

December 11, 1989

**Telegram of the Hungarian Embassy in Moscow
about V. M. Falin's Briefing on the Malta Summit on
11 December**

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Summary:

V.M. Falin, Head of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, provides a briefing about the Malta Summit.

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Telegram sent by the Hungarian Embassy in Moscow about information presented by Valentin M. Falin on December 11, 1989 about the meeting at Malta. Department of Telecommunications of MFA [Ministry of Hungarian Foreign Affairs] Embassy: Moscow. "Top secret."

On December 11 [1989], V.[alentin] M. Falin, the Head of the International Department of the CPSU CC, USSR, gave information to the leaders of the socialist countries in Moscow on the summit at Malta. They [the Soviet leaders] decided to provide new information, as he said, because on the one hand there are still things that have not become public, on the other hand in the US some ideas have been presented tendentiously or even wrongly.

While reconsidering the values that have been valid until now, some unpleasant things came to light for the first time from the US, and some doubts have arisen in regard to if [the US] is capable of handling the problems raised by the Soviet Union, the socialist countries, Japan, and Western Europe, at a time when a devaluation of [the United States'] power is in progress in international politics. The US has had considerable internal economic difficulties, the national debt is huge, and it is starting to fall behind in some areas of technological and scientific advancement too.

[George] Bush's team considered it important and useful [to hold] a working-style exchange of views with the Soviet Union in order to reinforce their own positions and conclusions, and to end those foreign-policy-related discussions which interrupted diplomatic activities, or even brought into question the efficient operation of the whole [American] administration. Although Bush is a liberal, non-aggressive, and balanced politician, if he could act freely he would fully exploit difficulties that perestroika inevitably entails. The situation, however, is that the US itself is awaiting a perestroika, the US cannot live in an old way anymore. The two biggest victims of the Cold War are the Soviet Union and the US. The national debt of an astronomical size is the price of America's world power ambitions, because they want to be the hegemon of the world.

The actual [American] government, to all appearances, has realized that it is not possible to make policy in the old way [any more]. This has become apparent already during the first talks of the two leaders at the Malta summit. Bush did not start to lecture the Soviet Union but he stated that the containment policy, which made the two countries adversaries and enemies, has to be supplanted. It had been typical of the atmosphere of the negotiations that the United States did not try to make [the USSR] feel its 'superpower-number-one' position any more, and approached the role of both great powers in a more balanced way [than before]. This has been a very significant positive difference in comparison with the previous summits. (...)

(...) Bush stated that the US does not want to disturb either perestroika or the analogue processes which are underway in Eastern Europe. [Bush] is interested in the success of perestroika. Gorbachev reflected upon this that if the position of the [US] administration were different, then it would get into conflict with the tenor of American society and public opinion. (...)

(...) Therefore at the Malta summit political-military questions were put in a central position. Serious, in some places rigorous, but constructive debate had taken place. Although the Americans did not agree with quite a lot of the questions raised by the Soviets, but they did not refuse them >>out of hand<< either, but held up the prospect that they would examine the Soviet arguments, conclusions and anxieties. (...)

(...) Gorbachev and Bush have agreed to sign an agreement in 1990 at the highest level on the reduction of conventional weaponry. At the same time Gorbachev proposed that they hold Helsinki II. Bush [however] did not commit himself to Helsinki

II. (According to Falin, [Giulio] Andreotti and [Francois] Mitterrand are more inclined toward this.) (...)

(...) According to Gorbachev's assessment, the American government has not yet taken up an exact policy line for the post-Cold War era. There is a big temptation to exploit the severe changes that have been taking place in the GDR to coax one-sided and "unbalanced" concessions out of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries. He even made a remark to Bush that instead of the already nonexistent Brezhnev doctrine some speak of a Bush doctrine. The components of the theoretical policy of the Soviet Union are freedom of choice, [and] non-interference into [others] internal policy. Along with this, and strictly complying with these principles, [the USSR] encourages political changes which aim at reinforcing democracy and the power of the people.

Bush stated that the US is faithful to the Helsinki process as well as to its principles. According to Falin, although this is quite a significant statement, it is quite general too.

Regarding the questions of German reunification, Bush's inner limits and interests became visible. It is very important that he gave a balanced evaluation of the situation. On the one hand the United States sympathizes with the profound changes which are reshaping the social structure of Eastern Europe, on the other hand [however] it is not interested in destabilizing the European situation. It is important to the Americans that the existence of such organizations of European stability as NATO and the Warsaw Treaty should not be questioned. The United States thus does not want to force German reunification, and the President does not intend >>to dance on the Berlin wall<<[1]. According to Bush, the West European allies [of the US] take the same position. They oppose establishing a strong, united Germany because nobody can guarantee what policy it would pursue.

Both sides agreed that the confederation proposed by [Helmut] Kohl is merely a slogan at the moment, [and] the necessary conditions for [its] realization have not been given. A confederation, for instance, would presume a joint military policy. The Soviet Union would not agree to a NATO-member Germany and the West would not agree to let it join the Warsaw Treaty. Achieving the neutrality of Germany would be improbable too. Falin separately emphasized that such mutually close approaches were expressed during the joint press conference [at Malta] which had not been imaginable earlier.

The Soviet side raised the question of the modernization of military doctrines too. The WT [Warsaw Treaty] has already changed its own [doctrine] based on the concept of sufficient defense, and its structure is undergoing some changes too. The US and NATO, however, for 20 years has been based on [the principle of] >>rapid response<< [i.e. flexible response] which earmarks the use of nuclear weapons on the fifth day [of hostilities]. The time has come for the Westerners too, to change this. (...)

(...) Gorbachev objected that on the American side [some actors] actively interfere with the internal policy of the Soviet Union. Some American senators travel around and make promises in the Baltics, and some American lawmakers are dealing with Karabakh too. He asked why they don't give advice to Canada (Quebec) and England (Ulster) instead. Bush pondered upon this and expressed that the administration does not share the opinion of Congress, and [that] on the Soviet side these manifestations should not be viewed as official, unfriendly gestures. (...)

(...) Falin assessed that the Malta summit means a new boundary, the Cold War has essentially been ending, and [that] the pre-conditions are now set for forming a new level and higher quality of international relations.

[\[1\]](#) “Jumping up and down at the wall” as G. Bush literally said at the Malta meeting.