

"the hostages have been released." Well, if you've got the US saying it and you have Syria saying it, come on, it has to be true, right? Wrong, as we all know. The negotiations almost broke down, it was a very fragile night, I can tell you Beirut almost exploded -- did anyone see the hostages? Who witnessed what? Do we rely upon officialdom, do we rely upon the leaders who should know?

I don't know about you, but again and again, especially these days, it is not only that if I rely upon their information and their knowledge in terms of giving me what I am going to report, it is not only that I am not being a reporter vis-à-vis witness, but I think more and more, I would just be wrong.

We can go back to China. And we are not now talking about the demonstrations but how much did people really think that Tiananmen Square would happen with the ferocity that it did? What about the whole change in what is taking place with Eastern Europe. All through the G-7 talks did we get the feeling that a coup was imminent? That things could really go wrong? I feel that in terms of reliance on the supposedly sophisticated intelligence communities -- they may have satellites galore up there, but so often something is missing that might inform them that is on the ground. And I don't know what that is. And I am not saying reporters know any more than they do. But in terms of my role as a reporter, do I go, when I can't witness, to the officials, to the experts, to the armies, to the governments around me, to tell me what is going on? If I did, I think I would be wrong a lot of the time and I think I wouldn't be doing my job.

I remember I ran into Phillip Habib, years after he had left his official role in the US government. And there was a key time in Lebanon where the Israelis were withdrawing and the Druze and the Christians were going at it. And there was a crucial time when the US fired their big guns. And it turned out to be against the Druze, and they became a player on that one very significant day. And shortly thereafter, as we all know disaster struck when hundreds of marines were killed when a big bomb went off. Habib admitted to me that it had been a mistake. They hadn't realized what going after the Druze meant. They didn't have enough contacts with the Druze. And I will say they probably didn't have enough contacts with the Shi'ites. And I will say that with Israel, when they were in South Lebanon after they had withdrawn from Beirut, they didn't know