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THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
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ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
GENERAL BRENT SCOWCROFT
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS
MICHAEL DUVAL
SPECIAL COUNSEL TO THE PRESIDENT
AND
STUART SPENCER
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE PFC
THE HOLIDAY INN



9:15 P.M. PDT

MR. CHENEY: We would be happy to respond to any questions you might have by way of obvious focus on the debates tonight.

Q Are there Soviet troops in Poland?

GENERAL SCOWCROFT: Yes.

Q How many would you say?

GENERAL SCOWCROFT: Offhand, I don't recall. There are four divisions. I am not sure, but a substantial number.

Q Do you think that would imply some Soviet dominance to Poland?

GENERAL SCOWCROFT: I think what the President was trying to say is that we do not recognize Soviet dominance of Europe and that he took his trip to Eastern Europe -- to Poland, to Romania, to Yugoslavia -- to demonstrate, to symbolize their independence, and their freedom of maneuver.

Q Do you think he succeeded in saying what you just said he said? He said Poland was free, at one point during that answer.

MR. CHENEY: I think the point, Lou, was the President was focusing on the fact we want separate independent relationships with each of those nations, and that was the purpose of his travels. I think you would get a similar statement, I would assume, from some of those governments and that his policy of his Administration is that we are interested in separate, independent autonomous relationships with governments like Yugoslavia, Romania and Poland.

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Q Did he misspeak himself? Is that what you are saying?

MR. CHENEY: I would have to go back and check the transcript, Bob, but I think you have to look at it within the context of the allegation that was made, that somehow this Administration recognizes or has sanctioned the charge or wants a relationship based on the assumption of dominance and we don't assume that. We want a separate independent relationship with each of those countries.

Q But he did misspeak himself. That is fair enough to say, isn't it?

GENERAL SCOWCROFT: I think you have to look at the transcript.

Q We got his quote.

GENERAL SCOWCROFT: That is clearly what he was getting at.

Q He said the U.S. does not concede Eastern Europe itself independent under the domination of the Soviet Union.

GENERAL SCOWCROFT: He does not concede the domination of Eastern Europe. That is what he took the trip for -- to demonstrate, to symbolize the independence of those countries. He did not concede --

Q Are there Soviet troops in Romania, too?

GENERAL SCOWCROFT: No.

Q If we have this many questions about it, do you think President Ford got his point across to the audience? Why wasn't he able to make this clear?

MR. CHENEY: I felt it was very clear, Ann, as I watched it. I understood exactly what he was saying, and I think the American people will understand exactly what he was saying, too.

Q Do you think it was a political plus for you, that particular comment?

MR. CHENEY: I think the overall debate was a definite plus from the standpoint of the American people's understanding of the President's beliefs and his record with respect to foreign policy. I thought the closing statement went right to the heart, at the bottom line, if you will, of the debates, and that all things considered in the final analysis the key fact the American people have to judge is whether or not a potential candidate for the Presidency has the experience and the knowledge and the understanding to be able to provide peace and freedom, and that the President went to the heart of the issue with respect to foreign policy in the campaign when he was able to point out that, after two years, we do in fact have peace and that not a single American is fighting anywhere in the world tonight.



Q Is he going to put out the names of these companies from here or is that going to be the Commerce Department?

MR. CHENEY: We have been working for the last several days -- the last several weeks, really -- on an Executive Order, as I understand it, which would mandate the Commerce Department under the action he had previously enacted in 1975 to provide public access to the names of companies involved in the Arab embargo.

Q Did the President go one step further and say he will order the Commerce Department to make them public so the public does not have to go searching for them, but they will be told?

MR. CHENEY: That is correct.

Q When can we expect that?

MR. CHENEY: I expect you will have a fact sheet on it tomorrow.

Q When did the Administration change its position on it?

MR. CHENEY: We never changed our position on it.

Q Didn't you oppose legislation on the Hill to this effect?

GENERAL SCOWCROFT: No. As a matter of fact, we proposed that as a way in which to move the legislation through the Congress.

Q But initially didn't the Administration this year oppose any change in the boycott law?

MR. DUVAL: No, the compromise proposed by the Administration and the Congress would have done that, would have gotten the kind of proposal through in law that the President announced tonight. What the President indicated as a problem with the legislation was legislation that had in it a criminal sanction which was totally unenforceable.

The Democrats in Congress proposed a criminalization law which would have required us to get evidence from foreign countries which we never could have gotten, and therefore would not have been enforceable. What the President wanted was a law that was enforceable.

Q What was Mr. Parsky's testimony -- was it on the Bingham proposal, on the boycott proposal?

