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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

January 18, 1985
The Briefing Room

9:17 A.M. EST

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#1298-01/18

9:35 A.M. EST

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PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

January 18, 1985

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MR. SPEAKES: The President today is having, for the most part, meetings with staff. He has his regular meeting with Secretary Shultz at 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

And tonight at 6:15 p.m. the President and Mrs. Reagan will go to the Elipse for the Prelude to the Inaugural, being back an hour later. From that travel pool will accompany and Inaugural-ticketed press, as they have requested, will be there to cover the event live.

Today, a 12:00 noon briefing.

At 10:00 a.m. today we'll distribute the Gannet, USA Today transcript, which will be for immediate release. The President conducted the interview yesterday afternoon -- yesterday morning at 11:00 a.m.

This afternoon we'll distribute the Inaugural schedule for the President and Mrs. Reagan together with the pool assignments for the weekend. And Monday --

Q You'll release that when?

MR. SPEAKES: This afternoon.

-- and Monday, at 9:00 a.m., we'll have the Inaugural speech. It will be available both here in the White House press office and at Capitol Hill, distributed among the press there in the press galleries.

Q You said 9:00 a.m., Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: At 9:00 a.m.

Q Both locations? (Laughter.) Same time --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, same speech, both locations.

Q At the same time?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. Speech A will be on the Hill; speech B will be down here. If you get the right one, you're lucky.

Briefing on Monday -- I would like to --

Q -- I don't think so --

MR. SPEAKES: Was I kidding? Yes. The briefing -- when we come back down through, on the parade route, and the President starts viewing the parade, I would like to come in the briefing room -- which will put us about 3:00 p.m. -- to offer any color that I might have, although I don't anticipate a lot of color, but if I do, I'll be proud to pass it along. And any questions you might have at

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that point during the day.

Q Can you do it -- any kind of a briefing between church and his going to the Capitol -- in terms of starting out the day and --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, we can do that.

Q What time would that be?

MR. SPEAKES: At the time, I don't think there's much time between -- I'd have to look at my schedule.

Q Church is 9:30 a.m. to 10:00 -- what?

Q At 11:00 a.m. --

MR. SPEAKES: If we can, otherwise we'll try to post the -- how many eggs he ate, and what kind of marmalade he had and so forth.

Q What time he woke up?

MR. SPEAKES: What time he woke up, what time he went to bed. Okay.

Q Frequent pool reports?

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Frequent pool reports?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. I will be available to the pool that's with the President all through the Inaugural events on the Hill, and they can phone down here. I honestly don't know there's going to be much that you won't see on television. Virtually every step of the way from the time he walks out the front door to the time he finishes his address will be on television.

Q And you're going to the lunch?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. I'll be there all the time. The lunch will be on and off -- that's when you'll lose him for a bit of time there during the lunch, and then live again as he leaves the Capitol and comes back down here.

Q Larry, as I understand it, the White House pool will not have any access, or see him, after he arrives on the Hill, until he's back in the motorcade. Is that --

MR. SPEAKES: You will see him -- you will be escorted to a warm place. You'll have the best of all worlds, with a television set and food, and probably bathrooms --

Q (Gasp.)

MR. SPEAKES: -- and telephones.

Q That ought to keep you quiet -- contented.

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know that you'll see him during lunch or not. When we deal with the Hill -- the Vatican's easier to deal with than the Hill. (Laughter.) Probably the Kremlin -- (laughter.)

Q If he says anything -- we have a toast -- will you --

MR. SPEAKES: I think the toast will be on television.

Issues today, stories in the newspapers: The New York Times has a story -- administration to increase economic military aid to El Salvador. We're following the Kissinger Commission recommendations which did call for increasing economic and military support for Central America. As far as specifics, you would have to wait to see the budget.

Q So you're basically confirming the requests, though?

MR. SPEAKES: I think you could read that into it.

Britain --

Q Larry?

Q -- yes. The figure, the -- are you talking about a request for more aid or are you actually confirming the amount in The Time story?

MR. SPEAKES: The figure. I don't think I want to be specific on the figure because there's still some adjustments going on in the budget.

Q Is it a ballpark figure?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

David?

Q -- this request for aid, does it reflect at all a concern that the legal situation for Duarte is deteriorating badly?

