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PRESIDENTIAL PRESS CONFERENCE, 17 SEPTEMBER, PREPARATIONS FOR
GENEVA

1. PRESIDENT REAGAN GAVE A TELEVISED PRESS CONFERENCE
ON 17 SEPTEMBER. THE TWO MAJOR TOPICS WERE TRADE
AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE GENEVA SUMMIT.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE GENEVA SUMMIT.

2. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE HAD BEEN WORRIED THAT A DEGREE OF
EUPHORIA MIGHT BE GENERATED WHICH WAS UNWARRANTED BY THE
RECORD OF PAST SUMMITS. BUT HE WAS TAKING THIS OPPORTUNITY
VERY SERIOUSLY. IT HAD TO BE MORE THAN A GET-ACQUAINTED MEETING.
THE US OBJECTIVE WAS TO HAVE REAL DISCUSSIONS WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO A
CHANGE

IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND THE USSR, AND REMOVE THE THREAT
OF NUCLEAR WAR. THOUGH THEY MIGHT NOT LIKE EACH OTHER, THE TWO
SIDES SHARED ENORMOUS RESPONSIBILITIES AND HAD TO LIVE TOGETHER
IN PEACE. ASKED IF HE WAS AFRAID OF LOSING THE PROPAGANDA WAR,
PRESIDENT SAID WE WERE SEEING THE CONTINUATION OF A LONG TERM
SOVIET CAMPAIGN, AIMED
PRINCIPALLY AT THE EUROPEAN ALLIES, BUT HE DID NOT BELIEVE
IT HAD REGISTERED WITH THEM. HE WAS PREPARING SERIOUSLY FOR THE
SUMMIT.

GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS.

3. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE HAD NOT GIVEN THE GENEVA
NEGOTIATORS ANY NEW PROPOSALS. THEIR ORIGINAL INSTRUCTIONS
CONTAINED ADEQUATE FLEXIBILITY. THE US HAD ALREADY MADE
PROPOSALS FOR REDUCTIONS IN NUMBERS OF WARHEADS, AND PRESENTED SIX
WAYS IN WHICH THIS COULD BE DONE, WHILE TAKING
INTO ACCOUNT THE DIFFERING MIXES OF WEAPONS ON THE TWO SIDES.
SO FAR THE RUSSIANS HAD MADE NO COMMENT OR COUNTER PROPOSAL.
THE US WERE STILL WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO BE PUT ON THE TABLE.
SDI.

4. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE DID NOT SEE SDI AS A BARGAINING
CHIP. IT IS TOO IMPORTANT TO THE WORLD TO TRADE OFF AGAINST A
GIVEN NUMBER OF MISSILES, WHEN THERE ARE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO
BLOW UP THE WHOLE WORLD. SDI WAS PURELY A SEARCH FOR A DEFENSIVE
WEAPON TO END OUR DEPENDENCE UPON MASSIVE NUCLEAR RETALIATION.
RATHER THAN NEGOTIATE (IT AWAY) HE WISHED TO BRING ABOUT A CHANGE
TO GREATER RELIANCE UPON DEFENSIVE WEAPONS. IF THIS COULD BE DONE,
THERE WAS A REALISTIC HOPE OF ELIMINATING OFFENSIVE WEAPONS
ENTIRELY. ASKED WHETHER THE SOVIET UNION WOULD NOT SEE SDI
WEAPONS AS HAVING OFFENSIVE POTENTIAL, THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT

THAT

THAT WAS NOT WHAT THE US WAS RESEARCHING OR TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH. HE WOULD WISH TO EXPLAIN THIS CONCEPT OF SDI AT THE SUMMIT. THERE WAS ROOM FOR NEGOTIATION. RESEARCH TO SEE WHETHER DEFENSIVE WEAPONS WERE FEASIBLE WAS NOT AGAINST ANY TREATY, AND HE REGARDED TESTING AS A LEGITIMATE PART OF RESEARCH. BUT, PRIOR TO DEPLOYMENT, THE US WOULD BE WILLING TO TALK, TO THE ALLIES, AND TO THE SOVIET UNION AND SAY 'HERE - ISN'T THIS THE ANSWER TO NUCLEAR WEAPONS'.

5. THE PRESIDENT DEFENDED THE RECENT ASAT TEST ON STANDARD LINES. THE US WAS 'PLAYING CATCH-UP'. THE TEST WAS CARRIED OUT ACCORDING TO A SCHEDULE AND NOT WITH THE SUMMIT IN MIND.

6. FOR PASSAGES ON TRADE, SEE MIFT. (NOT TO ALL).

WRIGHT

US/SOVIET ARMS CONTROL TALKS

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