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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Geneva, Switzerland)

For Immediate Release

November 18, 1985

INTERVIEW OF AMBASSADOR
AMBASSADOR ARTHUR A. HARTMAN
BY CNN

Hotel Intercontinental
Geneva, Switzerland

9:40 A.M. (L)

Q Ambassador Hartman, can you give me some sense -- you've been involved in these discussions -- of what the President's mood is and what the delegation's mood is as you await Mr. Gorbachev's arrival?

AMBASSADOR HARTMAN: Well, the mood is one of expectation. This has -- it's been a long time since we've met with a Soviet leader. The President has been wanting to meet with Soviet leaders for some time; three have died during his term of office. And he's looking forward to this meeting where he thinks that he will be able to establish a relationship and try and get our bilateral relationship, at least, on a more constructive basis.

Q You used the term "establish a relationship." Larry Speakes, the White House spokesman, has talked about a fundamentally new relationship, and yet, you sit in Moscow as the Ambassador -- the relationship exists and has existed for a long time. What does that mean "establish" --

AMBASSADOR HARTMAN: Well, when I said "establish," I meant a personal relationship between the two where they're communicating with each other and, perhaps, understanding each other better than they have been just through the letters that they've exchanged. But I think in terms of what we're looking for between the two countries, we'd like to break through some of these problems that we've been discussing for so long and see whether we can't make some progress in these negotiations. The Soviets, after all, have only come in with a proposal within the last month and a half and those negotiations had essentially been stymied and now we're looking for -- hopefully, some new impulse to those negotiations so we can get going.

Q What is the mood in Moscow as you observe it there? What do you see the Soviets and Mr. Gorbachev wanting and needing out of this summit?

AMBASSADOR HARTMAN: Well, I think it's bad to start talking in terms of need. Quite frankly, I think that portrays a situation that doesn't exist. I think basically the Soviet leadership is looking at its internal situation, its -- Mr. Gorbachev has just come to power, he's looking at how he can consolidate that power, and he's looking at what policies he has to follow in order to do something about an economy that's essentially stagnating, and where real change is necessary. And I think he probably knows that, but he also knows it's going to be very difficult to bring change to the kind of whole system that they have had, which is central control of a broadly based economy and they found you can't do it.

Q When you say consolidate power, we hear that term from Kremlin watchers saying -- to suggest that he is not as powerful as some of the past leaders have been -- that he has not reached that stage; he's in control, but doesn't have the full grasp, is that what you're saying?

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AMBASSADOR HARTMAN: Yes. Well, since Stalin's day you've had what is -- really amounts to a kind of collective leadership -- coalition of forces within the Soviet Union. It took Brezhnev perhaps ten years of his 18 years in power to get to the height of control that he had and the height of power that he had in the 70's. Gorbachev has actually moved much quicker than I think many observers thought in replacing people in the Politburo and now he has an opportunity before this congress that comes in February to make changes -- significant changes -- in the central committee of the communist party, which really runs the country.

Q Is that more of a key for Gorbachev than is this summit? Is that a more important date -- the February party congress?

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Q What does this summit do for Gorbachev in terms of the congress?

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Q The Soviets have, in advance of the summit, agreed to release a number of Soviet citizens who are married to Americans, a couple of cases of dual citizenship -- clearly, a gesture of some sort, but is -- what do you make of that? Is it anything more than a gesture?

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Q You say that you've only heard it through one of the officers in the embassy being told but --

AMBASSADOR HARTMAN: The foreign officer.

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send here? Are you -- it happened?

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Q Is this a distraction from the essential elements of the summit?

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Q But in the sense that, if it does come about, that the Soviets have said -- look what we're doing; we're not holding these people back. How do you make the point that --

AMBASSADOR HARTMAN: Well, I think it's --

Q -- indeed, there are so many more.

AMBASSADOR HARTMAN: No, I think it's important. We have tried over the last period of time -- and the President has made this quite clear -- that he would like, in a quiet way, to discuss some of these matters. In fact, I'm sure you've noticed the Soviets have a different tactic toward these problems now, too. They've taken the offensive; they're quite aggressive in returning our charges and saying that the United States is guilty of civil rights and human rights violations. We question that, but we welcome the debate. In our society these things are not hidden away. So, if they want to debate it with us publicly, that's fine. But we want some progress on cases that we think fall clearly under the obligations that the Soviet government has accepted in Helsinki and elsewhere.

Q Do we have any indication of any move on such cases as Scharansky, Sakharov?

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Q Let me expand that question in terms of what the Soviets do to get attention. We all see this public relations effort somewhat different, far more expansive here than at previous summits. What do you make of that, and are they succeeding?

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Q Same old soap in a fancier box?

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Q Ambassador Hartman, thank you very much.

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