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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
(Geneva, Switzerland)

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
LARRY SPEAKES

November 20, 1985

Hotel Intercontinental
Geneva, Switzerland

11:25 P.M. (L)

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MR. SPEAKES: I have an announcement. It'll be very brief. The leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union will participate in a ceremony tomorrow at the Geneva International Conference Center at 10:00 a.m.

Q That's it?

Q So?

Q What kind of ceremony?

MR. SPEAKES: I said it'd be brief.

Q On what?

MR. SPEAKES: That's the extent of the announcement.

Q Are they going to make a joint statement -- a joint communique?

MR. SPEAKES: Joint statement and joint communique? That's the extent of the announcement.

Q Can't hear you, Larry.

Q Can't hear anything.

MR. SPEAKES: I'll repeat it again.

Q We can't hear you.

MR. SPEAKES: Do you have the sound?

Q Questions.

Q Could you repeat the statement?

MR. SPEAKES: The leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union will participate in a ceremony at the Geneva International Conference Center on Thursday at 10:00 a.m.

Q Well, does it mean --

Q Will they take questions?

Q -- they're going to have a joint communique or a joint statement? Or are they going to have separate statements?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't have any comment on the three. Joint communique, joint statement or separate statements, I do not have a comment on it.

Q Larry --

Q Larry, will they be signing --

MR. SPEAKES: Let's go. I'm going to be here all night if you want me to stay.

Jim.

Q Will they have any agreements to announce? Will they be signing any agreements?

MR. SPEAKES: Will they have any agreements to announce? Will they be signing any? I just cannot comment beyond that --

Q Why?

MR. SPEAKES: -- at the present time.

Q Well, are there any agreements to sign?

MR. SPEAKES: I just can't.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Wait, wait, wait. Those who shout don't get questions. I'm going to work the front row and go right to the back. Here you go, Bill.

Q Larry, do Shultz and Shevardnadze have any separate business to do tomorrow morning that you could announce tonight?

MR. SPEAKES: No, not that I'm aware of.

Q What's the question?

Q Such as signing bilaterals, that's what --

MR. SPEAKES: Well, you mean separate business other than this ceremony?

Q That's correct.

MR. SPEAKES: I would judge that anything that takes place tomorrow will take place in the ceremony.

John.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Don't shout at me.

Q Will the two leaders at that occasion take questions?

MR. SPEAKES: There's no plan to take questions.

David, then --

Q Larry, do you anticipate U.S., Soviet, the international press? Is that who they're making this appearance in front of?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, you would like to -- logistics, I'm sure are important to many of you. There will be an allocation of 100 passes -- press passes to the United States and 100 to the international press and 100 to the Soviet press --

Q Is that all?

MR. SPEAKES: -- for the ceremony tomorrow. We will

post a pool list for those 100. It will take care of most of the traveling White House press from here. And we will have that logistical announcement and posting shortly.

Mike.

Q Why are you calling it a ceremony?

Q Larry, has the President ordered that his blackout remain in effect for all his aides until the 10:00 a.m. announcement?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, it will.

Jim.

Q Will it?

Q Can one assume that a joint ceremony is more than a photo opportunity?

MR. SPEAKES: One can assume what one wants.

Frank.

Q Can you tell us, is there a scheduled running time on this ceremony? And can you give us any further details about the dinner tonight and the report from the aides, those who were working elsewhere?

MR. SPEAKES: Don't have any specifics on the time. It will be relatively brief tomorrow. Report from the dinner on aides calling in: The report from the group making discussions was telephoned in to the Soviet side and to the United States side during the course of dinner. The two leaders discussed the developments further and agreed to make this announcement.

Q Well, Larry, the differences -- the distinct differences that you talked about earlier, were they resolved? Was --

MR. SPEAKES: Did I say distinct differences? Noooo, uh-uh.

Q I forget the words you used. But, anyway, whatever you indicated needed working on earlier --

MR. SPEAKES: Well, I don't --

Q -- I mean, that they would go back and work on, did they resolve them?