MR. DUVAL: That was two separate --

Q What was Parsky's testimony on the boycott proposal?

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GENERAL SCOWCROFT: Parsky testified in opposition to the Bingham-Rosenthal amendment. The Administration was opposed to the Bingham-Rosenthal amendment.

Q Did Mr. Ford seem to be taking credit for signing this tax bill which provided for the tax sanctions against those companies that complied with the Arab boycott?

MR. CHENEY: He did in fact sign the tax bill, did he not?

Q He did.

MR. CHENEY: And that was a key provision of the tax bill and the Administration had no objections to that provision of the tax bill. We went along with that. It is a separate issue.

Q Can I ask Mike Duval a question? We have been hearing rumblings and rumblings that your side will propose some sort of an amendment to the rules for the third debate "to force Carter" to be more responsive to questions in the debate. Can you give us some idea as to what you are going to propose?

MR. DUVAL: We are on the Nessen amendment. I think the point, as I understood it from talking to Ron -- and he raised a good point -- the format is intended to allow a structured and a disciplined approach to serious subjects. You ask a question. We anticipated that the American people would get an answer to the question asked and that the rebuttal would be on that topic. So that you did not have mini-speeches in this debate, where people go in with memorized speeches and give them.

The President answered every single question he was asked. In his rebuttal he referred to the points raised by Mr. Carter. And what I think we would like to see continue in these debates is both men be responsive to the questions that the reporters posed and in the rebuttals be responsive to the points made by their opponent.

Q Don't you want a moderator with a little more backbone, then? Isn't that what you are saying?

MR. DUVAL: The point is, the men themselves should do that because that is in the interest of the people that are listening to the debates trying to make up their mind. I think if you go back through the transcripts you will find the President always answered the question he was asked.

Q Mike, is this something you are going to propose to the Carter people, that their candidate be required to stick to the subject?

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MR. DUVAL: I don't know, Fred. I am not certain it would be enforceable. I think common courtesy and a sense of wanting to be responsive to the people who are listening to the debates would make Mr. Carter -- or at least would be a strong inducement on Mr. Carter -- to answer the question he has been asked. It seems to me it is not particularly fair nor leveling with the American people to avoid the questions you are asked.

Q Mike, when you thought you won the first debate, you opposed any changes in the format. Is this a sign you feel you did not do as well?

MR. DUVAL: No. As I said earlier tonight, I think in the first debate the President hit a triple. I think tonight he hit a home run. I am not sure what is left to do at the third debate.

Q Can we return to the four divisions in Poland? Does that not amount to dominance in that country?

GENERAL SCOWCROFT: I think the point is the President was saying we do not concede Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and that we are working in every way to demonstrate, to symbolize the freedom, independence, of the countries of Eastern Europe.

Q Let me read you the White House transcript: "There is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and there never will be, under the Ford Administration."



Q Does domination now exist?

GENERAL SCOWCROFT: I think the point is, he was trying to say that we do not concede the domination of Eastern Europe. That is the whole context within which he made that answer.

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Q He said, "I don't believe the Poles consider themselves dominated by the Soviet Union." Is that a valid statement?

GENERAL SCOWCROFT: I think that is another element of it. In the sense of the acquiescence of the people of Eastern Europe there is no domination at all. Not that we don't concede it. There is none.

Q Two weeks ago at this hour, approximately, you had some preliminary polls indicating what public sentiment had been in reaction to the debate. Do you have anything similar tonight?

MR. CHENEY: I have not seen any yet, frankly. I don't know whether any organizations are polling tonight like they did at the first debate. Maybe somebody else can answer.

Q For the last debate you gave sort of a round-by-round score of how you thought it went, and I think yours was something like eight to two to two. There were 14 questions tonight. How would you score it?

MR. CHENEY: Nine and five.

Q Stu, how would you score it?

MR. SPENOER: Nine and five, for the President, obviously.

MR. CHENEY: For the President.

Q Mike, how would you score it?

MR. DUVAL: I am going to disagree with my Chief of Staff. I would score it 14 to zip.

Q Dick, didn't you say a couple of weeks ago by about now you thought the President would be leading in the polls?

MR. CHENEY: I think I said two weeks ago, Bob, when we talked in Philadelphia, I projected within two weeks we would have a national poll that would show us being even or ahead -- as I recall the specific language -- and I would point to the Yankelovich poll, Time Magazine, as an indication that we have in fact achieved what I said we would two weeks ago.

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Q What did the President say after the debate to you when you got back to the residence about how well he did?

