

DEEP DEEP BACKGROUNDDEEP DEEP BACKGROUND

R

RELEASED IN FULL

INTERVIEW OF
 THE HONORABLE ALEXANDER M. HAIG, JR.
 SECRETARY OF STATE
 BY
 JOHN WOLCOTT
 NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE
 FRIDAY, APRIL 23, 1982, 5:50 P. M.

MR. WOLCOTT: That's as good a place for me to start as any is just to ask you on whatever basis you can talk about it, where that stands now. You met for an extraordinarily long time today with the Foreign Secretary, and where do things stand now? Is he going back to London? What happens next?

SECRETARY HAIG: Let me give you this on DEEP BACKGROUND because, I think you know, I have not talked to the press since this thing started.

MR. WOLCOTT: Yes. I appreciate that.

SECRETARY HAIG: And I didn't take any press on my trip.

MR. WOLCOTT: I appreciate that too.

SECRETARY HAIG: I don't know whether I appreciate it or not but it was more pain free as a result, whether we stumble around the back of that plane and say the wrong things, I don't know, but I don't think it was either. I think that the press realizes this is a serious problem.

MR. WOLCOTT: Certainly, everyone of the regulars that I've talked to certainly understand why we weren't with you.

SECRETARY HAIG: It's not standard operating but it was a unique thing.

Let's go back and look at the setting of the thing. That's very important because there's been a lot of distortion except from people who are sophisticated enough, I think, to know what the stakes are. But certainly I haven't seen a great deal of that expressed. It's usually telegraphed.

When this thing occurred, it was, of course, a shock in London and a surprise, and equally so here. The immediate question we had to face was what was our best posture? Was it one of concerned detachment or peripheral kibitzing, or was it to recognize that the United States -- not just Great Britain but the United States had a major interest in this situation and its ultimate outcome.

It had a major interest, first, in terms of the basic principles we are trying to strengthen and reinforce in our foreign policy, and that is the start changed by rule of law and peaceful means. You have heard me speak to that repeatedly, and I think it is a firm conviction of the President that the lawlessness and the hemorrhaging of historic change through force was becoming a major threat to international stability, to say nothing of our vital interests.

So we didn't have the luxury of stepping aside from that point of view.

Secondly, it had a profound -- and would have and will continue to have -- a profound effect on our traditional alliance relationships in the Atlantic community. The scars of Suez, no matter how you judge them at this stage of the alliance history, might well be more than the traffic would bear. So we could not let our British ally anguish alone.

Thirdly, it has fundamentally hemispheric implications. As you know, we have been in the process of working diligently to re-establish American influence in the hemisphere, especially in the OAS, and we have achieved considerable success.

Again, I just refer to St. Lucia where, by and large, the overwhelming majority supported the United States' position on Nicaragua and Salvador.

A failure to deal effectively with this issue -- at least be perceived with an attempt to deal with it responsibly -- could well fragment the OAS organization between the Spanish speaking and the English speaking countries.

Fourthly, the problem has East-West overtones. What I just described to you are North-South overtones. You know, they could have deteriorated without our action into a polemic North-South problem: Colonialism versus imperialism. And that, in itself, could have then deteriorated into an East-West problem because where vacuums are created in the south, then they afford opportunities for greater Soviet and Cuban influence in the southern cone and perhaps even farther.

Beyond that, both parties viewed the United States as the only entity in whom they had sufficient confidence -- although they viewed their respective relationship with us somewhat differently -- but they felt that the United States was the only credible vehicle for seeking a peaceful solution.

Some said we should have delayed, stepped back and been less hyperactive. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Had that occurred, had there been vacuums, they would have been rapidly filled either by the OAS with all of the consequences we're talking about, or the United Nations with an even stronger North-South flavor.

We really didn't view that we had the luxury of staying out, and we had to seize control of the process, whatever the risks, and we did not view those risks as being minor, and we did not view the prospects for success as being paved with opportunity.

What are the basic issues? The basic issues are traditional British procedures for decolonialization which has historically been premised on self-determination.