MR. SPEAKES: No, it's a -- the long-term approach that we've taken to Central America, based on the Kissinger report, something that we can work toward, plan to, the nations -- the leadership in those countries can plan.

Q So, this money would have been sought regardless of Duarte's situation?

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Frank?

Q Well, Larry, what is the administration's assessment of Duarte's political situation vis-a-vis the pressure he's coming under from rightists now throughout the peace talks that he's tried to hold?

MR. SPEAKES: We think President Duarte's done a courageous and effective job. And as far as passing any judgment for what's going on momentarily -- at the moment down there -- I don't want to specifically comment on that.

Q Are you concerned about the weakening of the military support for him?

MR. SPEAKES: The weakening of which military support? By the army?

Q By the army.

MR. SPEAKES: I just don't think I'd really want to get into the internal politics.

Another story out this morning says Britain and West Germany to join in building space station, the U.S.-European contribution. We have seen the West Germans' formal announcement. The British have not made a formal announcement, but we have seen the stories on it. And we would certainly welcome their participation as part of the European effort on building a space station.

Q Do you expect that announcement to come before Mrs. Thatcher visits the President?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. I would anticipate yes, since she's a little over a month off.

Q When do you think?

MR. SIMS: They have a Ministers' meeting at the end of this month in Europe. And I think there'll be some formalization of their decision at that time.

MR. SPEAKES: Over at HHS there's a report that someone

mailed out some sermons to welfare offices supporting the adoption of children. We checked with HHS -- at the higher levels of HHS -- this morning; they're not aware of it. They're checking, and they will be happy to answer your questions once they ferret out what went on over there.

And that pretty well takes me down the line.

I have a statement here on personal income which today increased .5 percent in December. Most of the increase represented strong increases in wage and salary income.

Q Are you going to post those?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Personal income, at the same time, increased 1.2 percent in December. Over the past 12 months, personal income has gone up 9 percent. And personal consumption has increased 3 percent. This report generally supports a view that the economy has strengthened in both November and December. Recent reports on inflation, industrial production, housing and index of leading indicators show that the economy was picking up steam at the end of '84, and there's considerable promise in store for '85.

That's all I've got. Anybody have anything else?

Q Yes, Larry. There's a report in Europe this morning that when the President goes to Bonn for the economic summit he will also visit Portugal, Spain and Austria.

MR. SPEAKES: At the moment, Ralph, we do not have final details on what the President will do in Europe following the economic summit in early May. As usual, we may take advantage of the President's attendance at an economic summit to visit other countries in Europe. But specifically, what they will be, we have not made final decisions, have not worked out the details with other countries.

Q Are those countries under consideration?

MR. SPEAKES: Really don't want to say.

Q Well, if he's in Austria --

Q Can I ask --

Q Go ahead, Ralph.

Q No, another subject. Go ahead, sir.

Q Well, if he's in Austria, will he meet Chernenko in Austria?

MR. SPEAKES: There are no plans at the moment to meet with Soviet leadership.

Q Has there been any decision where the V-E Day ceremonies are going to be held for the --

MR. SPEAKES: No, has not. We continue to talk with the Allies on what will be done on the V-E.

Q May I ask another question? This report that Thatcher will address a Joint Session of Congress when she's here in February?

MR. SPEAKES: I would really like that to come from the British Embassy. But it's a good report. (Laughter.)

Q Has the administration been in touch with the Spanish and Portuguese governments about a possible visit by President Reagan?

MR. SPEAKES: Really don't want to discuss that.

Q What --

Q What was the question?

MR. SPEAKES: Have we been in touch with the Spanish and Portuguese about visiting them?

So -- Ira?

Q A logistical question. Are we going to have any trouble getting into the northwest gate by foot particularly Monday if we're not coming in earlier as part of the pool?

MR. SPEAKES: That was asked the other day. Normal access -- I think probably we should hammer on them to be sure that they don't change signals on us which --

Q Nail it shut --

Q Larry, is the President giving private interviews to the wire service reporters next week?

MR. SPEAKES: We don't normally --

Q We don't ask about interviews here, Lesley.

Q No, I'm asking --

MR. SPEAKES: -- don't normally discuss them, but Miss Thomas might --

Q Well, did you tell David Gergen that so that he could report --

MR. SPEAKES: David Gergen finds out -- yes, I did see that punch line thrown.

