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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Dublin, Ireland)

#1113A

BACKGROUND BRIEFING
BY
SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL

Grand Ballroom
Jury's Hotel
Dublin, Ireland

June 4, 1984

9:02 A.M. (L)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I will take a few minutes to give you a brief overview of the President's Parliament address. And then we'll be happy to take your questions.

As you can tell from having read the address, it is a serious, substantive speech, and addresses a number of issues.

Before I talk about any of the specific issues, I think I'd like to talk about the overall thrust. We see the basic message coming out of this speech as one of confidence, a message that President Reagan has a positive program for success. He outlines, for example, in the section on East-West relations, a very substantive and specific agenda for improving relations with the Soviet Union; but he then compliments that specific substantive agenda with a broader, longer-term vision. And that vision, again, is one of self-confidence, one of optimism, one of leadership, one that believes that we have already made major gains around the world in shoring up the forces of democracy, and one that also believes that in the future democracy is a coming trend.

In discussing the Soviet Union, he outlines a realistic program for moving to constructive cooperation with the Soviet Union. And he describes in some detail his efforts to implement the policy that he outlined in his January 16 speech on U.S.-Soviet relations, going down the list of initiatives in the area of conventional force reductions in Vienna, a new chemical weapons treaty in Geneva. And he talks about a new willingness to discuss proposals in the Stockholm negotiations on confidence in security-building measures.

He notes his disappointment that the Soviet Union has not responded to the initiatives he has taken. But he makes it clear that he will continue to work for a more constructive relationship.

But, as I said, he -- his confidence that we can pursue this flexible and forthcoming, reasonable approach with the Soviet Union is underlined by -- or even fortified, if I could use that word, by a deep sense that history is on the side of freedom and democracy.

As a personal view, I see a new tone of maturity and realism and steadiness in our foreign policy approach. This speech can some ways, as I said, be contrasted with the January 16 speech as filling in the programs that we are pursuing with the Soviet Union. But in a different sense, it can be contrasted to the speech given two years ago at Westminster, where he unveiled his democracy initiative. Because here he's, in a sense, giving the world a status report and saying that that initiative is making headway.

There are other subjects addressed in the speech. He talks about the problem of Northern Ireland and emphasizes his desire for reconciliation between the traditions. And, of course, he touches on Central and Latin America, notes the achievements that have been made in Latin America, moving toward democracy in many countries

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and notes our efforts to strengthen democracy in Central America, and specifically, our support for the newly elected government of Napoleon Duarte.

And with that I'd be happy to take your questions.

Yes?

Q On page 5, medium-range missiles -- where the President says -- are prepared to halt, and even reverse the deployment as the outcome of a verifiable and equitable agreement -- when he says "reverse," does he mean he will go all the way by removing the currently deployed missiles if he can get that sort of agreement?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's correct.

Q Question?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The question was -- on page 5, the speech says that the United States is prepared to halt, or even reverse the deployment of INF missiles as the result of an outcome of an effective and verifiable agreement. And the question was, "Does this mean the President is prepared to withdraw already deployed missiles in Europe in the context of a negotiated agreement?" And the answer is yes.

In fact, his proposal for eliminating these weapons altogether remains his key desire. He would have preferred that the missiles would have never been deployed in Europe. And if we can achieve an agreement that would reduce the missiles down to a very low level, or even down to zero, we would withdraw all missiles already in Europe.

Andrea?

Q Just to follow on that -- is he making explicit something that has been implicit all along -- or has -- is this -- does this statement go further than what he has said before?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No. This has been our position for the last two years, that we would have preferred to see an agreement prior to deployment, but once deployment started we're prepared to reverse that process in the event we achieve an effective agreement.

Q And is -- in your reference to the Stockholm talks -- what is -- how far is he willing to go in these new discussions?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: What the President is saying here is that the Soviets have a proposal called the Non Use of Force Proposal. We have said in the past that such a proposal would not change the military situation in Europe and that we, instead, preferred the approach that the NATO allies have taken in those negotiations -- and that is, proposing very specific steps that would improve the confidence of both sides in Europe -- more information about the disposition of forces, where they're deployed, how they can be moved -- and what the President is saying now is: If the Soviet Union is willing to put teeth in an -- a Non Use of Force Proposal -- and that is consider seriously our proposals on building confidence in Europe, then we are prepared to consider their proposal for a Non Use of Force agreement.

