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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

NOVEMBER 19, 1985

Hotel Intercontinental

11:40 A.M. (L)

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12:05 P.M. (L)

#1618-11/19

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
Geneva, Switzerland

PRESS BRIEFINGS
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

November 19, 1985

Hotel Intercontinental

11:40 A.M. (L)

MR. SPEAKES: I have an announcement to begin today. The United States and the Soviet Union agreed at the outset of their meetings today that there will be no details provided by either side of the meetings between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev until these meetings conclude.

Both sides have agreed this was appropriate in view of the serious and far-reaching topics that will be discussed on the agenda from both sides.

There will be briefings only by the principal spokesmen for both governments, myself for the United States and Mr. Zamyatin for the Soviet Union.

At these briefings, only the length of the meetings, the participants, will be provided -- nothing else.

There will be no background briefings, no television appearances by representatives of either government. For the U.S., we will abide completely by this agreement without exception. Those who talk don't know what's going on, and those who know what's going on won't talk.

As far as today's meetings are concerned, the meeting between the two at the conclusion of the photo op began with the President and the General Secretary together with the interpreters -- no one else -- at 10:14 a.m. The meeting concluded at 11:18 a.m. -- 1 hour and 4 minutes.

The general session started after the photos at 11:25 a.m. and is continuing now. Present for the United States were the President, Secretary Shultz, Chief of Staff Don Regan, Foreign Policy Adviser Bud McFarlane, Assistant Secretary Ridgway, Ambassador Hartman and Special Assistant to the President Matlock.

Other announcements -- tick through them. or do you want to talk about this?

Q Any other meetings going on in other rooms?

MR. SPEAKES: Lou.

Q Do you expect to -- regardless of when you're going to tell us about it, or this other rule, do you expect to be briefed -- let me ask -- do you expect to be briefed on what went on in the personal session?

MR. SPEAKES: I will know what goes on in all of the meetings, but I will not talk about it, either publicly or privately.

Q Including the session with -- the President had with Gorbachev privately?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. Sure.

Q Larry, who requested the news blackout?

MR. SPEAKES: It was by mutual agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Q Did the Soviets --

Q Are there --

MR. SPEAKES: Wait a minute. I'm going to be here all the time. I will talk.

Q Larry, are there any --

Q May I follow up, please?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, go ahead.

Q Did the Soviets bring up the subject, bring up the topic, make the request and the U.S. agreed to it, or vice-versa?

MR. SPEAKES: It was by mutual consent of both sides, mutual agreement of both sides, and I think -- indicate that both sides brought it up mutually.

Charles.

Q But Larry, you had already scheduled a briefing with Secretary Shultz this afternoon. I presume --

MR. SPEAKES: That briefing will not take place. I will be here, and that in its stead.

Q I presume since you had scheduled that at one point that you had not anticipated such a blackout.

MR. SPEAKES: No, it is not that we anticipated, it is not that we at both sides had not agreed on it.

Q Larry, when --

Q Did that come from the tete-a-tete?

MR. SPEAKES: It was both sides agreed at the outset of the meetings.

Q Was this subject raised at all, the subject of a possible blackout, before you came to Geneva?

MR. SPEAKES: Don't think it's -- it adds anything to the meetings to begin to discuss when we discuss things and so forth. As you will note from your own experience, this is a pattern that Secretary Shultz has followed in his meetings with Gromyko here in January and in other meetings he's had.

Mike.

Q Was there agreement on how long this blackout would last?

MR. SPEAKES: The blackout will last until all -- until the leaders conclude that they have something to say. Now, whether that's Wednesday afternoon or Thursday morning remains to be seen.

Greg?

Q Larry, is there something planned Thursday morning?

MR. SPEAKES: There's nothing scheduled Thursday morning at this time.

Owen.

Q I may have missed a beat earlier. Was this decided by Reagan and Gorbachev at their one-on-one, the news blackout, or when was it decided today --

MR. SPEAKES: Ultimately, yes, but there have been discussions at all levels on both sides -- myself and Mr. Zamyatin, the Secretary and Mr. Shevardnadze and the President and the General Secretary have all discussed it.

