

INTERVIEW GIVEN BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO PETER SNOW
OF NEWSNIGHT ON ~~THURSDAY, 24 APRIL~~
IRAN *FRIDAY 25 APRIL*

Peter Snow: Lord Carrington were you consulted about this operation?

Lord C: No. But I dont think that should be a criticism. I think that when an operation of this kind is planned and carried out it would be almost, well, it would be totally impossible to consult all your Allies, or any of your Allies really.

Peter Snow: Were you informed about it?...

Lord C: Well, as I say, I dont believe that you can consult or inform people on issues of this kind, i think its very very difficult to do, and in my judgement we all know how difficult it is to keep these things secret. I think the wider you spread the net in consultation and information, the more difficult it is.

Peter Snow: But you surely see yourself as one of America's closest Allies and here is President Carter using force for the first time. Do you feel he should at least have told you before - in fact I think you heard it on the BBC News this morning?

Lord C: Well I must remind you, if you need to be reminded, that we are talking at 9.15 in the morning, and as you say I heard it for the first time on the BBC news. But as I say, I do not think that in a situation of this kind you could consult Allies. I dont believe its possible. I am quite sure the Israelis didnt consult anybody before they did Entebbe. I think that the wider you spread the knowledge of this sort of operation the less likely it is to be kept secret, and whatever the outcome of this operation, sas far as I know it was kept secret, although of course there were rumours that, as we know by reading the papers, yesterday that possible action was going to be taken.

Peter Snow: Do you think President Carter was right to do this?

Lord C: I think that if it had succeeded everybody would have said, how splendid, its solved the problem. What a daring thing it is

to have done. When missions fail, its always more difficult. I think it must have been an agonising decision for President Carter to take, and I think its very difficult to criticise President Carter for taking action of this kind because for six months the Americans have been patient and used diplomacy to try to release the hostages. Everything they have tried to do has failed, and the pressures on President Carter are obviously very great. But there is no doubt about it that a failure is not a success.

Peter Snow: Now the Americans say that this was not force against the Iranian people. Do you accept that? Wasnt this the first use of force against Iran?

Lord C: Well it obviously wasnt force against the Iranian people in the sense that nobody was attacking the Iranian people. What has happened.....

Peter Snow: (interrupting) but wouldnt people have been killed inevitably in the streets of Tehran?

Lord C: Well, how does one know? I suppose there was a very considerable danger of that. I should think it very unlikely that some people wouldnt have been. But one has got to recognise that the Iranian government has been holding the hostages illegally for six months against every kind of international convention, against an overwhelming vote in the United Nations against this, condemnation by the whole of the civilised world, even condemnation originally by the Soviet Union, and nobody has been able to get the hostages out, and I suppose it could be argued if all fails an operation of this kind is justifiable.

Peter Snow: The force has now been used, whatever kind of force it has been. What do you think this means. Are we now on a sort of slipper slope, as some White House adviser is reported to have said, towards a war of some kind?

Lord C: Well, you and I have only just heard about this, and I think its a bit too soon to analysis the consequences of this. But I would judge that it will change the situation quite considerably, and we dont know yet what the reaction is in Tehran, or indeed the reaction of the American people themselves. Its too early to say whether it will change everything completely, but ~~xxxxxx~~ its certain that after today it wont be

the same.

Peter Snow: You say it might change the situation. Are you implying that it might push the Iranians even further into the orbit of the Soviet Union? They have got Afghanistan, may they not get Iran as well?

Lord C: I didnt actually. I think thats a separate point. What I really meant was that I think that it is possible that it will be more difficult now since this has failed to get the hostages released. Thats really what I meant. In terms of putting the Iranians into the Russian camp I doubt whether this could necessarily have that significance. I think there was always the danger of the Iranian people feeling that they were in a position where they were being pressed by the Americans, and that they would have to take other action. We heard on the news this morning, for example, that the Iranian Foreign Minister had said that he would ask the Russians to come and help if the United States mined the ports, so I think one was always in that position. But you know the difficulty really about the whole of this problem is that it is exceedingly easy to sit down and criticise the Americans and say they should have done that, or they shouldnt have done that. So far as I know, nobody has given them any constructive advice about how these hostages should be released and what they ought to be doing. Everybody has been telling them what they ought not to be doing. I have a very great deal of sympathy with our American friends in this.

