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BUSH INTERVIEW, POST MALTA SUMMIT

1. WE HAVE OBTAINED IN CONFIDENCE FROM CONTACTS IN NEWSWEEK THE TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW WITH BUSH ON 7 DECEMBER FOR SYNDICATION AND PUBLICATION ON 11 DECEMBER. IT IS OF SOME INTEREST IN BEING THE FIRST INTERVIEW GIVEN BY THE PRESIDENT ON THE SUBJECT OF LAST WEEK'S SUMMIT. IT ALSO SHOWS BUSH IN A RELAXED AND CONFIDENT MOOD ADDRESSING MAJOR CURRENT ISSUES OF CONCERN - RELATIONS WITH GORBACHEV, CSCE SUMMITRY, SOVIET ATTITUDES TO GERMAN REUNIFICATION, EC INTEGRATION, TROOP CUTS IN EUROPE.

2. TEXT AS FOLLOWS:

Q: WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU LEARNED ABOUT MIKHAIL GORBACHEV IN MALTA?

A: HE'S FIRMLY IN CONTROL AT HIS SIDE OF THE PROCEEDINGS THERE, AND HE IS DETERMINED TO SEE PERESTROIKA SUCCEED - ABSOLUTELY DEDICATED TO IT AND DETERMINED TO SEE IT SUCCEED NO MATTER HOW TREMENDOUS THE PROBLEMS ARE INSIDE THE SOVIET UNION AND HOW UNPREDICTABLE THE CHANGES OUTSIDE THE SOVIET UNION.

Q: YOU'VE TOLD US ABOUT THE EVOLUTION IN YOUR THINKING THAT LED TO THE MALTA MEETING. HOW HAS YOUR THINKING EVOLVED SINCE?

A: IT'S EVOLVED SINCE IN THAT I THINK I DID THE RIGHT THING IN HAVING THE MALTA MEETING. I WAS CONVINCED OF THAT AT MALTA ONCE WE STARTED TALKING BECAUSE OF THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE TALKS AND THE COMPREHENSIVE NATURE OF THE TALKS, THE WILLINGNESS OF MR GORBACHEV TO TALK ABOUT ANY SUBJECT IN A VERY STRAIGHTFORWARD, DIRECT WAY. THEN, GO TO NATO AND I SENSED THAT OUR NATO ALLIES WERE DELIGHTED THAT WE HAD UNDERTAKEN THIS MALTA MEETING. INDEED, IT WAS BECAUSE I'D SENSED THAT MANY OF THEM WANTED ME TO SEE GORBACHEV IN THAT KIND OF MEETING THAT I PROPOSED IT IN THE FIRST PLACE, POST-PARIS (1989 ECONOMIC SUMMIT). AND SO, SINCE I'VE GOTTEN BACK, I'M JUST CONVINCED IT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO HAVE DONE AND (MY) THINKING HAS EVOLVED IN THE SENSE THAT I WANT TO NOW FOLLOW UP ON THE SPECIFIC ITEMS THAT WE PUT ON THE TABLE AND I

GUESS A LOT OF THE EMPHASIS HAS TO BE IN THE ARMS CONTROL (AREA), BUT IT CAN ALSO BE ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE.

Q: HAVE YOU CORRESPONDED OR COMMUNICATED WITH GORBACHEV SINCE MALTA?

A: SINCE I'VE GOTTEN BACK, NO. I PROBABLY WILL, PROBABLY GIVE MY PERSONAL VIEWS AS TO WHAT I SAW THERE, FELT THERE.

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING DIFFERENT ABOUT YOUR VIEWS OF HIM?

A: NO, EXCEPT THAT IT'S A REINFORCEMENT OF A VIEW RATHER THAN A RADICALLY DIFFERENT WAY OF LOOKING AT THE MAN. BUT I MEAN, THERE IS CERTAINLY AN ELEMENT OF RESPECT FOR THE WAY HE HAS MANAGED THE CHANGE IN EASTERN EUROPE AND (HIS) DETERMINATION TO FIGHT FOR PERESTROIKA REFORM AT HOME. I HAVE MORE RESPECT FOR HIM THAN I HAD BACK WHEN HE FIRST CAME INTO OFFICE, BACK WHEN I FIRST MET HIM OR WHEN I SAW HIM LAST YEAR. I MEAN, HE'S UP AGAINST SOME TREMENDOUS PROBLEMS AND HE IS DETERMINED TO SOLVE THEM.

Q: PRESIDENT MITTERRAND HAS NOW ENDORSED GORBACHEV'S CALL FOR A 35-NATION SUMMIT NEXT YEAR TO DECIDE THE FUTURE SHAPE OF EUROPE. ARE YOU PREPARED TO JOIN HIM?

A: NO, BUT I'M PREPARED TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT IT WHEN I SEE HIM DOWN IN ST MARTIN NEXT WEEK.

