No one would have picked Khrushchev. Kosygin will probably go within the next year or two.

The President: Over the next three years we may see major changes in both the Soviet Union and China.

In the final analysis, it is the basic interests, not the personalities or the clinking of glasses, which will get the leadership to come along.

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