MR. SPEAKES: Frank, I'm just not going to be able to comment much further than to say this is the announcement.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Steve?

Q Does this joint statement tomorrow take the place of or supercede in any way the Gorbachev request or statement -- press conference?

MR. SPEAKES: I did not --

Q -- question?

MR. SPEAKES: Does the joint statement, he says, supercede the Gorbachev press conference? I did not use the word "joint statement." I said ceremony. If Gorbachev can be two places at once, it would not supercede it. If he's going to be at the conference center at 10:00 a.m., it would supercede it.

Sheilah?

Q Will the two leaders get together before 10:00 a.m. -- I mean, more than a few minutes before 10:00 a.m.? Will they have any other discussions tomorrow morning?

MR. SPEAKES: There's no plan to.

Candy?

Q Question?

MR. SPEAKES: Will the two leaders get together before the 10:00 a.m. ceremony? There's no plan to.

Candy?

Q So the negotiations are complete?

MR. SPEAKES: Didn't say that.

Candy?

Q Assuming that the ceremony will not run for hours, what is the President going to do after the ceremony before he goes to the airport?

MR. SPEAKES: The President will return to his residence, have lunch, go to the airport at the scheduled time. So --

Charles?

Q Let me ask that question again. Do you say that negotiations are not complete? There are ongoing talks? Will the President and Mr. Gorbachev have ongoing talks?

MR. SPEAKES: Said something about negotiations are not complete? I didn't say that.

Q I asked you if they were complete, and you said I didn't say that.

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Q Are they not complete?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't have any comment on it. I'm sorry.

Q Well, are there any further plans, except for this

ceremony, for Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Reagan to meet --

MR. SPEAKES: I can't speak for Mr. Gorbachev, but there are no further plans for them to meet, other than at the ceremony and perhaps briefly thereafter to say their farewells.

Q Larry, is that the only appearance the President has, the only event he has here?

MR. SPEAKES: That's correct, yes.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Greg?

Q Question?

Q What was that question, Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: Is that the only appearance the President has here? Yes.

Q Will agreements be signed by officials other than the two leaders?

MR. SPEAKES: Can't comment on that, Greg. Sorry.

Jim?

Q Larry, there are several reports that there will be a joint news conference. Would you steer us away from the idea of a news conference?

MR. SPEAKES: Not only would I --

Q Question?

MR. SPEAKES: Joint news conference? No.

Lou?

Q You've used very positive words here over the last two days: "good atmosphere" yesterday, "good progress" today. How would you -- taking in the range of the summit and including tonight's dinner -- well, what can you tell us about --

MR. SPEAKES: Well, the atmosphere at the dinner was a good atmosphere. I will not speak for any discussions outside of the meeting. We received a report. We've scheduled a ceremony for tomorrow. And that's basically where it stands. I think tomorrow we can sum up the summit in atmospheric terms.

Q And do you or another senior White House official plan to do that tomorrow?

MR. SPEAKES: I would anticipate after the ceremony, at a time we will announce, that we will have some additional information, at least to fill in the gap. So --

Q Will it be here at this hotel, do you --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes. What we do would be here at this hotel.

Owen?

Q How is the atmosphere of the summit being summed up tomorrow -- by them?

MR. SPEAKES: How will it be summed up?

Q Yes.

MR. SPEAKES: In one fashion or another. (Laughter.)

Q Well, let me ask this: Would you suggest that we bring sound recording equipment?

MR. SPEAKES: That you bring sound recording equipment? It won't be by sign language, I can assure you.

Q That they will have something to say, is that correct?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, we'll wait and see. So --
John?

Q Larry, you cannot say whether they're -- Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, I'm hearing you.

Q -- you cannot give us any guidance?

MR. SPEAKES: I heard my name called, but it was Downing.

Q Can you give us any guidance to whether there will be any kind of written statement apart from the agreements?