The Argentine position has been one of soul-felt conviction that the Malvinas or Falklands have been Argentine over the last 150 years since the relinquishment of Spanish sovereignty in their region.

The last 17 years they've been intensely engaged in negotiations which have led nowhere and which have built frustration upon frustration. From the Argentine point of view, they probably would not have been averse earlier on to the concept of self-determination if they felt they had a fair shot at influencing the attitudes of the Islanders.

But, rightly or wrongly, they developed a conviction over an extended period that it was a British cocoon that could not be penetrated in such a way that they could open up the Islands and show the Islanders what opportunities were available to them through allegiance to the mainland. Therefore, they felt discriminated against. One must suggest that that had even racial overtones.

Don't think the British have a fixation for sovereignty, but rather a fixation for self-determination consistent with their decolonialization pattern.

The Argentines, on the other hand, have applied force to change status quo, and the stakes right now probably are good enough for Argentina to have, as a result of their sacrifices and military action they've taken, compressed the process to the point where there would be a British willingness to negotiate in a more forthcoming way. And the real question is, would the Argentines, as they have been, insist not only on decolonizing but on prejudging negotiations before those

DEEP DEEP BACKGROUND

negotiations take place by insisting that they must ultimately lead to their sovereignty.

One is cutting an umbilical cord with Britain, and the other is plugging it in.

I think that is a very hard position to justify. It would be a reward for aggression, recognizing there will be some rewards in any event because the status quo has changed, the attitudes of the Islanders will be affected accordingly, and things will never be quite the same. There's never going to be a return to status quo in a rigid sense from this day forward.

So these are the basic issues. Can Britain sustain, as it should, self-determination as the major criteria for any change in the status of the islands, and can Argentina be satisfied with an evolutionary change where they have a fair chance to influence self-determination. That is where we are today.

We've been to both capitals. I've been to Buenos Aires twice, as you know. I did not go back to London from Buenos Aires because the bottom line was so excruciatingly arrived at with ups and downs because, quite frankly, it's a government with the slightest dictatorial character -- and be careful how you say this -- that is less structured than a pluralistic society. There are as many as 40 to 50 guys who can veto anything.

There's a president, there's a junta, there's an army command structure, including corps commanders, all of whom have a voice; and, therefore, when you have an agreed position, you don't know how long it's going to hold.

MR. WOLCOTT: Yeah. So I've heard.

SECRETARY HAIG: We came up with an agreed position. I came out of Buenos Aires with that. We transmitted those ideas -- not as American ideas but as a combination of the interaction of British and Argentine ideas -- from the Argentine perspective. It went to London and London is discussing their view on those ideas here in Washington and our perception of those ideas -- I expect Pym will return to London tonight or tomorrow -- and that we are in what is clearly the final stages of the pre-conflict diplomacy.

No one can say for sure how many hours or days are left, or even at this moment whether any are. But it's not a situation

DEEP DEEP BACKGROUND

5

there's just going to be a transition from peace to war, and therefore that once that threshold is crossed, that nothing else is going to happen. There will be even more urgent calls for settlement if there is indeed armed conflict beyond what has already occurred in the seizure of the Island.

I think the bottom line here in the United States is that the United States cannot abandon the basic principles which constitute our own national policies and interests and which happen to be shared by Britain as well, and that is that change can occur by force of arms.

Should that be the bottom line of the Argentines -- in other words, should they be unable, for whatever reason -- and we have to be very tolerant that they have a complex mix because incumbencies are involved in both capitals -- I'm talking about temporary politics -- and that reduces a great deal of the flexibility on both sides.

But should it turn out that way, then clearly the United States must be guided: (a) by principle, and (b) by its traditional alliances.

MR. WOLCOTT: Two questions to follow-up on that, still on the same basis.

MR. FISCHER: This all has to be Lindley DEEP BACKGROUND.

SECRETARY HAIG: Lindley? You don't know where you got this.

MR. WOLCOTT: I don't know where I get half of what I get. No. That's understood.

SECRETARY HAIG: There are a lot of reasons why I think it would just be dynamite if I were quoted or even said for me to think or anything --

MR. WOLCOTT: It ain't going to happen.