Q Who initiated the call? Who initiated the subject?

MR. SPEAKES: Once again, the initiation, I think you can fairly say, was mutual on both sides -- simultaneous.

Andrea.

Q Can you give us a little sense of why the one-on-one went so long?

MR. SPEAKES: No, I cannot.

Q Can you give us anything on the atmospheric or any --

MR. SPEAKES: You came in late, obviously.

John.

Q Will you now, or at any point, be able to give us a reflection on the tone, the feeling, the mood? Upbeat?

MR. SPEAKES: No, sir. You will get the time and the participants.

Pat.

Q Larry, in yesterday's incident in which the Soviet Union cancelled their briefing because of disruption by a Soviet dissident, did that play any role in the Soviet view to want the blackout.

MR. SPEAKES: No. Did not.

Owen.

Q Larry, do we have your assurance that this blackout will extend to any private meetings that senior officials might have or have planned to have with selected reporters either here or at dinners or meals?

MR. SPEAKES: In my judgment, there will be no -- there are no private meetings. The United States will not participate in any private meetings with the media.

Q So we have your assurance that there will no special invitees among the press corps who will be meeting with selected senior officials be given private briefings on --

MR. SPEAKES: If so, it will be -- not be arranged by the Office of the Press Secretary, and if they do go on, the Office of the Press Secretary will advise the person involved from the United States' side that this is not proper and he should not continue.

Q If I could follow, then, it is possible, you're saying, that members of the party with the President may choose on

their own to meet selectively with reporters and give them their versions of events -- violate the blackout? Is that right?

MR. SPEAKES: If they do so, that it would not meet with the approval of the President nor anybody that's involved from the U.S. side. The important thing is to remember that those who are participating in the meetings will know what goes on. They will not talk. Those who are not participating in the meetings will not know what is going on. If they talk, they simply are not authoritative and do not know.

Q You're saying if there was someone who is in the meeting who perhaps previously planned to speak privately with some reporters will no longer do that?

MR. SPEAKES: You may assume that's been cancelled.

Q Okay.

Mike. Then I'll work the back.

Q You said, Larry, that those who are in the meeting will know and those who were not in the meeting will not know what's going on. You also said that you and -- you're not participating in the meeting -- will know what's going on.

MR. SPEAKES: That's right --

Q Can't we assume from that that others, then, will also be informed and so the information will be more widely --

MR. SPEAKES: If others receive any information, it will not be first-hand and will, therefore, not be authoritative and they are not authorized to talk about it.

Andy.

Q Larry, do you happen to have the names of the seven Soviet participants --

MR. SPEAKES: I do not. That's for the Soviet side.

Andrea.

Q Can you respond to reports that have been aired -- or written -- before this time about prior agreements on future summits, new language on SDI from the American side --

MR. SPEAKES: I can say specifically that -- on the business of future summits, there has been no agreement on that, and that will be a topic to be discussed. And as far as any proposal on SDI, I would not discuss it, but -- I just wouldn't discuss it.

Q What about an early return to the arms talks?

MR. SPEAKES: As the story says today that we know of no such plans for that.

Q Can I ask -- you've talked at considerable length about this policy -- this news blackout -- can you explain why you think it's important and constructive to have it now?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. We think it is important and constructive to have it because of the seriousness of the talks, the far-reaching implications of the topics to be discussed between the two sides.

Q Yes, but if you could -- if I could follow -- what's bad about talking about it under those circumstances and giving us what -- the kinds of readouts you often do, which are not terribly

sensitive?

MR. SPEAKES: I think it implies that both sides are approaching this as a meeting that will take place in the privacy of the room. And it will be engaged -- it underscores the seriousness of both sides in the approach to the meetings, that we will conduct them in private and that the results, as agreed to, will be announced by both sides at the conclusion of the meeting and will not be carried on in public. In other words, there will not be a public debate between the two sides, but there will be private discussions that will go forward in that fashion.