MR. CHENEY: I rode back from the debate with him to the residence and he felt -- we discussed it in the course of the ride -- he said he felt much better after this debate than after the first.

Q Why?

MR. CHENEY: He felt very comfortable. He felt it had gone very well. I did not ask him in detail why, Helen. In my view it was a matter that tonight after the debate I don't think we know any more about Jimmy Carter's positions or policies or what policies he would pursue in the national security area, both with respect to defense and foreign policy, than we did when we turned on the television tonight.

I was, I guess, disappointed in the sense I had hoped that you would have a clear-cut distinction in the sense that Governor Carter would stand by the positions he had taken previously and that there would in fact be more portrayed to the American people for them in fact to make a choice, observing a difference in the approach of the two candidates to national security matters.

I did not see that tonight because I thought Governor Carter never really did address the substance of the questions he was asked. I point specifically to the first question that dealt with the issue of whether or not he took issue with strategic arms limitation, the opening to China, our work in the Middle East or our work in Africa, and he never did at any course, at any point during the course of the debates tonight, address any one of these issues in terms of saying he would pursue a different set of policies.

From that standpoint I felt as I watched the debates, Helen, there was no question in my mind that the public watching the debates would feel that the President did in fact have a two-year track record, knew what he was doing with respect to SALT, knew what he was doing in South Africa, our relationships with China, our relations with Europe, and that Governor Carter never really did spell out any set of policies he would pursue were he to be successful.

Q What did Kissinger say to the President when he called?

MR. CHENEY: I don't know, Helen. I did not talk to him.

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Q In view of the fact Mr. Frankel caught the President up on his statement about the captive nations, did the President say to you he had any second thoughts about this?

MR. CHENEY: We did not discuss it in the car.

Q Did he realize he had not said what General Scowcroft said he meant?

MR. CHENEY: I will say again we did not discuss it in the car.

Q You have not discussed with him at all the question of Poland since the debate?

MR. CHENEY: That is correct.

Q Don't you think you should issue a clarification on that?

MR. CHENEY: No, Helen. I thought he was clear in terms of what he meant and I would say, as Brent said, the point that was made -- and it was made within the context of the charge that the Helsinki agreement conceded or consisted of a U.S. concession of Soviet dominance of Eastern Europe -- and in the response to that question he made it very clear the U.S. does not concede the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe.

Q What do you think the political effect of this will be in terms of Polish-Americans, Americans of Eastern European descent?

MR. CHENEY: Spence is the politician.

I think the political significance tonight has to be looked at in the total debate, and whether or not the American people came away with the feeling that Governor Carter is better qualified to handle foreign policy, and I don't think they came away with that impression.

I don't think he spelled out at all, at any place during the course of the debate, how he would pursue different policies from those that have been pursued by the President.

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Q I heard what you said on that score earlier, but what I was asking is about a specific type or group of voters, what they call, I think, the American supporters --

MR. CHENEY: I would suspect they would be strongly supportive of the President's position that the United States does not concede Soviet domination of Eastern Europe.

Q Do you have any comment on the Roper Poll which gives Carter 40 percent and Ford 30 percent?

MR. CHENEY: I have not seen it.

Q What are your reactions of 40 for Carter, 30 for Ford, 30 undecided?

MR. CHENEY: I would want to look at the poll before I commented on it.

Q Does Mr. Spencer have any analysis of the political fallout of the statement -- whatever exactly he said or meant -- but the political statement about domination in Poland?

MR. SPENCER: I don't view it as a political problem at all. I think the President answered the question very forthrightly and in the manner most people understand. I don't see any political problem at all. As far as the debate goes generally I look at it more from the standpoint of perception and style. I think the President was forceful tonight. I think when you use electronic media for debate the style probably is important to the issues they are discussing and he certainly scored on style tonight being very forceful, in command, and I think he did a tremendous job. I think he was much better than the last debate.

Q What do you think of Carter? Do you think he came on better than you expected him to?

MR. SPENCER: No, I frankly thought Carter would be better. I thought he was a little mushy.

Q Can we get some mechanics straightened out on tomorrow and the boycott announcement? Where are we going to get it? Is it going to be made in Washington? Here? Is Commerce going to make the announcement? Is the President going to make the announcement?

MR. CHENEY: We can give you guidance on it in the morning.

Q Dick, when are we going to get a list of companies who are participating in this boycott? This is what the President said actually he would make public.

MR. CHENEY: We will have details in the morning.

Q Was that a surprise? Did you know that was coming?

MR. CHENEY: No, it has been in the works for a week or ten days. It was not a surprise.