SECRETARY HAIG: -- I can't do my job under those circumstances.

MR. WOLCOTT: No. I understand that. I appreciate that. The first question is, at what point do we have to make the choice publicly? Now, it seems to me --

SECRETARY HAIG: Very simple.

DEEP DEEP BACKGROUND

6

MR. WOLCOTT: If I understand correctly, you have been in touch with your counterpart in Argentina more off and on since you came back to Washington --

SECRETARY HAIG: Oh, yes.

MR. WOLCOTT: So he is presumably --

SECRETARY HAIG: He'll be in New York tomorrow, and chances are I'll see him Sunday --

MR. WOLCOTT: Here?

SECRETARY HAIG: -- probably over the weekend here. And chances are by then I will have had what you might refer to as the bottom line from London.

MR. WOLCOTT: Which you don't have now.

SECRETARY HAIG: No. We're in the process of developing that. You see, serious negotiations really didn't start until we had had the views of both capitals.

MR. WOLCOTT: They really started with that Argentine proposal that they finally got together.

SECRETARY HAIG: That's right.

MR. WOLCOTT: But the bottom line I think you've already outlined.

SECRETARY HAIG: And that, incidentally, is another reason why we didn't start one-thirty-seconds too soon.

MR. WOLCOTT: Because it took you a week to get up to speed.

SECRETARY HAIG: The distances involved and the differences in perception of this problem. They were diametrically different.

MR. WOLCOTT: But I think you've already hit the bottom line. It seems clear what it is, which is that the British insist the one thing from which they cannot budge and from which we can't either is that the Islanders have a right to a voice in their own future. And the Argentines have insisted, as I understand it, that their flag must remain there, their governor must remain there -- the troops maybe don't need to --

DEEP DEEP BACKGROUND

7

SECRETARY HAIG: No. That wouldn't be fair. And I can't give you the outline of the Argentine position, but it's not that rigid. It was initially. There has been flexibility. There has been flexibility on the subject of withdrawal, there's been flexibility on the subject of interim authority on the Islands, but there's been a great tendency to insist that the outcome of the negotiations be predetermined.

MR. WOLCOTT: Yes. There was --

SECRETARY HAIG: Before they negotiated.

MR. WOLCOTT: That reminds me of the West Bank. Nevertheless, then you're into talking about a mechanism down the road for -- I guess you're talking about two stages --

SECRETARY HAIG: Let me post this to you just so you get this sufficient. The real question today in practical terms, as distinct from issue terms, substantive terms, is whether two leaders who have started down a course will not only be able to have the statesmanship to accept a compromise, but perhaps even more importantly whether the fact of doing that will eliminate their incumbency. See what I mean?

MR. WOLCOTT: Yes.

SECRETARY HAIG: You have two tiers of obstacles that the leadership in both capitals have to deal with, and that's what makes this such a complex problem.

MR. WOLCOTT: I understand, and in both -- certainly in the Argentine case, that incumbency is not what I would call firm, either historically or in the present tense.

SECRETARY HAIG: That's right.

MR. WOLCOTT: But still it seems to me that the British argument is quite persuasive, that if you allow the Argentines to keep anything on those Islands, you will have rewarded their invasion unless you return -- and here's another unfortunate phrase from the past -- unless you return to a status quo ante.

SECRETARY HAIG: No. The status quo ante as such in rigid terms will never be achievable in the light of what has already occurred. Some of the Islanders have left already. They've been exposed to Argentine presence, either favorably or unfavorably, depending on how they look at it -- and we have no way of knowing that --

DEEP DEEP BACKGROUND

8

MR. WOLCOTT: Right.

SECRETARY HAIG: They've been exposed to Argentine blandishments, whatever they may be.

MR. WOLCOTT: Television.

SECRETARY HAIG: Probably offers for land or whatever. And that's a fact of life, and it is always the case in the interests of peace which is so critically important. One has to understand that as long as principles themselves are not put in jeopardy, that there can and probably should be something to take on the subject of status quo ante, even if it's an interim arrangement that prevents conflict, that permits a withdrawal of forces and the demilitarization of the Islands.