Q Mr. McFarlane told us yesterday --

MR. SPEAKES: Mike.

Q Has the President specifically instructed the people who work for him not to talk about this?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. And those who were not present for his instructions, I will instruct them.

Q Mr. McFarlane told us yesterday that the President would today give a long exposition of the American -- a long exposition of the American position and views. He called it "vintage Reagan." Does this mean we will not now get a copy of that?

MR. SPEAKES: Absolutely.

Q Absolutely.

Q Question?

MR. SPEAKES: Will you get a copy of what the President said to Gorbachev in the hour-and-four minutes. No.

Lou.

Q -- said that the blackout won't conclude until the leaders have something to say. Does that mean that the leaders will have something to say together?

MR. SPEAKES: Not necessarily, Lou. That, too, has not been decided.

Q Larry, were there any --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes --

Q Were there any surprises in the Soviet delegation, as to participants in the Soviet delegation, as far as the U.S. is concerned?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't believe so, Ralph. I think the participants were those which they have announced.

Q Larry, did the nature of the public dialogue here over the course of the last week -- almost a briefing war -- have anything to do with the decision that was made?

MR. SPEAKES: No, it did not.

Miles.

Q Larry, is it true that there is no verbatim written transcript being kept of these talks?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think there has historically been verbatim transcripts made of these type meetings. There are historically note-takers on either side which keep very accurate

records, but not verbatim by steno.

Q There were no note-takers in the morning --

MR. SPEAKES: Only interpreters.

Q Who was the note-taker --

MR. SPEAKES: Not going to give out those names. We'll give the seven participants and that's it. There was no note-taker in the morning -- interpreter.

Q Was their talking process the same as you described it yesterday? In other words, simultaneous on the United States side and consecutive on the Soviet side?

MR. SPEAKES: No, it will be simultaneous on both sides. Now, as to how the one-on-one session went with translation, I don't know whether they pause for translation or whether it was a whisper interpretation.

Q Were the doo-dads used, Larry?

Q -- whether or not you will jointly announce whatever you do announce?

MR. SPEAKES: No, that decision has not been made, Jack. I presume at the -- somewhere toward the conclusion of the meeting that both sides will agree on how to report.

Q Has a decision been made as to whether there'll be a press conference at the end?

MR. SPEAKES: No, there has not. I don't anticipate one from our side.

Q You say there is now simultaneous interpretation on both sides?

MR. SPEAKES: That's correct. Both sides, both meetings.

Q When was that decision made? And --

MR. SPEAKES: It wasn't a decision. It was simply our hearing from the Soviets about where they stood. It was our first understanding that they would do consecutive. We checked with them mid-afternoon yesterday and it was simultaneous.

Q Did they change or were you -- Did you misunderstand or did they change?

MR. SPEAKES: We just didn't have final word.

Q Today, yesterday, Bud McFarlane was rather free in saying what the President intended to say to Gorbachev. And over the past couple of weeks, there's been a rather open way of saying, "The President intends to say this," and, "The President intends to say that." Did you get any impression that the Soviets were rather irritated by having the press being told in advance what the President was going to say?

MR. SPEAKES: No, I did not, Dan. I met with Mr. Zamyatin two days ago and he did not raise that. And I met with him again today and he did not raise it.

Pat.

Q Larry, you've been saying for some time that we shouldn't set our expectations too high or be concerned about a lot of signed, formal agreements. Now, if there is a news blackout and

they're presumably getting down to serious talks, are you modifying that in some way? Is a formal agreement more likely now?

MR. SPEAKES: I can't predict.

Q Is it possible that there will be an interim report by agreement on both sides?

MR. SPEAKES: If the two leaders decide to do it that way, there could be. At the moment, I don't anticipate it.

Andrea.

Q Can you just clear up something for those of us who couldn't see it clearly? When the two men met outside on the steps, were they chatting in English? There didn't seem to be translators

MR. SPEAKES: The translators were about 10 feet to their right. In anything that needed to be translation, it was more or less sign language that was moving the two. No, they were not chatting in English.