MR. SPEAKES: I can't.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Yes.

Q -- there are rumors around that there's going to be a cultural agreement signed tomorrow. Would you steer us away --

MR. SPEAKES: Rumors on a cultural agreement, would I steer away? I would not steer you.

Q Larry, two things: Is the ceremony going to be piped into this room here?

MR. SPEAKES: The ceremony will be piped into here and, in all probability, will be a video of it.

Q And do you know whether the parallel discussions have ended and there won't be any more?

MR. SPEAKES: Don't have any comment on that. So --
Andy?

Q Larry, is one reason why you've been reluctant to discuss the form and content of the ceremony the fact that the exact nature of those ceremonies is unyet totally decided?

Q Unyet?

MR. SPEAKES: Never heard of the word "unyet," but I suppose it's Russian. (Laughter.)

Q -- yet and unyet.

Q Nyet.

MR. SPEAKES: Let's see. Since I haven't discussed -- would it -- is it because it's not decided?

Q Yes, it's totally decided?

MR. SPEAKES: I think it's basically decided. So --

Pat?

Q Could you tell us anything that the President may have said tonight that doesn't go to the substance of the issues, that might give us some idea of his mood tonight upon reaching whatever agreement they've reached?

MR. SPEAKES: Let me look at the notes. Let me give you a brief overview of the dinner because that's about the best I can do tonight -- is that the dinner began, oh, at about 8:20 p.m. with drinks prior to dinner.

Q What drinks?

MR. SPEAKES: What drinks? It was the choice of those who were there. I didn't make any notes on that.

Then, they went to dinner. I think we put out a menu in the pool. They concluded with the toasts, which were cordial on both sides. And, then, they adjourned

to the library of the residence for coffee and conversation. The conversation --

Q Everybody?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, everyone.

The conversation included discussions of the report regarding those who have been talking about the various issues that are at hand in preparing for tomorrow's ceremony. So it was -- and it concluded about 10:30 p.m., I believe.

Q Can you tell us about the toasts?

MR. SPEAKES: No, I think both sides asked that they be private. So, let's see. I don't think I would really provide anything in the way of quotes from that dinner.

Q You told us they were going to go back to the dinner and make decisions -- that the report would be made and decisions would be made by the leaders. Is that still true?

MR. SPEAKES: There was a report made and there were decisions made.

Q Can you say by whom? Can you give us a little bit of the process? Was it at the Shultz-Shevardnadze level to the leaders?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. It was at the leader level.

Q No, I mean the report.

MR. SPEAKES: The report was given in to Bud McFarlane, to Shultz, I would presume to Shevardnadze, but I don't know. And then they briefed the leaders on the situation. The leaders made certain decisions and that's where we stand.

Q Did they do that in a separate place?

MR. SPEAKES: They did it all in the library of the room, seated on the couch side by side with their advisers gathered around them and the two wives present in the room, the fireplace glowing.

Q And in answer to a previous question --

Q That ever-present fireplace.

MR. SPEAKES: This is called the fireside summit.

Q In answer to that previous question, were you leading us to believe that all basic things have been decided or --

MR. SPEAKES: I wasn't leading you in any direction.

Q Are people still working tonight on language?

MR. SPEAKES: I wasn't going to comment on that.

Q Larry, is the blackout lifted or is it still on?

MR. SPEAKES: No, the blackout remains.

Q Until when?

MR. SPEAKES: Until the two leaders speak.

Q In full force?

Q Until the two leaders speak, did you say?

MR. SPEAKES: Until the two leaders speak, yes.

Q You mean they will speak?

MR. SPEAKES: Probably will, yes.

Q Larry, are those business meetings finished?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, Pat?

Q Are the business meetings finished between the two leaders?

MR. SPEAKES: Is the meeting finished between --

Q Are the business meetings finished?

MR. SPEAKES: The two leaders do not have any other scheduled meetings other than at the ceremony and perhaps a brief private farewell before they depart the conference center.

