

Page 7/16/67

Soviet Hints New Stand For U.S. Missile Talks

Reuters

MOSCOW, Feb. 15—Pravda, the Kremlin's leading newspaper, hinted today that the Soviet government may be ready for talks with the United States on an anti-missile moratorium.

The hint was vague but it prompted speculation in diplomatic circles that Soviet thinking on the subject may have suddenly changed.

Premier Kosygin, at a London press conference last Thursday, appeared to suggest that Russia had little interest in talks on an anti-missile moratorium as proposed by President Johnson.

However, today Pravda quoted Kosygin as having said in London "that the Soviet government is ready to discuss the question of the prevention of a further arms race both in the field of offensive and defensive weapons."

Western diplomats were

quick to note that Pravda's version put the Premier on record for something he did not actually say, according to the official Soviet transcript of his press conference statement.

They said Pravda's editing could be highly significant, but cautioned it was too early to form definite judgments on the basis of a single newspaper report.

The diplomats noted nevertheless that Pravda commentaries on matters of high policy such as this are always carefully checked and their publication often means the Kremlin has a message which it wants to transmit to the outside world.

President Johnson proposed an anti-missile moratorium last month, and followed it up with a personal letter to Kosygin.