Bob.

Q Larry, tonight at the dinner, are there going to be toasts that we are going to have access to?

MR. SPEAKES: I would doubt it, Bob. I think the President, for his part, intends to do it informally. And so at the moment I don't know of any plans to release the text.

Q What --

MR. SPEAKES: Will they do a toast text release? No, it will not. Be private.

Colonel.

Q When the President and the General Secretary greeted one another outdoors from the building, they seemed to be talking to one another. Is it your understanding that the General Secretary understands enough English to have --

MR. SPEAKES: I was asked over here. My judgment is that I do not know whether they were speaking in English. I think most of the discussions were going on by gestures and it was simply -- "Where do you stand?"

Q Do you know for certain --

Q Do you know whether --

MR. SPEAKES: No, I do not know for certain.

Q -- the General Secretary understands --

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Wait a minute. Let me hear Jerry.

Q Do you know whether the General Secretary understands English?

MR. SPEAKES: I do not know. I think I'd let Mr. Zamyatin brief on what his man understands.

Bob.

Q You're not going to talk to us again today? You're not going to brief?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, I will be here at the appointed time that Secretary Shultz was to be here, 5:00 p.m., provided that things are generally on schedule. And I'll provide you with the times of the meeting.

Q What will you tell us? Just the times and the participants, that's all?

Q Larry --

Q And deal with the leaks?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Deal with the leaks?

MR. SPEAKES: Won't deal with any leaks. If you've got leaks, they're wrong.

Q Can we go ahead on the assumption that everything that the administration has said in recent days about what the President intends to say is, in fact, occurring? Or should we go on the assumption that there may be changes in that?

MR. SPEAKES: I know of no changes in the U.S. position. But the meeting is certainly one that is not that tightly structured, where the two can discuss in any fashion. And, as you know, the President -- the President will say what he likes to say.

Q Can you give a chronological balance on this thing? When did the decision for the blackout come? Was it made during the morning meeting?

MR. SPEAKES: It was finalized at the -- as the two gathered for the group meeting.

Q For the -- okay.

MR. SPEAKES: For the large group.

Mark?

Q Larry, is the fact that the one-on-one meeting went on so much longer a good sign in the White House view?

MR. SPEAKES: I can't interpret it.

Greg?

Q Can you give us your impression of how these two leaders are getting along?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, they gave it in the photo op and I think I'd leave it with them since they can --

Q What did they say?

MR. SPEAKES: -- judge each other better than I can judge the two.

Mike?

Q What did they say, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't have a verbatim. You had a pool there. You need to hammer on them to produce.

Q You said yesterday that if the tete-a-tete ran longer than 15 minutes, the other members of the delegation will be standing around cooling their heels. Can you tell us what they were doing?

MR. SPEAKES: Cooling their heels. (Laughter.) There were certainly small group conversations and private conversations really almost between counterparts there.

Q Is it possible that if they agree on any bilaterals during the meetings that you might release statements on them before the meetings conclude?

MR. SPEAKES: If we did it would be by mutual agreement with the Soviets as to whether we would announce any side meetings that were taking place at the margins.

Q Larry --

Q I don't mean side meetings, I mean should they have an agreement finished --

MR. SPEAKES: Bilateral issues --

Q -- issue -- might they issue statements before --

MR. SPEAKES: Once again, if they did decide to announce anything during the course of the meeting, it would be the decision of the two leaders in the meetings. So --

Q Larry --

Q When somebody decides on a news blackout, surely somebody is the first one to say let's keep quiet about this -- let's have a blackout about this. Was this the United States, or can't you answer this question?

MR. SPEAKES: That question -- you're number three on that question -- third time around. It was a mutually arrived at initiation, a mutually arrived at decision.

Q Who was the first person to ask for it?

MR. SPEAKES: I think both people spoke at the same time. (Laughter.)

