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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary  
(New York, New York)

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PRESS BRIEFING  
BY SECRETARY OF STATE GEORGE P. SHULTZ  
ON THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING  
WITH FOREIGN MINISTER SHEVARDNADZE  
OF THE SOVIET UNION

October 24, 1985

Louis XVI Room  
Waldorf-Astoria Hotel  
New York, New York

4:47 P.M. EDT

SECRETARY SHULTZ: The President and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze have just finished about a half an hour or so of discussions. And the purpose of the meeting from both sides' point of view was to touch base on preparations for the upcoming meeting in Geneva.

So, we simply assess the various areas. And, of course, we are prepared for about a couple of hours of meeting tomorrow morning that I'll be having with Mr. Shevardnadze. So, it's essentially a base-touching and that kind of a meeting.

Now, I think it is also the case -- and both Mr. Shevardnadze and the President made this clear -- that the meeting and the spirit of it demonstrate the seriousness of purpose with which we are going about this process and, I believe, they are going about it as well. So, I think it was worthwhile and constructive in that sense.

Q Mr. Secretary --

Q Mr. Secretary, did he have any response to the President's speech? Did he characterize it in any way? And did the President offer any response to his --

SECRETARY SHULTZ: We didn't -- we didn't get into a discussion of the President's speech and Mr. Shevardnadze's speech; although, as I said when we here a half an hour or so ago, you can see some things perhaps that show a mutual attention to regional issues, as well as arms control issues. In a sense, you can say what is security all about? Well, arms control is a branch of security; regional tensions are an important branch of security. So, both of those things are very much present in both speeches.

Q What did you touch base on particularly?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: The full range of things that we have on the agenda for Geneva that run from arms control of various settings -- Vienna, Stockholm, as well as Geneva -- just mentioning in a short space of time --

Q Was the President's initiative talked about at all in detail?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: No.

Q How did Mr. Shevardnadze react -- if you discussed the full agenda -- to the U.S. plan to bring up the issue of human rights?

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SECRETARY SHULTZ: I think -- I'm sure they are very well aware of the fact that that is a matter of great importance to the American people and, for that matter, people throughout the democratic world.

Q Was the President primarily presenting ideas to the Foreign Minister or was it a sort of an open conversation? What -- what -- what was the dynamics?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: Well, in terms of discussions, the President opened up with some comments about assessing progress and lack of progress in various areas, and Mr. Shevardnadze responded and made some comments of his own, expressed his appreciation for the fact that the President had taken the time for this and the meaning of that. And it went back and forth. It was done with simultaneous translation, which lends itself to a conversation. And I think was -- as a physical attribute -- helped.

Q Mr. Secretary, was there any decision reached to try to speed up the procedures, talks, either between yourself or Mr. Shevardnadze between now and the summit? Or any letter that Mr. Shevardnadze brought from Mr. Gorbachev to President Reagan?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: No, no new letter. The -- I think we have in place a process of working on the upcoming meeting that's a very strong one. Each Ambassador is involved. Ambassador Hartman, for instance, met last week with Foreign Minister Shevardnadze in Moscow. I saw Mr. Dobrynin when he returned from Moscow earlier this week. We have people who are working on negotiations on various subjects that are in place and doing it. And, of course, there have been some public proposals here today at the U.N.

But there's a rather intensive effort and different people are in place doing things. And so we'll review that process tomorrow at the breakfast.

Q There's no possibility, sir, of your going to Moscow before the summit?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: Well, the question of how to prepare this is something that we're all working on. And right now, where we stand is that we have our Ambassadors and we have this network that's doing its work.

Q Was an invitation extended to you, sir?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: The question of whether or not there's anything further needed, undoubtedly, we'll just keep examining that. And if we have anything to say on it, we'll say it when we have something to say. Right now, I have nothing to say on it at all.

Q Does Mr. Shevardnadze accept that the President's regional problem-solving proposal is a fair element for the agenda in Geneva?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: The importance of discussing regional issues has been agreed on between the two sides going back, certainly, to Mr. Shevardnadze's visit in the United States -- whenever that was -- three weeks or so ago. So, we both agree that that's an important subject to talk about, and have all along.

Q But do you accept Mr. Shevardnadze's suggestion, or inference in his speech, that it has to go beyond those five countries that the President mentioned?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: Well, as I said, when we were discussing it earlier, we have been discussing other areas which have different attributes to them. The President's proposal was directed toward a set of problems, all of which have a single characteristic

to them. And that doesn't mean that there aren't other problems that also deserve discussion, and, for that matter, have been discussed.