Q So that's it?

MR. SPEAKES: That's right.

Q Larry, obviously Gorbachev's press conference at 10:00 a.m. is cancelled -- being held at the same time as the ceremony. Have the Russians told you whether he has cancelled or has he put it up?

Q It's at 11:00 a.m.

MR. SPEAKES: They have not told me. No, they told Andrea.

Q Has the presidential schedule been altered for the pool of tomorrow?

MR. SPEAKES: No, it has not. It remains the same with the addition of the 10:00 a.m. ceremony.

Q Larry, one other scheduling question. For the sake of being able to say how long a day the President has scheduled tomorrow, what time does he plan to get up?

MR. SPEAKES: From the time the two leaders meet at 10:00 a.m. until the time he steps before the American people in the House of Representatives in the Capitol Building will be seventeen hours.

Q No, what time does he plan to get out of bed?

MR. SPEAKES: I would imagine he -- well, I don't know. He gets up when he wants to get up. I would imagine he would be up probably around 8:00 a.m. and then, you know, he will speak for awhile and it will probably be 11:00 a.m. before his head touches the pillow. It'll be close to a twenty-four-hour day.

Q Can you tell us what kind of working group stopped working or are they still working?

MR. SPEAKES: Won't comment on that, Rick. Sorry.

Q The President said tonight to Chris Wallace that the news is so good we're going to hold it until tomorrow. Can you give us some guidance on that? Was that a quip, a joke, was it an old trooper who -- watch all these people laughing. Was that something that --

MR. SPEAKES: You've known Reagan almost as long as I

have. I'll let you make your judgment.

Q No, I haven't.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, you have.

Q -- there was some talk here of having televised -- or televisions at Andrews so that we could watch the speech from there.

MR. SPEAKES: There will be a television at Andrews so you can watch the speech.

Q I have a very small point. You said that they had cocktails and went to dinner. The pool says the guests declined pre-dinner cocktails and went straight to their table. Did they have some drinks before dinner?

MR. SPEAKES: Well, I had three glasses of Perrier if that counts.

Q No, really, did they have any hard liquor? The reason that I ask is because Gorbachev is supposed to have a crackdown on alcoholism in the Soviet Union and apparently setting it as an example by --

MR. SPEAKES: There was orange juice and Perrier on the trays.

Q What time will we have to be in the Conference Center in order to --

MR. SPEAKES: We will post a logistical announcement within the hour and that will give you everything you need to know.

Q How about the speech tomorrow night? Will it be at Andrews at 7:30 p.m. Or will it be on board the press plane?

MR. SPEAKES: Our anticipation is having it at Andrews but we don't make guarantees. We will have it

as quickly as we can produce it and we do have a page by page --

Q -- what?

MR. SPEAKES: -- distribution system.

Q What?

Q The speech.

MR. SPEAKES: Speech tomorrow night -- 9:00 p.m. Eastern time, Capitol.

Greg, that you?

Q Yes. How long will the ceremony be?

MR. SPEAKES: It'll be relatively brief. I can't give you a running time.

Q Less than a half hour?

MR. SPEAKES: I would think so, yes.

Q Larry?

Q Larry, I would guess that ceremony would produce a headline. Would you say the success of the summit would be measurable by the headline or will it be the kind of event that will take some months to decide whether -- (laughter) --

MR. SPEAKES: I was afraid of that question --

Q Pretty good, huh?

MR. SPEAKES: -- and I appreciate it.

Q Is it a sweep? In other words, will there be any sweep there or will it take months to figure out what they really got done.

Q Is this a watershed event?

MR. SPEAKES: No, I think you'll understand. (Laughter.)

Q -- not a watershed event? (Laughter.)

Q Even you, Barry.

MR. SPEAKES: I'll let it be your judge.

Q Peace in our time?