The ultimate outcome, of course, is again if it's placed on a fair shot by all interests, the outcome that does give heavy weight -- not exclusive weight but very heavy weight -- to the will and the interests of the people.

MR. WOLCOTT: In that context, are the British willing to tolerate an Argentine presence in the Islands?

SECRETARY HAIG: There are limits.

MR. WOLCOTT: But are they willing to tolerate one at all, even as part of a --

SECRETARY HAIG: I have to be very careful here simply because these things have not been aired and the answer is yes within very tightly constrained thinking.

MR. WOLCOTT: That does give you some room still to work, does it not?

SECRETARY HAIG: That's not where we've been working.

MR. WOLCOTT: Yes. But the question, obviously, that's in the back of my mind is whether there's still --

SECRETARY HAIG: I think it would be fair to say that neither side has been terribly rigid; that at this juncture the British have been somewhat more forthcoming as of this reading.

Be careful how you write that. I don't have to tell you what an impact it has.

DEEP DEEP BACKGROUND

MR. WOLCOTT: Yes. Back there.

SECRETARY HAIG: Both places.

MR. WOLCOTT: Oh, certainly. All right. So then there still is some -- the door is still open in whatever -- a crack, or whatever, for some sort of a --

SECRETARY HAIG: One can draw this conclusion: How much time is left? Clearly, the British cannot put themselves in the position of having sailed a 40- or 60-ship force to that region only to roll around the turbulent South Atlantic.

When they are there and in position, they must be used or from that moment on their own credibility is in a steady decline. There are constraints here which there are few with little ability to us to deal with. I've gone into this thing from the outset with a deep sense of urgency, from the first moment, that we barely would have enough time.

Of course, when I got to Buenos Aires, it was even more evident that we were going to need that time.

MR. WOLCOTT: Can the British to some extent satisfy that need by going off to South Georgia? There have been some reports here that the Argentines are not defending South Georgia, that whatever people they had there are gone.

SECRETARY HAIG: It can pose a problem to talk about it. You can speculate any way you want on it.

MR. WOLCOTT: But there's been a lot of public speculation of that.

SECRETARY HAIG: Yes.

MR. WOLCOTT: Some portion of their force is headed that way. As I said, I have heard that the Argentines have made a decision that it's not defensible, that they're not going to try, and it's not worth it. It's 800 miles away and --

SECRETARY HAIG: You can speculate that. It's probably very true.

MR. WOLCOTT: But that would certainly take some of the heat off. You wouldn't have the fleet just steaming around doing nothing; it would have done something. Raised the Union Jack somewhere, and that would have some political merit.

DEEP DEEP BACKGROUND

10

SECRETARY HAIG: Don't discount it.

MR. WOLCOTT: It might buy time.

SECRETARY HAIG: Yeah.

MR. WOLCOTT: Then I can conceive of a situation next week where you'd have a sort of a "sitzkrieg" there where the British would declare this quarantine zone, they'd have a fleet there to enforce it, the Argentines would test it, and they'd sit and stare at each other.

I can even conceive of a situation where somebody might test it once and get a ship sunk or a plane shot down and then they'd sit and look at each other and see --

SECRETARY HAIG: But all the ground rules could change too. There are a number of things the British could do to seriously aggravate the Argentine situation.

MR. WOLCOTT: They could go after the Argentine ports.

SECRETARY HAIG: That's right. They could mine them. A large part of their external traffic goes through that river mouth.

MR. WOLCOTT: Yeah.

SECRETARY HAIG: I don't think that would happen unless there was some effort to take action against the exclusion zone. That's just my own guess.

MR. WOLCOTT: You know, your top part of the Treasury Department is getting extremely jittery about that.

SECRETARY HAIG: In what way?

MR. WOLCOTT: Argentina has a huge foreign debt, a lot of it held by American banks, and an inability to service that debt which a blockade would create would cause very serious problems for some financial institutions here.

SECRETARY HAIG: To say nothing of in Buenos Aires.

MR. WOLCOTT: I think his concern was principally with ours, not theirs.