Q Well, sir, what issues then have the Soviets said they won't agree to talk about in Geneva?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: I don't think either side has said we won't talk about subject X. Either side can bring up whatever they want.

Our problem, though, is to take the limited amount of time in Geneva and organize ourselves so that both know that at time X we're going to discuss subject Y, and so on, and we are able to cover the things that each wants to do. So it hasn't been, in terms of broad categories, difficult, really, to pin down how we want to go.

Q Will the administration's interpretation of the ABM Treaty be a topic of discussion at the summit? And was it discussed by the two this afternoon?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: Well, the President has made a decision about the ABM Treaty in the light of our examination of it in the government, and that's been thoroughly aired, and that is our view. And people may want to bring it up, but, anyway, that is our view of the matter.

And the problem of erosion of the assumptions that underlie the ABM Treaty is a major problem, and Max Kampelman, in his group, has been discussing that and bringing it to the Soviets' attention. So we think that's an important topic.

Q Mr. Secretary --

Q Mr. Secretary --

Q Mr. Secretary, wouldn't the President be going to Geneva with a stronger hand if his allies today had come up with a formal communique of support? And why was there no such statement?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: Oh, I think that the extensive support in the room was uniform and deep. And I know the President felt very good about it. And I believe the others felt good about it, too. And I don't know that formal communiqués necessarily carry that much weight. You go and talk to the other heads of state and ask them. It was an outstanding expression of general support.

Q Was there any thought given to a communique?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: We gave a little bit of thought to it. But you know what happens when you decide you're going to put out a communique, somebody tables it at the beginning of the meeting and that's all you talk about for the rest of the meeting. Communiqués are often the enemy of a productive meeting. And so the President felt that the -- just as -- as he went about organizing the Williamsburg Economic Summit -- that the content is what is important. And the content is what I reported to you.

Q Mr. Secretary, will you be discussing with Mr. Shevardnadze tomorrow a Soviet offer to separate medium-range missiles from the larger issue of SDI and strategic weapons? And if -- and are you interested -- is the United States interested in that approach?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: In our two hours, I expect that we'll try to review the spectrum of things that will be on the agenda in the President's Geneva meeting and kind of take stock. And to the extent that we want to put some additional questions about what they have suggested, we'll be prepared to do it. To the extent that they have questions about the U.S. position which, after all, has been on

the table there for some time, well, we'll be prepared to respond. But I don't think that we're -- we don't contemplate a detailed negotiating session on some particular narrow issue. It's a more general kind of review. The negotiating is to be done in Geneva.

Q Mr. Secretary?

Q Was there discussion of the Geneva arms control talks?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: -- you haven't had a question.

Q Is there a difference of view between the Americans and the Soviets of how much time to devote to certain areas, whether they be regional issues or arms control. Is that one of the things that you're discussing with the Soviets now?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: No, we haven't had any disagreement about that in particular, but we haven't really come down to trying to allocate out the different meetings. There'll be four meetings. There will be one in the morning and one in the afternoon of each day. So that's four meetings. Then there are two dinners, which are more social occasions on the other hand, more or less the same people that are at the meetings will be at the social occasions and it's always the case that you tend to talk shop under those circumstances. So, that provides a somewhat more informal setting in which people can talk.

Q Can you --

SECRETARY SHULTZ: So I don't anticipate we're going to have a difficulty. Our problem will be that the time is relatively short and there's a lot to cram into it. Although I would say that in studying past meetings of the heads of state of these two countries and looking at the amount of actual meeting time devoted to the discussion of content, this one will have a great deal more actual time allocated to that than I think any of the past ones.

Q Can you clarify --

Q Mr. Secretary, in his speech today Mr. Shevardnadze called on the United States to adopt positions which would make possible an agreement in principle, as he called it, at Geneva on the arms matters under discussion in the other Geneva forum?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: Yes.

Q Did he make at all clearer, either in the meeting with the President or some other way, what kind of thing he has in mind?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: The meeting with the President didn't have the time really to get into that, but, certainly, that's the sort of thing that I would no doubt be asking about tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKES: Last question -- Bob Timberg.

Q Mr. Secretary, at your meeting tomorrow, do you intend to press the Soviets on the possibility of resuming diplomatic relations with Israel?

SECRETARY SHULTZ: Well, that's a subject that we take up with various countries that don't have diplomatic relations with Israel and so it's something that is present in the discussion. Of course, as one discusses the question of Middle East peace negotiations and the problem of involvement in any way or responsibility for them, it's a little hard to imagine somebody being involved who doesn't have diplomatic relations with a central party to the dispute. But I don't expect that's going to be a major topic of conversation.

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THE PRESS: Thank you.

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5:02 P.M. EDT