Peter Snow: isnt that the duty of Allies, to do things like that sometimes?

Lord C: Yes.

Peter Snow: Didnt the Americans try, but fail, to advise us, your predecessors, at Suez not to do what we did. Isnt it really your duty now, if you think its wrong, to persuade the Americans that they are on the wrong course?

Lord C: I think it certainly is our duty to tell them what we think. I absolutely agree with you. I think equally when you tell people not to do thing, you do have an obligation to tell them what they ought to do. I think purely negative friends are not very helpful.

Peter Snow: But what ought they to do? Ought they to have used force?

Lord C: This is the point I am trying to make. I have doubts about the sanctions policy and its efficacy, I have doubts about use of force, I have doubts about sitting around doing nothing, I have doubts about going on with the policy of patience, I have doubts about them all. But I don't think that I can genuinely say to my American colleagues that I am certain what we ought to be doing, and therefore I am a little bit anxious about criticising. I think what we ought to do, if I may say so, is to explain our doubts and reservations and let it be known what we think.

Peter Snow: Lord Carrington, many people watching you now hearing you talk about doubts, may wonder whether we are really in control of events. Are we, to repeat the question I asked earlier, are we now in a very dangerous situation which could lead to war because we just don't know where we are going?

Lord C: Well I would doubt that it would lead to war, but I think that the situation obviously is a grave situation, I don't think anybody has ever pretended that it was not, and it's a grave situation caused by the action of the Iranian Government. But when you say whether anybody is in control of events, how often are we in control of events in our domestic or foreign policy? There are so many conflicting things which we have to take account of. What will be the reactions of the Iranians, what will be the actions of the Soviet Union? What will be the reactions of the Third World? I think that the Americans are trying to see their way through this. WNYXWNYX

Peter Snow: But what is the clear message which you would like to give ~~Residants~~ first of all to people watching you tonight, and secondly to the Russians? Let's take the people first. Should they be worried. Are we in a crisis. As Chancellor Schmidt of Germany said, it looks like 1914. Is this a pre-war situation, how serious is it?

Lord C: I think one ought to be very careful not to confuse the situation in Iran with the situation in Afghanistan. Although they both rub off against each other, they are really not the same thing. The really serious thing that has happened is the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. I mean this is on a scale infinitely more important

than Iran. The difficulty about the Iranian situation is that what the Americans do in Iran, and what we all do in Iran, is obviously bound to rub off on the situation in Afghanistan, and how the rest of the world view the rest of the situation in Afghanistan. And to that extent, I think we are in a very serious situation. But I don't think that anybody ought to underestimate the feelings of the United States about those hostages, and if we put ourselves in that position I think we would feel very much the same as they do. It's on the front page of their newspapers all the time. They are outraged and frustrated that the most powerful country in the world can be held to ransom by a few people in Iran, and that in itself is a very dangerous situation.

Peter Snow: And what is the message you would like to send to Moscow?

Lord C: That.

Peter Snow: And if they try to take advantage of the situation?

Lord C: Well then I think we are in very grave trouble.

Peter Snow: What, if any, is the British role in any kind of counter-action to Soviet moves in this area. There was talk about Britain considering some kind of enhanced role in the Indian Ocean. Might you take part with the Americans in any kind of ~~six~~^{counter} use of force.

Lord C: I don't see that happening, No. What we said after the invasion of Afghanistan - and we are talking about Afghanistan - not about Iran - was that we ought to look at our military capacity for intervention outside Europe, because although the NATO area is geographically confined, what happens to the rest of the world must be of great consequence to the countries of NATO, even though it is outside the area. And those of us who do have an intervention capability of one kind or another ought to look very carefully at it. The French have been looking carefully at theirs - after all they intervened in Zaire, they intervened in Tunisia, and I think we ought to do the same.

Peter Snow: But if the Russians moved forward, either into Pakistan or into Iran, or whatever happened, is it then read that your forces would be in a kind of opposition force to that Soviet move?