DEEP DEEP BACKGROUND

11

SECRETARY HAIG: Yeah. Well, international markets at large he'd be concerned about, the turbulence of that on top of the Polish situation on top of the already shakey situation in the market place anyway.

MR. WOLCOTT: Yes. He had expressed that thought as well. All right, just so mechanically I understand it: You are now finished with your meetings with the Foreign Secretary.

SECRETARY HAIG: No.

MR. WOLCOTT: Are you going to see him again?

SECRETARY HAIG: He's mulling things over from our day-long meetings, and I'll meet with him later this evening.

MR. WOLCOTT: Okay. So he is not going back as "sheduled" as they would say.

SECRETARY HAIG: No.

MR. WOLCOTT: Do you expect to have something or have you already communicated something to the Argentines? That is, on the basis of your discussions with --

SECRETARY HAIG: No oral response.

MR. WOLCOTT: Will that happen when you see Costa Mendez on Sunday or even --

SECRETARY HAIG: It will happen as soon as Pym gets back to London, discusses it with the Prime Minister, and they give us the next to the bottom line.

By now we already have a series of structured proposals which we're dealing with paragraphs and issues --

MR. WOLCOTT: Oh, I didn't realize that. Whose proposals are these? Are they British?

SECRETARY HAIG: No. They're a combination of the interplay of the views of both sides, and the communication role that we've been playing in merging it and putting it together and presenting it and there it is. It's not a Haig plan as some of the networks suggested here a week ago. There's no Haig plan.

MR. WOLCOTT: What should one call it then?

SECRETARY HAIG: Call it a structured approach from the perspectives of London and Buenos Aires in which there are some important gaps.

MR. WOLCOTT: But it is sort of a combination -- Column A, Column B.

SECRETARY HAIG: It's not even A and B now. It's A with some very sensitive gaps in which differences remain.

MR. WOLCOTT: All right. Finally, just to wrap this up. There has been some flexibility shown by the Argentines in public: About their ability to withdraw troops from the Islands.

The British have indicated, privately at least, a willingness to stop the fleet, stop that action.

SECRETARY HAIG: That's the least difficult part.

MR. WOLCOTT: That's my understanding.

SECRETARY HAIG: The more difficult part is the contemporary status to a lesser degree but most importantly the ultimate status of the Island and the procedures arrived at to determine it -- procedures that will be adopted to determine it.

MR. WOLCOTT: All right: Just to pin that down a little more. Is it still conceivable that some sort of multilateral administration could be established during a transition period?

SECRETARY HAIG: Yes. But it would have to have a very heavy British character.

MR. WOLCOTT: What do you mean?

SECRETARY HAIG: I've probably gone too far.

MR. FISCHER: Do you want to roll that point back a little bit?

MR. WOLCOTT: I guess I don't understand what you meant.

SECRETARY HAIG: You know what I meant when you asked.

MR. WOLCOTT: Well, there's another problem that seems to me it's the basis of this. I don't know any way to put it but be blunt, which is that you have two systems of government here that are not compatible.

DEEP DEEP BACKGROUND

13

The British character is democratic; the Argentine character is not, and we're not talking about turning over these islands or these people to Holland or Switzerland.

SECRETARY HAIG: Oh, you're telling me!

MR. WOLCOTT: And so you have incompatible systems of government.

SECRETARY HAIG: That is not necessarily a problem.

MR. WOLCOTT: I was a little amused when the Argentines promised the Falkland Islanders all the rights of Argentinians. I'm not quite sure what that amounted to.

SECRETARY HAIG: Well, no. Talk about autonomy. Autonomous -- (inaudible).

I don't think there's anybody here that would accept the concept of substituting dictatorship for democracy. You couldn't look for an outcome of that kind.

MR. WOLCOTT: All right. I've spent virtually all my time on DEEP BACKGROUND, so I better get off it and change subjects.

MR. FISCHER: Let me check, Mr. Secretary. I don't know how much more time you've got before Mr. Pym comes by.

MR. WOLCOTT: The other major topic this week has been the Middle East, and I assume you have had to keep one hand on that while you have concentrated on this.

SECRETARY HAIG: Yes.

MR. WOLCOTT: You remain confident that the Sinai withdrawal will go as expected?