Q Well, were you the source?

MR. SPEAKES: I would -- David Gergen gets a lot of things out of the White House. Sometimes I find out things going on here from him.

Q I can't even get an interview with him.

Q But were you the source of that particular one?

MR. SPEAKES: I just don't want to talk about it.

Q Well, but you said you don't give out information on private interviews.

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Q And then he comes on and I wonder if you told it to him so he could --

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. I did hear a gasp on the Washington end of that interview during that point, though.

Q Well, the point is we don't have an interview with him next week apparently. And --

Q Oh?

Q -- I didn't want to sit around and argue with him in a six-minute broadcast.

MR. SPEAKES: Well, do you want to relieve me from my customary --

Q No.

MR. SPEAKES: Okay.

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: And let me unload on both of you?
(Laughter.)

Q The AP has an interview, uh?

Q No, I don't think -- I mean, I don't see any point in opening this thing up on our side; but Mr. Gergen did commit -- credit you and commit you to a --

Q No, he didn't credit --

Q -- to weekly interviews --

Q That's right.

Q -- with the President and monthly press conferences. And he certainly indicated that he had that on authority of the White House. Is there any commitment like that?

MR. SPEAKES: What'd I tell you here six weeks ago? That I was pushing for weekly sessions that I could bring in press and --

Q Pushing is a little different.

Q He announced your victory.

Q Is the President committed?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, let me finish.

Q -- he did announce your victory.

MR. SPEAKES: And that I was working out opportunities for the press in various formats to meet with the President on a regular basis, weekly, I would like. I am pleased to report success, that we do have a number of interviews approved that will take us right through the first six months of the new term and -- after which we will begin again and do more.

Q Could I apply after the --

Q Well, I mean, let's carry that -- Is this a commitment now for monthly news conferences?

Q I don't want to see --

MR. SPEAKES: As I told you, we will try to do them more or less on a monthly basis; but from time to time they may run six weeks. We had a very full -- full and rich discussion --

Q No, I want to know what the President -- I know you've been very kind to push for it and so -- I want to know is the President now committed to that format?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, you interrupted me before I finished.

Q I am because you're going over the same ground.

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q I want to know has the President decided that.

MR. SPEAKES: Now, how do you know what I'm going to say? Have you got any idea? Why --

Q Well, why do you let --

MR. SPEAKES: -- have you been so --

Q Why do you let Gergen make --

MR. SPEAKES: People accuse me of being cantankerous.

Q Why do you let Gergen make your --

MR. SPEAKES: Why have you been so cantankerous?

Q Why do you let Gergen make your announcement?

MR. SPEAKES: Why have you been so cantankerous?

Q Well, answer her questions. Just answer her questions.

MR. SPEAKES: Well, answer mine.

Q Wait, we'll ask the questions.

Q We're asking --

MR. SPEAKES: No, I can ask a question.

Q -- your job --

Q We're asking you, is the President committed --

MR. SPEAKES: There's nothing in the First Amendment that says -- I mean, every day you start this stuff, every day.

Q And you've never told us that the President was

committed and we've been asking you.

MR. SPEAKES: I told you that we would -- if you'll look back at the record -- that we will do press conferences on a regular basis. In some cases, they may run six weeks apart. I even went so far as to discuss specifically with you scheduling problems in the month of April that would probably mean that we would go five or six weeks before we would have a press conference --

Q I'm asking you did the President commit himself to this. I'm not asking you what you have --

MR. SPEAKES: I am not committing the President to press conferences within the calendar month for 12 --

Q Nancy Reagan --

MR. SPEAKES: -- the 12 consecutive months.

Q -- wants him to have a monthly press conference.

MR. SPEAKES: However, we will have regular press conferences, and in some cases they may run five or six weeks apart. In other cases, they may run 28 days apart.

Q Six months apart. What about six months apart?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q But they can run six weeks apart and still be -- still have a press conference in each calendar month. Have it early in a month and then late in the next month.

MR. SPEAKES: That's true.

Q That's all she said to him. Said, "I want you to have one every calendar month." He said, "All right. Fine."

Q Did the interviews for the first six months average out at one a week? The private interviews?

