

Haig men gloat: Carter's through

Nominally in the camps of Republican presidential nominee candidates George Bush and Ronald Reagan, two of Alexander Haig's men, Scott Thompson and retired General Graham, are now gloating at the prospects ahead for President Carter ... and their future under a Haig presidency.

Who's to gain from White House crisis

Professor Scott Thompson, from the Political Science Department of the Fletcher School of Diplomacy at Tufts University, evaluated the Republican presidential contenders who will most likely gain in prestige from the antics of the Carter administration in a recent interview. A British Rhodes scholar and a member of London's International Institute of Strategic Studies, Thompson knows of what he speaks. New York Times columnist William Safire recently mentioned him as a likely member of a "hard-line" (read: Haig) Administration's cabinet as National Security advisor.

Q: *Everybody seems to be looking to some kind of alternative to the present administration. Do you think we've approached a crisis that is deeper than Watergate?...*

A: We have because we've got no basis for getting rid of Carter and we are stuck with him for another year and a half. Don't you notice a sort of similarity with Watergate in a funny sort of way ... the twirling, the shuffling of the deck and all the tricks to take attention away from the real problems? ... Carter can't go out admitting failure ... I supported him early in 1975. ...

Q: *I understand you're not supporting him now...*

A: No, I'm not supporting him anymore. I think this enormously enhances Connally's image because Connally can campaign on the "Look, I'm a son of a bitch" platform—You wanted a nice guy and look what you got.

Q: *Who will benefit from this fiasco?*

A: Any guy that comes across as decisive. I think from that point of view it hurts Reagan, because I don't think Reagan has an image one way or the other of being decisive. He's beloved by many second-echelon Republicans. I think that Connally has the image of being a tough person, getting tough on the Europeans, getting tough on the White House, the Smithsonian, I think that's the kind of image he sustained.

Q: *There's one name that is not even a candidate that is floating around. He made a speech in New York a couple of months ago, Al Haig...*

A: That's one I am fairly close to. I don't think he'd benefit so much from the present crisis. The country isn't going to turn to a military leader unless it's a directly military problem. ... Only if the Soviets decide to play their cards. ...

Q: *You're actually talking about a crisis more radical in many ways than the events that took place during Watergate.*

A: Vastly more significant, because this affects the very ability of the United States to have a system that can get over a Watergate. People seem to think our institutions will go on forever. ...

Q: *Do you think that Carter can be made to step aside?*

A: You asked a very interesting question and people are only just beginning to talk about it, once it became obvious that he bombed again with his energy speech. ... I think now it's going to become a big national question. Ask yourself this: Since 1960, we assassinated the first president, we hounded the next one, we threatened to impeach the next one, we humiliated the next one and now we're going to drive him out. ... We're sort of becoming a banana republic. That's the problem which Carter has exacerbated. What we needed was stability and competence after a long period of insecurity that goes all the way back to the assassination. ...

Q: *People say the president is insane. I never even heard that with Nixon.*

A: Yes. A friend of mine who works in the White House said that Carter no longer listens—not even on strategic issues. ... I think we're now in the advanced Woodrow Wilson stage. ...

Q: *Do you think he's on the verge of psychological collapse?*

A: He could very well be. ... And then we have the perfect Mrs. Wilson also to play the same role. You've already got some of the symptoms without the collapse, the closing of the mind, the narrowing of the channels, the closing of the door. ... How do you prove incompetence? The country is going to hell and everything, but how are you going to split the Democrats on this? They're still showing in their polls that they support him. ...

Q: *How about a particular incident along the lines you were talking about before?*

A: That might happen, and Haig would be the chief beneficiary if it did, because he would be catapulted forward, even if it were a Wilkie-type situation with people just demanding Haig, and poor Al would be wringing his hands and it would be a difficult decision for him to decide to run the country (giggles) again. (laughing uproariously)

It only lacks a specific action to put together a coalition. Do you remember in the Nixon thing that Clark Clifford made a proposal (for a government of national unity—ed.). There's a mechanism in the constitution to solve the problem. No one had any difficult time in figuring out whom he had in mind for solving the problem, but this would be the time when it would be more appropriate. Let's say in the wake of a defeat of the SALT treaty, after the energy thing has been compounded further and the Soviets have made some threatening noises, and then it would become clear we would have to face up to some responsibilities to the nation and start at square one and Carter isn't up to it....

'Haig's the man to run the country'

General Daniel Graham (retired) sees the disintegration of the Carter administration and the split-up occurring in the Democratic Party from the standpoint of the SALT debate. He is a leading antagonist and predicts that the chaos in Washington will not help the treaty's chances for ratification. What follows is an interview with General Graham, who is the former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency and now with the American Security Council in Washington, D.C.

Q: Could you comment on the ramifications of the current disintegration of the Carter Administration?

Graham: Well I see it mostly in terms of its effects on SALT. You're aware that Paul [Nitze] and I are leading the fight to defeat SALT? My estimation is that what's going on within the administration now will not help Carter's case for SALT at all. With everybody wondering about his competency, how will he be able to sell a treaty that people already have strong reservations about? The situation is bound to work in favor of our position. I'd say that we now have a 50/50 chance—better than that, actually—of forcing changes in the treaty. I'm absolutely certain that the treaty won't go through the Senate unscathed. The real question is how substantively it will be amended.

Q: What happens if it is amended?

Graham: Any amendment would put it back into negotiations. The Soviets will insist upon it. Rejection of SALT II by the Senate would work to our advantage and increase the possibility of getting a better treaty for us. The Soviets would understand, if the Senate does

this, that we aren't about to be pushed around, and that if they want another arms control agreement, they're going to have to be prepared to make some real concessions.

Q: If SALT is defeated, what effect would that have on Carter?

Graham: It's clear that it has become critical for this Administration to get this treaty through in its present form. Any further failure on the part of the Administration, any further debacle in foreign affairs, would be the final nail in Carter's coffin. One of the reasons for the rather risky things the administration is doing to get the treaty passed ... is their desperation to get the treaty through. One thing you newsmen can expect is that the administration will start releasing high-grade intelligence material. ... I think the extent of these efforts indicates that the administration knows it won't weather a SALT defeat....

Q: I understand that Al Haig is taking an active part in the treaty debates.

Graham: Oh yes. Al is helping us do a film against SALT. ...

Q: His name is being mooted as a possible presidential contender. How does this strike you?

Graham: Of all the men running, Haig is, by far, the most capable of running the country. But that doesn't mean he'll be able to get elected. If Connally becomes the GOP nominee, on the other hand, you'll have him and Kennedy running the "Battle of the Scandals." That's why I'm sticking with Reagan for the time being.

Q: About Haig's chances—Prof. Scott Thompson at Tufts thinks that under crisis conditions, Haig's military background could become his key to the Oval Office. What do you think?

Graham: Well, Scott—I know him, by the way—could have a point. I'll always remember what Herman Kahn once said: If the U.S. loses Vietnam, then the nation will be electing a military man within the next two elections. Kahn has an uncanny ability to foresee the future. What Scott's saying could well come true. If this situation in Nicaragua really hits the American people—after all, Castro and the Soviets now have their eyes on three other South American countries, after their takeover in Nicaragua—then it could really shock people out of their stupor. If the gas shortage develops again, and what with our feckless president, this could all propel a guy like Haig very fast into the White House; I just don't think that will all happen between now and November. There's no question that the kind of crises exist which demand someone like Haig to take over, but they aren't dramatically evident enough yet to the general public. But, I wouldn't rule out Scott's scenario.