SECRETARY HAIG: Yes.

MR. WOLCOTT: All right. In Lebanon there was another round of rumors this week and attacks, overflights. What is the prognosis for military action?

SECRETARY HAIG: I think we're all encouraged that it was both portrayed as a punitive response to a series of perceived violations, and they were real violations, and that thus far the parties seemed to have not be inclined to expand. That's extremely tenuous -- not right now, but with every passing minute it comes closer to a reality.

BACKGROUND

14

MR. WOLCOTT: What about after the withdrawal is completed? Does this become a new ballgame then?

SECRETARY HAIG: With respect to Lebanon?

MR. WOLCOTT: Yes.

SECRETARY HAIG: No. Lebanon is a separate problem which is a result of the unsettled situation that emerged from '76, the Syrian presence, the movement of the PLO from Jordan into southern Lebanon; the weakness and the disparate character of the Lebanese central government which of course favors strengthening of that central government, a stronghold for it, as the best prospect for the ultimate solution -- that's a separate set of problems -- and the perception of Israel that the cease-fire which was so arduously worked out involved obligations which would preclude the attacks, against Israeli or Israeli-occupied territory, emerging from southern Lebanon.

There have been a series of efforts by not only the central PLO but also splinter groups to move through Jordan into the West Bank and while not all of them have resulted in bloodshed, there have been a number of efforts made and they are perceived from the Israeli point of view -- and I think with justice -- as violations of the cease-fire.

In addition to that there's been Israeli casualties abroad which, while not legally constituting violations of the cease-fire as negotiated, clearly are a matter of great subjective concern to the Israeli Government.

That has nothing to do with the Sinai. Again, this Sunday it's due to be turned back, and we've had 15 months, 15 months, to work this problem. When we came in, there was an ocean of difference between the two sides, and with a deadline approaching there was no peacekeeping force in the making and both sides viewed the character of that force as something entirely different: Egypt insisting it must be without Americans, and Israel insisting it must be entirely Americans. Above all that, U.N. And we've managed to bridge that gap and not only get American participation but broad multinational participation, including, remarkably, a heavy European participation.

We've worked out all of the modalities, the complexities of the transfer which involves controversial waterways, rights, residual rights, relocations. That is a rather remarkable achievement. Everybody's saying we don't have a Middle

BACKGROUND

15

Eastern policy. I'm surprised that some are not at least commenting on the fact that Camp David has been vindicated in this process, and by Sunday it will have been vindicated. Just like the Salvadoran elections vindicated certain things that people refused to accept before those elections.

The second part of the Camp David process, of course the autonomy talks, and there, too, they were totally stalled out with both sides going in divergent directions. Except for the unprogrammed historic crises in Lebanon, we would have hoped to have had autonomy progress move hand in glove with Sinai turnover progress, but the Syrian actions in the Bekaa Valley, triggered by the Christians, the Israeli attack against the Iraqi reactor which triggered the PLO attacks against northern Israel and again caused the breakdown of peace, and the structuring of the cease-fire itself made progress on autonomy extremely difficult.

As the Sinai turnover period approached, real progress on autonomy faltered on what I call the scope of attention that the two capitals could apply. And, as a matter of fact, the closer the Sinai turnover came, the less possible it was to extract flexibility from the two capitals on autonomy. But we have put together a framework. We have been dealing with it while avoiding deadlines because of the turnover problem, and after this I would think there will be more intense efforts within the Camp David framework to achieve autonomy.

MR. WOLCOTT: The stumbling block at the moment is they can't agree on a place to meet. Obviously, one option available to you is to invite them here.

SECRETARY HAIG: Yes. But that's more a manifestation of the trauma of the Sinai turnover itself. Some of the technical problems associated -- which there's only one remaining tonight and that the Taba area -- all of the rest have been ironed out -- the islands, the patrol areas. It's been an incredibly complex task and people should be wondering at how two governments in a post-Sadat area have managed to do it, and I think it's a credit both to Egypt and to Israel. There ought to be a little bit of a minor celebration on Sunday if it all happens the way it was supposed to have happened.