Lord C: I think that a Soviet move into Pakistan or into the Gulf would plunge the whole of the Western world and the whole of the West into a situation which would be almost irretrievable. And obviously we would be involved in that.

Peter Snow: And what happened today, it was slightly in that direction.

Lord C: I very much hope not, but you and I, as I said at the beginning are talking rather early in the morning.

Peter Snow: What do you think about the timing of President Carter's move. Isn't it strange that only three days after you agreed to a staged sanctions policy, hoping in a sense to push the day when the force would have to be used further away, President Carter suddenly uses force.

Lord C: I don't think that President Carter - I judge that President Carter doesn't see the action that he took in trying to rescue the hostages as force in the context of what he was saying earlier on. I think that the force he was talking about then was mining the ports, blockade, that kind of thing. And I don't think that he would think that what he did last night was force in those terms.

Peter Snow: Well this careful distinction then between this attempted grab of the hostages and force against Iran like a blockade, or some other use of force in general, what do you think of that? Do you think it would be wholly a mistake to use force in general against Iran, or not?

Lord C: It would be a very serious decision to use force in these circumstances, and I think that it would very likely be wholly counter-productive.

Peter Snow: So you would oppose President Carter if he were to blockade the ports?

Lord C: Look we have just jumped an enormous fence on sanctions, and this has been a very serious decision for the West to take and will affect our economy and all of us in the West. Let's see how that goes, and not say what we would do in a hypothetical case, which I hope will never arise.

Peter Snow: But the Americans were making it pretty clear to us that they thought it would be a mistake to use force sometime before-

Lord C: Well I thought~~xxx~~^I had made it pretty clear just now that I didnt think force was the answer.

Peter Snow: So you would disapprove

Lord C: I go so far as I said....

Peter Snow: But in private terms when you are talking to the Americans you are telling them it would be unwise?

Lord C: what I say to them in private is private.

Peter Snow: Lord Carrington, can we talk about the Summit at the weekend in which presumably you will be discussing these things. Are you confident that the other European Allies will take President Carter's move as generously as you have taken it today?

Lord C: I would have thought they would have the same sort of reaction that I have had. Certainly talking to my foreign minister colleagues in Luxembourg earlier this week there was a great sympathy and determination to help the Americans. I think the problem is that as I said earlier, that when something is successful everybody applauds it, when it fails people are more critical.

Peter Snow: What about the budget. Do you think there is a chance of a solution to Britain's budget problem at the EEC?

Lord C: Yes, I think theres a chance. I dont know whether I would say it was a very good chance, but there are some very difficult decisions and bargaining ahead. Its clear from what President Giscard d'Estaing said that the French will expect a settlement of the prices and settlement of sheepmeat as part of any other settlement and its equally clear that there are some very difficult decisions ahead about the Budget itself. The question of how long we get our agreement to last and whether or not we can get adjustments if things go worse. And indeed about the Summit itself.

Peter Snow: Are you ruling out a deal? Your not quite saying what Mrs Thatcher said yesterday?

Lord C: I think I am!

Peter Snow: I'm sorry. You are ruling out any kind of deal on prices and the budget. You wont exchange one for the other?

Lord C: I think that there has got to be a settlement in parallel, but I dont think you can trade one off against the other. The real issue is the amount of money involved, and I think there is some way to go yet.

Peter Snow: And if there is no agreement at this particularly crucial time for the Western Alliance, do you think that would be a disaster this weekend?

Lord C: Well, I dont think it would be very helpful when we are facing a crisis in Afghanistan and Iran for the Nine count of Western Europe to be in dispute about a matter of this kind, but it is difficult. I dont one wants to underestimate the difficulties it does bring for other people. But I have absolutely no doubt that we cant go along as we are, the situation for us is clearly quite unacceptable. What I think is encouraging about what has happen is that we started in Strasbourg this time last year with not even recognition that there was a problem for the British. We then got to Dublin and got a recognition that there was a problem, and we got what we believed - and I know was an inadequate response - we have now got further than an inadequate response. What we have really got to do is to get an adequate response. I dont think thats out of the question

Peter Snow: You have had a year now as Foreign Secretary. Are you more worried about the world than you were when you started.

Lord C: I think I am rather more knowledgeable about it.