Q You're still expecting the Soviets to deal with the NATO proposals on specific --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Every country in the Stockholm Conference, in one way or the other, has endorsed these specific steps with the exception of the Soviet Union and its allies.

What the President is doing is making very explicit this concept of meeting the Soviets halfway. That is, a concept which we had previously rejected, could become acceptable if the

Soviets were to make it concrete and substantive. And we think the way to make a Non Use of Force proposal concrete and substantive is to adopt the specific proposals that NATO has tabled in the Stockholm Conference.

Q Could you be specific on some of those topic proposals?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: What these proposals do, for example, is they place limits on the size of military maneuvers in Europe. They put a ceiling -- or, excuse me -- they require pre-notification of major military exercises; so if NATO or the Warsaw Pact is going to engage in exercise, the other side would have to provide prior notification. They require exchange of data on the size of forces.

They are designed, if you will, to produce greater transparency between forces in the East and on the West to lower the risks of surprise attack, to reduce uncertainty. That's why they're called "confidence-building measures."

Yes.

Q How does this relate -- how does the non-use of force relate to the the first strike? Is there any relationship --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: None whatsoever. The Soviet Union has proposed a no-first-use-of-nuclear-weapons proposal. We have not and will not accept that proposal because it would undercut the deterrent strategy within Europe that has prevented a war for over 40 years.

Q Is that also -- if that's non-use of -- non-first use of nuclear strike, is that related -- has that been done in Stockholm? They proposed that in Stockholm or elsewhere?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The Soviets have come forward with a variety of measures in Stockholm and elsewhere, including a no-first-use. But there is no relationship between no-first-use of nuclear weapons and the non-use of force.

And to give you just a little background here, we accept the principle of the non-use of force. And we have even signed up to it in the UN Charter and in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act.

What we have objected to is signing a treaty, a declaratory treaty in Stockholm which simply, once again, reaffirms that principle, but without actually changing the military situation or enhancing confidence. We want to enhance confidence. That's why we need to go beyond that and to give it some teeth and give it some meaning.

Steve.

Q -- when you say "we," do you mean the United States or NATO? Is NATO --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We work very closely with our allies, consult within Stockholm. And you will see that there is reference to the non-use of force concept in the recent NATO Ministerial, which was released last week after the Foreign Ministers met in Washington.

Q I don't -- Is there a reference to the NATO Ministerial, also? Or were there discussions about this being a new proposal? In other words, that we would be willing to include in the discussion of the confidence-building measures some sort of declaration on the non-use of force?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The answer to that is yes. There have been discussions with the allies.

Q How have the Soviets reacted to the specific NATO proposals in Stockholm for confidence-building?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So far, I think it's fair to say that they have been somewhat negative. Some of the proposals are more difficult for them to swallow than others. One of the problems we have traditionally with the Soviets is that they are a closed society. They have traditionally been unprepared to give us very much information about their military forces. But I would point out that in the past they have been willing to agree. And the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 includes the first confidence-building measures. And they have, with some exceptions, they have lived up to those proposals. They have, in the past, given us prior notification of certain military maneuvers, for example.

Q I'm not sure I understand, then, what the big compromise is. What we have said before is that we wouldn't accept -- Can I finish my question?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: All right. Sure.

Q Or, you know, or the new initiative or the new position. We said in the past --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I haven't said that.

Q -- that we wouldn't accept a -- So it is not a new initiative?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: All I'm saying is it represents a step on our part to meet the Soviet Union halfway in this area.

Q Well, I guess what I don't understand is why it's halfway. What we're saying is we would accept a principle we've already accepted, if they will accept specific military steps that they have rejected.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: They have made a specific proposal for a treaty on the non-use of force. And we have rejected that concept, arguing that a treaty just signing people up to the non-use of force would not change the current military situation.

What the President is suggesting here is that if the Soviet Union was willing to give such an agreement or such a proposal teeth

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by adopting the majors that we have proposed in Stockholm, we would be prepared to consider the kind of agreement they have discussed.