People say we don't have a policy. Of course, we have a policy. We've had a policy from the beginning. And there's another complication in the Middle East which must be viewed with increasing interest, if not concern, and that is the growing alignment of Syria with Iran, and the possible increased Soviet influence with both.

BACKGROUND

16

You recall I talked last spring about a strategic consensus. Again -- and I repeat -- not as a made-in-America gimmick to divert attentions from the Arab-Israeli conflict or not as a product of American myopic preoccupation with Soviet imperialism, but rather as an expression of strategic reality which had to be considered in the mix of a very complex Middle East strategic environment.

I talked at that time about Soviet involvement, I talked about Soviet proxy involvement, I talked about radical Arab movement. It has turned out the growing alignment of Syria with Iran has resulted in a -- I don't want to call it a strategic consensus because it's become a dirty word -- but it's the same damn thing: A sense of growing concern among moderate Arab states that this is a threat with which they have to deal, especially the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia.

That's what I was talking about last spring that everybody seemed to have terrible problems with. It is now a fact of life, and it's growing to have an increasing impact on both Arab-Israeli issues and regional issues at large. Some of the consequences of that will be helpful and some will be deleterious.

MR. WOLCOTT: Doesn't, for example, an Israeli group into Lebanon only help to diminish Syria's growing isolation in the Arab world? They then become once again the confrontation state --

SECRETARY HAIG: Yes. One of the reasons why we've been so active in doing all we can to prevent that. We don't think it's a constructive outcome. We don't see any interest in the PLO either because they'll be the first victim of it. I think they know that, and that explains their unusual moderation in this period.

MR. WOLCOTT: All right. Specifically on Camp David, what is our strategy for it, assuming there will be a short breather after the Sinai for everyone to celebrate? Is it now time for the United States to go back to give that process a push with some ideas of our own and perhaps with your presence again?

SECRETARY HAIG: We have appointed a negotiator and he's been steeping himself in the details of this. He's had his own travel over there. I've made two trips on the subject of autonomy. We know where the issues are, and it now remains to be seen whether the \$64 question can be answered with statesmanship in Cairo and in Tel Aviv, and that is this: Camp David itself was a product of compromise. Two responsible

BACKGROUND

17

leaders decided to defer what were diametrically opposed views on a number of key issues: Jerusalem and certain other aspects of the occupied territories, and in that Camp David accord a call for a 5-year transition period under the conditions of the autonomy with a central governing authority, elected by the inhabitants -- the West Bank and Gaza -- which would lend itself to an evolutionary process of a direction of an ultimate solution.

The question now that's important is having accepted that kind of approach in '78 in Camp David, are they going to insist now in the context of negotiating the specific transitional arrangements under autonomy in insisting that those issues that they would defer then must be resolved. If they are, the prospects for autonomy are very grim. But if they can carry over what I call the spirit of Camp David into autonomy, then the problems are solvable and it is our obligation as a full partner in this process to do our utmost to approach it from that point of view, and that's the way we've been approaching it.

MR. WOLCOTT: What is our next step?

SECRETARY HAIG: Our next step is to recognize that the span of attention can now be narrowed somewhat, and there can be a greater degree of effort and work done on autonomy.

MR. FISCHER: John, we'd better cut this off in a minute.

MR. WOLCOTT: Okay. Let me just go into a couple of quick ones. Our relationship with China. There have been some rough spots lately. Are you confident that that is still stable, sound, or does it need work?

SECRETARY HAIG: It's been getting work. It's had work ever since my trip to Chinad. It's a very sensitive, difficult question for reasons that are self-evident. It's receiving a great deal of attention and work and will receive more in the days ahead.

MR. WOLCOTT: Are you going to go back there?

SECRETARY HAIG: No, not in the near term.

MR. WOLCOTT: Okay. Soviet Union. The question of Brezhnev. He made his first appearance yesterday.

SECRETARY HAIG: I don't want to mislead you by saying that I'm not going back there. That doesn't mean there isn't going

BACKGROUND

18

to be some action on the subject. Don't write that Washington intends to leave it unattended. We are attending it.