Q Larry, when the two leaders made the decision side by side on the couch, did they shake hands over the agreement -- the decisions they made? Was there any --

MR. SPEAKES: The decisions they made at the conclusion of it and before the two rose from the couch -- they did shake hands across the couch.

Q Any embrace -- any other gestures?

MR. SPEAKES: No embrace, no kiss. (Laughter.)

Q Oh, come on.

Q -- the NATO meeting, the list of leaders includes

Felipe Gonzalez, the Prime Minister of Spain although news from Madrid indicates that he's not going. Did you receive an official confirmation that he would participate?

MR. SPEAKES: Haven't checked my mail from Spain yet so I don't know. We'll get somebody to check it for you.

Q Please.

Q Larry, what time was --

MR. SPEAKES: Let me go to the back --

Q What time was this handshake?

MR. SPEAKES: Oh, it was in the 10:30 p.m. time range.

Q So, if I understand the scene right, they're both sitting there, they both get simultaneous calls from their two sides --

MR. SPEAKES: No, no, no. There were calls that came in either during dinner, at the conclusion of dinner. The Foreign Ministers reported to their respective leaders, the leaders sat and discussed the report, and at the conclusion of their discussion they shook hands seated on the couch before a roaring fireplace.

Q Were they -- (laughter) -- separately -- were they in separate room --

Q Was there any music?

Q Were they in separate rooms at the time that these reports from their Foreign Ministers --

MR. SPEAKES: Pardon? Were they in separate rooms? No, they were not. The entire group was in one room.

Q So there was a common report?

MR. SPEAKES: That's right, a common report as has taken place more than once at this summit. So, yes.

Q Pool phone call.

Q Larry, the Russians booked the COMSAT and Eurovision circuits at 3:15 p.m. this afternoon for a 10:00 a.m. booking tomorrow. You announce this joint session at 11:30 p.m. tonight. Can we take it that the Russians took the lead in bringing this thing about?

MR. SPEAKES: No, they had planned a Gorbachev press conference at 10:00 a.m. and I judge that's why they booked the satellite for that hour. So, maybe they'll decide to keep it since we're going to do something else at that hour.

Okay, anybody else in the back? Let me go -- let me work the fringes here a little bit.

Yes?

Q They've answered -- a series of questions so I'd like you to reconstruct what you said about the phoning in of some of the results and then ministers giving a report to the leaders who have discussed it. Was anything written, was -- can you reconstruct this for us?

MR. SPEAKES: The reconstruction of it is that dinner concluded, the respective parties either received then or had received by telephone a report from the groups --

Q -- phone calls --

MR. SPEAKES: Mr. McFarlane, I think, got one, Mr. Shultz may have been briefed also. They went into the library, they sat down, had coffee, had a brief discussion on other matters, then the two Foreign Ministers, Mr. Shultz taking the lead, briefed the two leaders. They discussed it for 15 or 20 minutes, shook hands, stood up from the couch, and bid farewell.

Q Did they show anything written to the leaders?

MR. SPEAKES: No, they did not.

Q Larry --

MR. SPEAKES: Promised Jack.

Q Well, I was going to ask you, I'd heard the Soviets had moved up the Gorbachev press conference to 11:00 a.m., is that not so?

Q Question?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't know. They told Andrea that they did.

Q Question?

Q Question?

Q They announced it publicly.

MR. SPEAKES: Okay, yes.

Q Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: Wait a minute, I promised to work here. Let's see. Anybody on the far said, that's done.

Sheilah?

Q Were Mrs. Reagan and Mrs. Gorbachev present in the library?

MR. SPEAKES: They were. The entire luncheon party was.

John?

Q Larry, can you just say yes or no whether we're going to find out about any agreements or any agreed language on arms control, regional issues, anything except what's going to be at the ceremony?

MR. SPEAKES: You mean you're going to find anything out elsewhere?

Q No, no -- yes. In other words, is there going to be anything in addition to the ceremony on issues that are not covered in the ceremony?