Q Would you be -- would you elaborate a little bit on the non-use of force proposal as to what they --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think there isn't really much -- I can't -- It is -- They want a declaratory agreement, a treaty that would just say that all the countries -- 35 signatories, participants in the CSCE process would renounce the use of force.

Q On the INF on reversing the deployment -- in halting and reversing the deployment of the intermediate-range weapons, the United States would still be opposed to the idea of us having no intermediate-range weapons in Europe and the Soviets having some lesser number, is that right?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That is correct. We continue to believe that the Soviet Union should not have a monopoly in intermediate-range nuclear capabilities. What the President is saying here is that if we achieve an agreement that allows us to limit these systems at very low levels then we would not have to continue deployment or if we could go down to extremely low levels, including zero, we could begin to withdraw the cruise missiles and Pershing IIs that we have already deployed in Europe.

Q You want to keep it even?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's correct. The principle of equality is a very important one.

Back there.

Q If I may be a bit parochial, please -- Mr. Reagan says the United States must not and will not interfere in Irish matters. Is he saying that it is purely an Irish problem to resolve or that it's an Anglo-Irish problem and, therefore, even then he's not going to use the influence that everyone knows he has with Mrs. Thatcher to act in a positive manner towards the Forum?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, I think it's pretty straightforward. What he's saying -- He supports efforts, any efforts that are undertaken from London, Dublin or in the north that are designed to improve the chances for peace, reconcile the conflict there. He supports talks and initiatives undertaken in the north to bring about a settlement. He also supports discussions and talks between Dublin and London designed to do that. And he also says that the United States, if it can be helpful, is prepared to be helpful.

Q He is saying, is he not, that the United States is going to stay out of the way and mind their own business? His words are, "The United States must not and will not interfere in Irish matters."

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We do not believe that that's a way to achieve a solution, and we don't think the various parties would want us to intervene and interfere in such a way.

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Q Have you --

Q On the question of consultation with allies, a few weeks ago the German Foreign Minister went to Moscow and, I believe, he raised the subject of a non-aggression pact, and you said at the time that you were prepared to listen to his ideas he brought back with him. Did you get any indication during the recent NATO summit meeting that there was a response from the Soviets that you find encouraging on this idea?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't want to discuss either what Hans-Dietrich Genscher was told or said in Moscow nor what took -- confidential consultations that took place last week in Washington other than to say this issue was addressed by the Ministers.

Q -- a positive signal --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't want to go beyond that.

Q Sir?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Let me go over here, Andrea. Yes?

Q Would you say that one of the main reasons of the speech is to reassure Europe of the -- to reassure European concerns over the President's Soviet policy?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't think that that's necessary.

Q -- question?

Q Question?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The question was: Was the main purpose of his speech to reassure the Europeans about the President's policy towards the Soviet Union? And I said I don't think that's necessary. The President gave a speech last January where he outlined a strategy which said we needed to be strong and realistic in dealing with the Soviet Union, but we want to dialogue with the Soviets. He reiterates that here. The President met last week with the Foreign Ministers of NATO. I think there's a substantial consensus, convergence within the Alliance and within the West about the desire to maintain a steadiness and continuity in our policy but to search for a greater understanding. And that's what the President is committed to do.

Q Can you remind us when the Soviet made that proposal of the none-use of force?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, they began talking about the proposal in, I would say, in the middle of 1983 or toward the end of '83. They specifically tabled a proposal in the opening round -- in the

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current round of the Stockholm negotiations two weeks ago. But they have been talking about this proposal, say, over the last six months.

Q When did the INF talks start?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The INF negotiations started November 1981.

Q Can you tell us what is holding up the hotline agreements?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, what we are doing is working at some technical issues involved with the discussions we've had on the hotline and we're also in consultation with the Soviet Union and we hope to schedule another meeting on operating the hotline in the near future.

Q Is there any truth to reports that it's been all agreed to and that it's simply being held up because the Soviets are --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Whether the Soviets are holding up such an agreement for their own reasons, I can't say. There are some technical questions that need to be resolved.