Q: WILL YOU TRY TO CONVINCE HIM THAT'S NOT A GOOD IDEA:

A: NO, I'LL JUST LISTEN TO WHAT HE HAS TO SAY AND THEN I'LL TELL HIM WHAT I THINK AFTER I'VE HAD A CHANCE TO PONDER ON IT FOR A WEEK. THAT MATTER, INCIDENTALLY, DIDN'T COME UP AT THE GORBACHEV (MEETINGS).

Q: WITH THE FALL OF THE EAST GERMAN GOVERNMENT, ARE YOU CONCERNED THAT REFORM THERE MAY BE MOVING A LITTLE TOO FAST?

A: WELL, I DON'T THINK IT'S A ROLE OF THE US TO INTERVENE INTO THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS IN ANY COUNTRY IN EASTERN EUROPE AND SET TIMETABLES FOR CHANGE. SO I CAN'T ANSWER AND WON'T ANSWER IN THE AFFIRMATIVE TO THE QUESTION. BUT WHAT I'M TRYING TO DO, WITH THE ADVICE OF A LOT OF EXPERTS AND IN CONSULTATION WITH OUR ALLIES, IS TO TRY TO SEE AHEAD TO WHERE THE CHANGES LEAD. IT IS VERY, VERY DIFFICULT BECAUSE THEY ARE COMING SO FAST. NOW THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT QUESTION WOULD BE IF WE WENT OUT AND TRIED TO PUT TIMETABLES AS AN OUTSIDE COUNTRY ON SOME QUESTION THAT'S AS TOUGH AS GERMAN REUNIFICATION. WE WOULD BE MAKING A BIG MISTAKE TO DO THAT, AND WE'RE NOT DOING THAT.

Q: SOME OF YOUR AIDES ARE SAYING THERE'S SUCH RAPID TURNOVER IN THAT GOVERNMENT THAT THERE WON'T BE ANYBODY LEFT WHO KNOWS HOW TO RUN A COUNTRY.

A: I DON'T WANT TO POSITION THE UNITED STATES AS STANDING

IN THE WAY OF CHANGE THAT IS BRINGING GREAT JOY TO MOST OF THE PEOPLE IN THESE COUNTRIES.

Q: WITHOUT PUTTING A TIMETABLE ON IT, ARE YOU CONCERNED THAT CHANCELLOR KOHL'S REUNIFICATION PLAN MOVES TOO QUICKLY?

A: NO, BECAUSE I LOOKED VERY CAREFULLY AT HIS PROPOSAL AND THERE WASN'T ANY TIMETABLE ON IT.

Q: DID SECRETARY GORBACHEV EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT THE REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY?

A: HE EXPRESSED A CONCERN ABOUT, I DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT WAS TOO QUICKLY, BUT HE EXPRESSED A GENERAL CONCERN ABOUT THIS QUESTION OF GERMAN REUNIFICATION. I'D HAVE TO GO BACK ON THE NOTES. BUT ... I THINK HE EXPRESSED CAUTION ON THAT.

Q: DID YOU GET A FEELING FROM HIM AT ALL THAT A REUNIFIED GERMANY MIGHT BE SOMETHING THAT'S HARMFUL TO HIS NATIONAL INTEREST RIGHT NOW?

A: NO, I DON'T THINK FOREVER. I THINK HE IS VERY MUCH CONCERNED ABOUT BORDERS, AND I CITED TO HIM OUR LONGSTANDING NATO POSITION AND THE POSITIONS AS YOU KNOW DEFINED IN THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT WHICH ADDRESSES ITSELF TO THE BORDER QUESTION, AND I DID THAT IN A SENSE OF REASSURANCE THAT AS FAR AS THE UNITED STATES GOES, WE WERE NOT GOING TO BE ADVOCATING BORDER CHANGES. THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT THAT CONCERNS HIM, AND IT CONCERNS A LOT OF OTHER PEOPLE. IT CONCERNS A LOT OF PEOPLE IN GERMANY, IT CONCERNS THE POLES, IT CONCERNS A LOT OF EUROPEANS.

Q: SOME OF THOSE OTHER EUROPEANS ARE ALLIED LEADERS. WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THOSE ALLIES WANTING TO SLOW DOWN THE PROCESS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION? ARE THEY MISTAKING THE TIDE OF HISTORY?

A: WELL, I THINK YOU HAVE TO DEFINE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION. WHEN I TALKED ABOUT IT AT NATO, THE VERY NEXT DAY THE BRITISH PRESS JUMPED ALL OVER MARGARET THATCHER AND SAID IN A DARNDDEST MISINTERPRETATION OF LONGSTANDING US POLICY THAT I HAVE EVER SEEN, SO YOU HAVE TO BE VERY CAREFUL IN TALKING ABOUT IT. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT ECONOMIC, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT OUR SUPPORT FOR EC 92, AND FOR SOME REASON WHAT I SAID WAS CONVEYED TO BE SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT IN THE BRITISH PRESS. I CALLED MARGARET AND TOLD HER, AND SHE HAD UNDERSTOOD IT PERSONALLY, BUT SHE THEN USED THAT TO FEND OFF THE CRITICS IN THE OPPOSITION PARTY, I'M TOLD. ALL I WAS DOING WAS SPELLING OUT LONGSTANDING US POLICY. TO BE SURE THAT THERE WASN'T SOME NUANCE OF DIFFERENCE, I ASKED THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO BRING ME A LIST OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY PRESIDENTS ON THIS, AND OUR POSITION IS STILL WHERE IT HAS BEEN. SO THERE ISN'T A SHIFT, BUT IT WAS INTERPRETED BY THE BRITISH PRESS AS A MAJOR SHIFT,

AND I THINK IT GOT CAUGHT UP IN THE SOCIAL COMPACT SCHEME OF THINGS ON THE EC, SUBJECTS THAT WE'RE NOT ADDRESSING OURSELVES TO.

