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MALTA SUMMIT : US PRESS COMMENT

1. MOST PRESS AND TELEVISION COMMENT HAS BEEN POSITIVE. THE NEW YORK TIMES (QUOTE MR BUSH, TALKING LIKE A LEADER UNQUOTE) SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD QUOTE SENT THE MOST IMPORTANT POSSIBLE MESSAGE TO THE SOVIET PEOPLE : THE US STANDS READY TO HELP MAKE GORBACHEV'S ECONOMIC REFORMS WORK UNQUOTE. HE CONVEYED THE RIGHT MESSAGE ON ARMS CONTROL : QUOTE BOTH THE US AND USSR NEED CUTS ... TO RELOCATE RESOURCES AND REPAIR ECONOMIES UNQUOTE. BUSH NEED NOT FEAR THE GRIPES AND GROANS OF AMERICAN CONSERVATIVES. HIS LEADERSHIP WAS FINALLY IN FOCUS. THE WASHINGTON POST SAW THE RESULTS AT MALTA AS QUOTE A USEFUL IMPETUS ... A POSITIVE AND NECESSARY OUTCOME UNQUOTE.
2. MANY COMMENTATORS TAKE THE VIEW THAT THE MEETING CREATED A MOMENTUM AND DYNAMISM WHICH COULD WELL PROVE DURABLE. THE AGENDA AND THE INITIATIVES WERE PRESIDENT BUSH'S, BUT GORBACHEV GOT WHAT HE WANTED, IN TERMS OF ACCELERATING THE ARMS CONTROL PROCESS, MOVING TOWARDS A NORMALISATION OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND ENDORSING THE REFORM PROCESS. THE MEETING CONFIRMED THAT THE US ADMINISTRATION WAS NOW CONVINCED ABOUT GORBACHEV'S AIMS BUT LESS SURE OF HIS PROSPECTS, AND WERE NOW GIVING POSITIVE SUPPORT TO BOLSTER THE LATTER : QUOTE THIS IS THE PAY OFF THAT WILL LET GORBACHEV SHOW CRITICS AND CONSUMERS THAT HIS STRUGGLING POLICY OF PERISTROIKA IS WORTH THE PAIN UNQUOTE (WASHINGTON POST).
3. BUT THERE IS CRITICISM FROM SOME HEAVYWEIGHT WRITERS. SAFIRE (NEW YORK TIMES) BELIEVED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S AIMS WERE FIRSTLY TO SHIFT THE DISARMAMENT FOCUS FROM START TO CFE AND SECONDLY TO LINK ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO AN END OF SOVIET SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL AGGRESSION. ON THESE CRITERIA BUSH FAILED MISERABLY AND GORBACHEV SUCCEEDED BRILLIANTLY.
4. ROSENTHAL (ALSO NEW YORK TIMES) SAW A QUOTE HISTORIC IRONY UNQUOTE AT MALTA. BUSH QUOTE COMMITTED THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC POWER OF THE US TO TRYING TO MAINTAIN THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE SOVIET UNION UNQUOTE AT A TIME WHEN THE PEOPLE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE GDR WERE MAKING IT QUOTE VIVIDLY PLAIN THAT THEIR GOAL WAS TO ELIMINATE COMMUNIST PARTY RULE OVER THEIR NATIONS UNQUOTE ... SURELY AMERICANS NEVER REALISED THAT

BUSH WOULD SELECT THIS ROLE.

5. IN THE SAME NEWSPAPER ADELMAN (HEAD OF ACDA UNDER REAGAN) SAW AN ABSENCE OF NEW THINKING AT MALTA AND DANGER OVER THE ARMS CONTROL PRIORITIES. ON START THERE WERE PERSISTENT DOUBTS THAT AN AGREEMENT WOULD HELP US STRATEGIC STABILITY. A CFE AGREEMENT WOULD LEGITIMISE THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF SOVIET TROOPS IN EASTERN EUROPE BEYOND THE MID-1990S. A WORLDWIDE CW BAN WAS SIMPLY UNACHIEVABLE BECAUSE VERIFICATION WAS IMPOSSIBLE.

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