MR. SPEAKES: There will be, in all probability, a briefing here after the ceremony. That would be the only place and that would be to amplify on details from the ceremony.

Q Is the ceremony entirely oral as opposed to -- apart from the --

MR. SPEAKES: I wouldn't comment on that.

Owen?

Q Did you win your \$5 bet?

MR. SPEAKES: Did I win my \$5 bet? What did I bet?

Q Would the Weinberger letter come up.

Q Not bringing up the Weinberger letter.

Q Yes. Did you --

MR. SPEAKES: I believe -- how many \$5 were put up against mine? I'm going to be rich. (Laughter.)

Q No way. (Laughter.)

MR. SPEAKES: I got to check it with the President in all fairness.

Q You know I did -- first \$5.

Q Larry?

MR. SPEAKES: Lou, did you have a question or just a gesture. All right.

Q If Mr. Gorbachev is willing to go before the international press and answer questions, why isn't President Reagan tomorrow?

MR. SPEAKES: The President will report to the allies of NATO first and to the American people first, and then I'm sure there will be ample opportunity at some future time for him to take questions.

Q Larry, there's an international press corps here who will not have the opportunity to cover the entire summit and they will not have an opportunity to ask the President questions.

MR. SPEAKES: That's right, but that saves more for the White House press corps when we get home.

Bob.

Q Can you tell us if the parallel meetings between lower level advisers are still continuing right now?

MR. SPEAKES: Bob, I declined to comment on that. Sorry.

I think we're in pretty good shape.

Q We'll have no prepared text of what happens at 10:00 a.m.?

Q Larry, what's the question?

MR. SPEAKES: Will we have a prepared text of what happens at 10:00 a.m.? That has not been determined. If we can, we will.

Q Larry, two things --

Q We will?

MR. SPEAKES: Never know.

Q Larry, two points -- one just to be clear -- you're ruling out also a mini-news conference with the White House press I presume?

MR. SPEAKES: Not planning on one, correct.

Q Second point -- Mr. Gorbachev --

Q Question.

MR. SPEAKES: Mini-press conference tomorrow? No.

Q Mr. Gorbachev said that he had been invited by the President to come to the United States. When was that? At what point in the two days was that invitation extended and what was the response?

MR. SPEAKES: I think we'll wait until tomorrow to discuss that.

Q Not even break down which day, which session, by the fire?

MR. SPEAKES: Sheilah?

Q Larry, how would you describe the President's frame of mind? Is he --

MR. SPEAKES: The President's frame of mind is very good. He will sleep well tonight.

Q Larry --

Q He feels good.

Q All right. Larry, the President said he didn't have any intention of buying Gorbachev a friendship ring. Has he changed his mind?

MR. SPEAKES: He hasn't been to the jewelry store. (Laughter.) Okay. Prices are high here.

Q Larry, have you announced yet which allied leaders he'll meet tomorrow in Brussels?

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, I think we put out a release on allied leaders tomorrow.

MR. ROUSSEL: Yes, there is one.

MR. SPEAKES: Yes, there is a release on that.

So, yes, sir.

Q Would you say the ceremony tomorrow will be about fifteen minutes or less?

MR. SPEAKES: I don't want to fine-tune it any more than that. Can you stay longer than fifteen minutes if it runs longer? (Laughter.) I'm getting tired and you're all tired.

Here, what else? John.

Q Larry, one of your aides said that Reagan did not want to give a news conference tomorrow with Gorbachev because, "with all due respect to the American press, there would be a tremendous temptation by the press to play off one against the other. I don't think that's very useful." Is that the reason why he's not giving a news conference?

MR. SPEAKES: Produce that aide in this briefing room and I will chastise him personally, no matter what level, as long as it's below the President.

Q Is that the reason why he's not giving a news conference? Because of the concern that the American press would play off one against the other?

MR. SPEAKES: No. The President feels that he wishes to report to the allies and to the American people first.

I think we're done, Helen. Haven't we?

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

11:49 P.M. (L)