MR. WOLCOTT: And that may at some point require your --

SECRETARY HAIG: Mine or somebody else's.

MR. WOLCOTT: The question of Brezhnev. He reappeared yesterday. Does that mean he is in full control and the succession is moot, or is it your impression --

SECRETARY HAIG: No. Transition is already under way, clearly. It started some months ago. It started even before the death of Suslov, but Suslov's death removed one of the spinal cords of status quo and the selection of Chernenko as heir-apparent is clear, at least in the first manifestations.

The demise of the other fellow --

MR. WOLCOTT: Kirilenko?

SECRETARY HAIG: Yes. As you know, he was again not there this week.

MR. WOLCOTT: Yeah. I don't know if he's demised or --

SECRETARY HAIG: When I say "demised," I don't mean it in a physical sense.

The transition is under way but it's too early to say because on set of actions generate counteractions. It's a very dynamic and intrigue-filled, interest laden process, and they are notoriously bad at providing graceful transitions.

MR. WOLCOTT: Well, it's interesting that Andropov appeared to speak yesterday.

SECRETARY HAIG: He was a new factor. Well, he was an old factor who just seemed to have been bypassed and now is again in the picture.

MR. WOLCOTT: Let me end up by opening up the old periscope question in this fashion: Whether you feel you have here in Washington the breadth of political support and loyalty that any Secretary of State needs to conduct foreign policy?

SECRETARY HAIG: What do you mean by that? What is the breadth and depth of support?

BACKGROUND

19

MR. WOLCOTT: Just what I said.

SECRETARY HAIG: I have a very loyal and very effective and efficient State Department. I get along very well with my fellow Cabinet officers, including Cap Weinberger, despite all the speculation, most of which is clearly sent from sources other than Cap and myself. So what are you asking about? What constitutes breadth and depth?

MR. WOLCOTT: You are also --

SECRETARY HAIG: Half our guys that don't work, that just talk to the press?

MR. WOLCOTT: Oh, I don't know anyone like that around town here. Who are they?

SECRETARY HAIG: At least one.

MR. FISCHER: That's off the record, John.

MR. WOLCOTT: That's all right. No. The question is about your relationship with the White House.

SECRETARY HAIG: I get along just very, very well with the President, and I have no comment on any of the garbage.

You know, the funny thing is you guys know where to get what you get --

MR. WOLCOTT: Uh huh.

SECRETARY HAIG: And you don't know after 16 months where you've gotten it, consistently (inaudible), even though it's camouflaged from time to time by agents -- and I can't tell you, and you haven't gotten it from me.

MR. WOLCOTT: No.

SECRETARY HAIG: In 16 months have I ever engaged in that?

MR. WOLCOTT: No. Not as an active participant.

SECRETARY HAIG: Not even as an inactive one. I can tell you that.

MR. WOLCOTT: But it's still there after 16 months.

BACKGROUND

20

SECRETARY HAIG: You guys ought to answer your own question.

MR. WOLCOTT: We try to. 16 months -- it's still going on, though.

MR. FISCHER: Somebody should write about motive sometime. Not just what is said, but the motive behind it.

MR. WOLCOTT: It's the hardest question to answer.

MR. FISCHER: It's pretty simple to me.

SECRETARY HAIG: Again, way OFF THE RECORD: Do you think I give a shit about the kind of airplane I ride in? What I give a shit about is whether I have communications, a teletype, a duplicating machine, and working space for a group of guys who are working 20 goddam hours a day seven days a week. And whether I go in a plane that is fragmented with an aisle, no working space, no adequate communications -- some, but no adequate -- hell, I didn't make 13 trips to Southeast Asia as a goddam Brigadier General, and any time it was an important trip, I had that communications in the plane and the working space to do it. I never heard of such a thing.

MR. WOLCOTT: I got to tell you, that one didn't fly very far with me.

SECRETARY HAIG: It shouldn't have flown with anybody, but it got written.

MR. WOLCOTT: I know it got written. I don't know where it came from, much less the motive. It wasn't my story. I have enough trouble answering for my own.

MR. FISCHER: We better get going.

(The interview concluded at 6:51 p.m.)