Q Larry, a couple of logistical details. Was there a fire in the fireplace when the two leaders met and were they served any refreshments in the one-on-one?

MR. SPEAKES: Fireplace was served. I do not know whether refreshments were served or not.

Q Fireplace was served?

MR. SPEAKES: Fireplace was there; refreshments I do not know.

Q Was there a fire in the fireplace?

Q -- refreshments were --

Q Fire --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes; there was a fire in the fireplace.

Q You did say that the pattern was started with Shultz and Gromyko. Well, did Shultz start the pattern or Gromyko?

MR. SPEAKES: You mean --

Q Of the private --

MR. SPEAKES: -- back then?

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: You mean back in January?

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know who -- I don't know where that started back then. I -- not being there, I don't know who initiated that.

Q Larry?

Q Larry, how many times did you meet with Zamyatin?

MR. SPEAKES: Twice.

Q Here?

MR. SPEAKES: In Geneva, yes.

Q Could you tell us when?

Q Did you have any meetings in Washington last week with Soviet officials?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Did you have any meetings in Washington last week with Soviet officials?

MR. SPEAKES: No, we didn't, did we? No meetings last week with the Soviet -- last meetings we had were with Shalnev. Whatever happened to him? Where were we?

Q Can you tell us when you met with Zamyatin?

MR. SPEAKES: Zamyatin was day before yesterday, Monday.

MR. DJEREJIAN: The day before yesterday.

MR. SPEAKES: Or Sunday.

MR. DJEREJIAN: It was Sunday.

MR. SPEAKES: Sunday afternoon at the International Press Center and then again this morning prior to the start of the meetings during the one-on-one.

Q Larry, without in any way meaning to suggest or implying that you are ill-informed or uninformed about any aspect of the summit --

MR. SPEAKES: Of course not.

Q -- is it fair that your counterpart on the Soviet delegation is one of the seven participants in the meeting and that you are not?

MR. SPEAKES: I have no objection to it. (Laughter.) He's not going to talk, according to what he stated to me this morning, in any detail beyond what we've agreed and I'm not either. So, I think the advantage is fair.

John?

Q Larry, in that period from the end of the first meeting -- 11:18 a.m. -- to the start of the second -- 11:25 a.m. -- did the President try to give a quick rundown to his staff --

MR. SPEAKES: Did not. The two walked out, shook hands around the table, and stood for the photo.

Bob?

Q Larry, can you tell us anything about the President -- anything he might have said privately this morning -- before the meeting when you saw him? Anything that indicated his mood?

MR. SPEAKES: No, I'd rather --

Q What was his mood?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q What was his mood?

MR. SPEAKES: Mood was very good, very upbeat, very enthusiastic, well-prepared, confident, brilliant.

Q Was he wonderful? (Laughter.)

Q Larry, he seemed to be some sheets of paper. What was he carrying when he walked in?

MR. SPEAKES: That was a book of U.S. positions on various topics. It was a book -- together with some notes he had made, I assume.

Q -- cards?

MR. SPEAKES: So -- no, no three-by-fives.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, sir?

Q Larry, just before the two men went inside, Mr. Gorbachev appeared to extend his hand to shake hands with the President and the President looked at his hand and then pointed inside. Is there any reason why he wouldn't shake his hand right there?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, the two shook hands when they arrived and then, I believe, shook hands again as they posed for pictures and then --

Q Right. But after they shook hands first when they were standing around and then Gorbachev wanted to shake hands again and then --

MR. SPEAKES: I realize the news blackout can lead to over-interpretation, but this is one I would caution you not to over-interpret.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes?

Q -- can you us anything about what the President did before he went to Fleur d'Eau this morning? Any details about --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, the President was up about 7:30 a.m., had breakfast, and then joined a group meeting at the Pometto House at 9:00 a.m., met for about 35 minutes with Secretary Shultz, Bud McFarlane, and Don Regan, and the rest of us, and then got in the car

and went over.

Q Did he say anything worth quoting?

MR. SPEAKES: Joe?