Q: IN RECENT WEEKS, YOU'VE BEEN REASSURING THE ALLIES THE US WILL MAINTAIN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF TROOPS IN EUROPE. WOULD YOU BE COMFORTABLE WITH CUTS OF 50 TO 60 PER CENT BY THE MID-1990S?

A: I'M GOING TO CROSS EACH BRIDGE WHEN WE COME TO IT, AND THE FIRST BRIDGE IS TO ACCOMPLISH THE REDUCTIONS THAT I PROPOSED IN THE CFE AGREEMENT. THEN WE WILL QUIETLY, IF WE GET THAT LOCKED UP, AND WE CAN TAKE FURTHER STEPS, I WOULD DO IT IN CONSULTATION WITH OUR ALLIES, AND THEN BE UNAFRAID TO MAKE PROPOSALS TO THE SOVIETS. BUT I'M NOT GOING TO GO INTO A HYPOTHESIS AT THIS TIME, UNTIL WE MOVE OUR BUREAUCRACY FORWARD AND THE ALLIED BUREAUCRACY FORWARD AS BEST HE CAN TO GET THE RAPID AGREEMENT ON THE PROPOSAL THAT'S ON THE TABLE.

Q: BUT THE NUMBERS AREN'T REALLY HYPOTHETICAL. THEY'RE BEING USED BY PENTAGON PLANNERS.

A: BUT THEY'RE NOT RUNNING THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THIS COUNTRY, ARE THEY? THEY DO SOME THINK-TANK WORK, WHICH IS VERY GOOD, AND I COMMEND OUR SECRETARY AND OUR CHAIRMAN TO THE JOINT CHIEFS FOR LOOKING DOWN THE ROAD. BUT THAT'S QUITE DIFFERENT THAN MAKING PROPOSALS OR ANSWERING A QUESTION AS TO HOW I SEE THE STRUCTURE OF THE FORCES FIVE YEARS FROM NOW UNTIL WE CONSULT WITH ALLIES. THE ALLIANCE IS TOO IMPORTANT FOR A PRESIDENT TO GO OFF SAYING HERE'S WHAT I THINK IT'S GONNA BE.

Q: THE WEST GERMANS HAVE DECIDED TO CUT THEIR FORCES BY 20 PER CENT. DOESN'T THAT SUGGEST TO YOU THAT WE CAN AT LEAST PLAN US TROOP CUTS WELL IN EXCESS OF WHAT YOU'VE CONTEMPLATED IN CFE?

A: WELL, I'M JUST DOING A LOT OF THINKING, BUT I'M NOT MAKING ANY STATEMENTS ABOUT IT BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES IS IN A VERY UNIQUE ROLE IN NATO, AND WE HAVE A VERY SPECIAL ROLE THERE, AND I JUST DON'T WANT TO SPECULATE ON TROOP LEVELS AT THIS POINT.

Q: IS IT CORRECT TO ASSUME THAT YOU HAVE A PLAN FOR SIGNIFICANT TROOP CUTS BY THE MID-1990S BUT YOU DON'T THINK IT'S TIME TO TALK ABOUT IT?

A: YOU MEAN DO I HAVE A VISION ABOUT ALL THAT? SURE.

Q: IS GORBACHEV SERIOUS ABOUT PULLING VIRTUALLY ALL SOVIET TROOPS FROM EASTERN EUROPE?

A: WELL, HE DIDN'T TALK ABOUT THAT TO ME.

Q: ARE YOU HEARING THAT FROM ANYONE ELSE?

A: YOU HEAR A LOT OF SPECULATION, A LOT OF DISCUSSION OF

WHERE ALL THIS LEEDS IN TERMS OF TROOP LEVELS. AND MOST PEOPLE RECOGNISE THE EXTRAORDINARY BURDEN OF MAINTAINING THOSE TROOPS IN EASTERN EUROPE MIGHT WELL BE CHANGED BY MR GORBACHEV. BUT AGAIN, THAT WOULD BE JUST SPECULATION ON MY PART. THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT ALL THOSE DIVISIONS COST A LOT OF MONEY TO MAINTAIN OUTSIDE THE SOVIET UNION OR INSIDE, AND SO I EXPECT HE'S THINKING WHAT HE COULD DO TO REDUCE THE BURDEN JUST AS WE ARE. UNQUOTE

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