MR. SPEAKES: More or less. We don't have to have one next week because we've already had two this week.

Q And is that an even distribution of print and broadcast? (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. Probably in numbers.

Q Would you say it is unlikely that we will go as long as eight weeks again without a press conference in the second term?

MR. SPEAKES: You still decline to give the President credit for a live television appearance on the day after the election -- about 20-25 minutes --

Q No, wrong. Eleven minutes.

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: You still decline to give the President credit for a December press conference that took place in this very room at that podium -- at this podium that went 28 minutes.

Q It went 20 minutes. What is this?

Q Twenty-eight.

MR. SPEAKES: Twenty-eight minutes. I'm sorry, Sam.

Q That's wrong.

Q He's right, Sam, 28 minutes.

MR. ROUSSEL: -- twenty-eight minutes.

MR. SPEAKES: Twenty-eight --

Q I say he's wrong.

Q No, he's right.

MR. SPEAKES: You won't admit you're wrong?

Q I will not. Are you kidding?

Q And he complained at that time that he'd gone double the time he had planned to spend.

MR. SPEAKES: That's right --

Q I think, if I'm -- correct me if I'm wrong; but I don't think the White House credits him with press conferences on those dates. It still counts the press conferences, as we have generally counted them, as being previously-announced, formal news conferences.

MR. SPEAKES: No. In the press conference the other night, I listed 420 different opportunities he's had to --

Q You can call it a press conference, but in the Presidential documents, when they list each press conference, they list it by number, and, if I'm not mistaken, this most recent one was the 27th.

MR. SPEAKES: Okay, we'll change it.

Q Larry, is there any significance for the USA Today Inaugural interview -- their being a sponsor of the Inauguration, or --

MR. SPEAKES: No, the main consideration was Ann Devroy's impending birth -- childbirth.

Q Awwwww -- is that what we have to do? (Laughter.)

Q Ohhhhh, come on! (Laughter.)

Q -- can get pregnant -- (Laughter.)

Q Now, that's a challenge! (Laughter.)

Q Okay, girls, you know what to do -- (Laughter.)

Q -- nine months -- (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: Charles wishes to continue.

Q We're working on it -- (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: What?

Q All right, Deborah, let's go on back here.
(Laughter.)

Q -- by insult.

Q The impending birth notwithstanding, I find that curiously coincidental -- the fact that the interview that appears on the eve of the Inaugural, and their sponsorship --

MR. SPEAKES: No, there was another one done yesterday.

Q When was the USA Today interview arranged?

MR. SPEAKES: The request had been made for probably 3 or 4 months. Ann asked for one right after the election. We didn't do any interviews during the --

Q She's not the only one, Larry.

MR. SPEAKES: -- during the budget times there, and she'll be leaving the beat, you know, in the next few days or next couple of weeks I would guess.

Q There's another challenge --

MR. SPEAKES: We thought it was highly appropriate to have Ann come in and do an interview.

Q -- two tracks --

Q -- two ways to go -- (Laughter.)

Q When was the last time Gannett, USA Today had an interview with the President?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know, you'd have to look at the record.

Q I don't think it's been more than 6 months, has it?

Q What about the networks?

MR. SPEAKES: When was the last time the news magazines had one?

When was the last time Lou Cannon had one?

Q When was the last time the networks --

Q Election day --

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon?

Q Election day.

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Q Well, what's your point with that?

MR. SPEAKES: The point is that sometimes we have people that get more than one interview in a 6 month period, sometimes we have others that don't.

Q Does it help to be nice to the press office?

MR. SPEAKES: No, not at all.

Q Have you discussed press policy at all with Regan?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q Do you think you will? I mean, do you see any change in the way things are operating?

MR. SPEAKES: I wouldn't think any major change, no -- not as far as I'm concerned.

Q So these decisions -- these decisions were made without any input from him at all?

MR. SPEAKES: From who?

Q From Regan.

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, from Regan?

Q What you're talking about right now.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q Larry, the other interview that was done, is that out yet?

MR. SPEAKES: No.

Q When will that be out, do you know?

MR. SPEAKES: I'll never say.

Q Well, don't say "never" since --

MR. SPEAKES: I wouldn't look -- I wouldn't look through the papers every day for it -- it'll show up.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

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9:35 A.M. EST