Q What'd he do for the 15 minutes he was in the villa waiting for Gorbachev?

MR. SPEAKES: Just made small talk, visited with his staff and Cabinet members that were there, looked at the window -- that's about it -- blew on his hands.

Miles?

Q -- brought a gift for Mr. Gorbachev?

MR. SPEAKES: Didn't have one with him. I don't know. We can check on whether there'd be a gift.

Q What was the question?

MR. SPEAKES: Gift to Gorbachev? Don't know of anything, but customarily the two do exchange gifts but --

Q He didn't give him a friendship ring?

MR. SPEAKES: No -- (laughter) -- I promise that.

Q Will the Soviets be releasing their toasts tonight? Will you object to that?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know whether they will or not. We can clear it with them. I don't anticipate it, but --

Q You don't anticipate --

MR. SPEAKES: Mike, we've run out --

Q Larry, he's going to keep the --

Q -- another subject?

MR. SPEAKES: On another subject? Yes.

Pat?

Q Larry, are you going to keep the toasts confidential, too, or are you going to make those available?

MR. SPEAKES: We don't have any plan to release them.

Q Don't want to pipe them in, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Gorbachev made reference to the fact that the President was not wearing a topcoat. Was the President wearing Kennedy-style long underwear or -- (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: No, he wasn't. I think the President was in his customary underwear. (Laughter.)

Q Did you check on that yourself?

Q What kind is that?

Q Would you describe that?

MR. SPEAKES: We're bound by the principle of

confidentiality. (Laughter.)

The President also does not have a cold. I would like to correct CBS who was the only person with that scoop last night. No, he does not have a cold. Sorry.

Q Are you expected to check on the President's underwear every day or --

MR. SPEAKES: No, I don't think -- not in charge of underwear.

Q If we could change the subject --

Q Other subjects?

MR. SPEAKES: Change the subject. Okay.

Q Yes.

Q Could you tell us if there's been any developments with meetings with Terry Waite?

MR. SPEAKES: Terry Waite meetings: Representatives of the U.S. government met with Terry Waite yesterday in London. Other than that, Mike, we will not be able to comment on the information that he provided us. It's our understanding from news reports that he is returning to Lebanon and there's just not much more we can say about it. It just wouldn't be helpful or appropriate at this time to talk about it.

Q Can you tell us who he met with?

MR. SPEAKES: I just really don't want to go any further into it than that. I mean, I hate to have a black-out on everything, but this one I'm sure you can understand.

Q Has anyone from Geneva on the U.S. side -- specifically Richard Murphy -- gone to or planned to go to Lebanon before this meeting ends to deal with that situation?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know of their travel plans.

Q Question?

MR. SPEAKES: Anybody from the U.S. side that's here in Geneva plan to return to Lebanon such as Rich Murphy or others? I don't know.

Q Rich Murphy is here?

Q Richard Murphy.

MR. SPEAKES: Richard Murphy. Is Rich still in Boston? Have you checked? (Laughter.) I mean in Baltimore?

Q Just wishful thinking.

Q Larry, you said before that there was Soviet debate on future summits, future meetings? I assume that you are referring to notices about -- Has there been a decision in principle or an agreement in principle by aides?

MR. SPEAKES: To report?

Q Plans to recommend a meeting?

MR. SPEAKES: Recommend what?

Q That there are future meetings.

MR. SPEAKES: Future meetings? I just wouldn't comment on that, Joe.

Q Larry, are these rules going to extend to the First Ladies? Are we going find out what they talk about?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't think there's been an agreement between the First Ladies. They may not be aware of this agreement, either.

Q Have the Assistant Secretaries of State that were supposed to go off after the summit arrived here now -- Wolfowitz, Murphy, et al?

MR. SPEAKES: Do we know if Wolfowitz and Murphy are here?

Q Have they arrived yet?

MR. DJEREJIAN: Not to my knowledge, no. Murphy I don't think is here yet. It's possible he may come.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know that they have.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

12:05 P.M. (L)