Q On the speech -- there have been widespread expectations in Europe that would contain major foreign policy initiatives with regard to improving East-West relations. Is the Stockholm proposal the only thing that fits that, or --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, and I think that we ought to put this in some perspectives. I don't think this should be viewed as a major new initiative, as you put it. What it is, is it's another example of the President's desire to meet the Soviet Union half way to achieve something in the U.S.-Soviet relationship. But we don't think that every time the President of the United States gives a speech on foreign policy there has to be a major new initiative. It's more important that there be a sense of confidence and steadiness in our approach to the Soviets, as well as other problems. And this is what's reflected here. And the President has outlined the general program for improving relations with the Soviet Union. He has filled in that program over the last four or five months in a number of areas. He addresses them. I've gone through in the arms control area -- talk here about our efforts to improve the bilateral relationship, our desire to avoid miscalculation on regional issues. And the way to make, I think, progress with the Soviets is to be patient, to be steady, to be firm, but to be ready to talk. And that's his program.

Q You talked about a new tone of maturity, reasonableness and steadiness. I didn't quite understand when this new tone set in. I mean, with this speech, or January's speech?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, I think that what we've seen and what I was trying to convey is the sense that the President in his administration early on said that we had some objectives here. We wanted to turn U.S. policy around. What we've seen over the last 10 or 15 years are self-doubts, self-criticism in U.S. policy, vacillation. What the President's program has been was to enhance our strength, not just our military strength, but our economic strength. But more important than that, a sense of confidence about what we stand for, our values. And what you see here, in a sense, is a progress report, saying that we think that program is being implemented and it's working.

Q So the new tone dates back to the beginning of this administration?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's correct.

Q On the Stockholm conference, could you explain one more time how the U.S. is willing to meet the Soviets half way? You're saying that we're willing to talk to them. I don't understand how that's happening.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We are saying -- if you look at the language of the speech, we're prepared to discuss with them their proposals for this treaty and the non-use of force if they're prepared to give it some substance. And we think the way to give that proposal substance is to adopt these concrete measures on improving confidence in Europe.

Q How is that half way? Wouldn't you have to give up something to go half way?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We're prepared to engage in a negotiation and we will. By saying we're prepared to seriously consider the Soviet proposal represents a movement on our part.

Q Last week President Reagan, before he came to Ireland said he was prepared to help on the case of the Irish priest who is being held on trial in the Philippines. Over the weekend reports have been emanating from Manila that President Marcos has contacted the primate there, Cardinal Sims, and has agreed to release the Irish priest. Has the President been informed about this development?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I don't know. I haven't been informed of that development.

Q On the question of the tone -- virtually all of the President's recent speeches have had at least one reference in some bellicose nature attacking the Soviet Union. That's absent from this speech. Can you explain why there is no clear present attack on the Soviet system in this particular speech?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think the speech, in that sense, speaks for itself. What we have here is a very positive statement of what the United States stands for. Our values, our principles -- I mean, I -- why

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this doesn't -- I know we -- I think we think that that's the way to project the leadership and sense of confidence that Ronald Reagan possesses.

Q You say -- the President, in recent speeches, has talked about bringing the Soviets back to the table, our willingness to talk. But there would be no concessions to get them back. Does he still believe that? Why doesn't he say so in this speech? And is this Stockholm thing a concession?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, it is not. And what he has said -- he has addressed the question of sessions in START and INF negotiations. We continue to believe that we should not agree to any pre-conditions. There should not be pre-conditions for negotiations; rather the Soviets, as he says in this speech very strongly, come back to the table. And if they come back to the table, they'll find us reasonable.

One more question.

Q All right. You said earlier, the principle of equality is very important to us. Does that mean you'll accept nothing less than an INF agreement that specifies exactly the same number of warheads on each side?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We want -- we want equal levels, global ceilings on INF warheads.

Q Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: One last thing. I just wanted for you to know, in the speech, there is a reference to the group, Czechoslovakia 77. For those of you who would like to know about that group, it was a group of human rights activists established in 1977 to monitor the Helsinki Accords. They have been systematically suppressed by Communist authorities in Prague. This letter was a letter from that group to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Britain a week ago.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

9:28 A.M. (L)