The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR HENRY ALLEN HOLMES

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is March 9, 1999. This is an interview with Henry Allen Holmes. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Allen, I want to start with the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born and then something about your parents?

HOLMES: I was born the day that Hitler became chancellor of Germany, January 31, 1933, in Bucharest, Rumania, at the American legation, where my dad, Julius Cecil Holmes, was the chargï¿½ at the time. He was the number two guy in a two-guy legation, and the night that I was born he was getting phone calls from Foreign Service colleagues all over Western Europe wondering what the king of Rumania's move was going to be now that Hitler had become chancellor of Germany.

Q: So you and Hitler sort of rose to power at the same time.

HOLMES: Be careful in this interview. We have the same initials - A. H.

Q: Could you tell me a bit about the background of your father and the background of your mother, please?

HOLMES: My mother and father were both born and raised in Kansas. They went to Kansas University in Lawrence, Kansas, where my dad spent most of his life growing up. After the Rogers Act was passed-

Q: 1924.

HOLMES: -in 1925, establishing a competitive way of entering the Foreign Service, my father was one of the first - in fact, I believe he was in the first group that took the exam - passed, and entered the first class of the Foreign Service in 1925 and then had assignments in Marseilles - he learned to speak very good French - where one day in the consulate there was a Sacco-Vanzetti riot in front of the consulate. Somebody threw a grenade, it went under the desk, the grenade was a dud, fortunately. Subsequently he had assignments in Tirana, Albania, and Smyrna, which is today Izmir in Turkey-

Q: It would have been under Turkey, too.

HOLMES: It was in Turkey, but-

Q: Not too long after the exodus of Greeks.

HOLMES: But it was still called Smyrna at the time. Then his next assignment was in Bucharest, Rumania, and while there he married my mother, in Kansas, and they both returned to post together.

Q: Your mother's background?

HOLMES: My mother was also a Kansan, and actually it was kind of interesting. She was from Wichita, and she had met my father at the Kansas University, but where I guess he sought her out more was when her father, who after World War I was governor of Kansas for a couple of terms. In about 1921 or 1922, I can't recall the date exactly, there was a very severe winter, and the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers' federation, struck - the miners struck - and there were some fatalities. There was not enough coal to heat various establishments, including old people's homes and hospitals, and there were some fatalities. So my grandfather, after talking with the labor union, called out the national guard to mine enough coal to fuel those establishments, and my dad was in the Kansas national guard and was one of the people who was called out to participate in this operation - which led to an early attempt at labor legislation well ahead of Taft-Hartley, called the Kansas Industrial Court Act, and my grandfather supported it all the way. It was sustained in the Kansas Supreme Court, went to the Supreme Court of the United States and was declared unconstitutional by a vote of five to four, with Taft casting the deciding vote against it.

Q: This is William Howard Taft.

HOLMES: William Howard Taft. My grandfather and he battled within the Republican Party. My grandfather was a progressive and a Bullmooser and had a very strong-

Q: Any connection with William Allen White and all that?

HOLMES: William Allen White was my grandfather's best friend, and they were editors and publishers together in Kansas. William Allen White had the Emporia Gazette, which was very well known, and my grandfather, after working his way up from being a war correspondent in the Spanish-American War and representing small Kansas newspapers, eventually arrived in Wichita and bought and developed the Wichita Beacon. He and White were very close friends, a long-time friendship.

Q: Well, also, too, White was a Republican and a Bullmooser and the whole nine yards.

HOLMES: Well, he and my grandfather went off to World War I together representing the Kansas Red Cross and the Kansas... I think it was the Salvation Army, but representing two organizations. They went off together. William Allen White wrote a book about it called The Martial Adventures of Henry and Me, and they had an interesting time in France visiting the Kansas national guard, and then my grandfather came back. I guess my grandfather stayed on briefly.

Q: What was your grandfather's name.

HOLMES: Henry Justin Allen. He came back, and William Allen White placed his name in nomination for governor of Kansas, and he won by acclamation. He never made a campaign speech. It is kind of unusual.

Q: Well, can you tell about growing up as a Foreign Service kid?

HOLMES: Yes. We didn't stay in Rumania. As I said, I was born in 1933. We didn't stay there very long after my birth - about five months. We returned to the United States, returned to Washington, where my father then became the assistant chief of protocol in a two-man political office that also had responsibility for international conferences and international aviation, and had that job for a number of years, until late in the '30s, probably 1938 or late '37, when he left the Foreign Service, took a job as vice president of the New York World's Fair, which was being organized at that time.

Q: Grover Whelan.

HOLMES: Grover Whelan was the sort of head guy, and my dad was responsible for negotiating the various bilateral agreements with those nations that would have pavilions at the New York World's Fair.

Q: Did that bring you up to New York?

HOLMES: That brought us to New York. We lived in New York for a couple of years, and then he stayed with the Fair, and then when the Fair was over, my father accepted a job as a vice president of General Mills and went off for a stint as their representative in Brazil. I used to kid him about selling Wheaties to the Brazilians. While there, World War II started. The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and my father came back. He had kept up his reserve commission in the Army since World War I, was a major, and within a week he was on duty at the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon.

Q: Where did you go to elementary school?

HOLMES: I went to school in a number of places. I went to a school for a couple of years while my parents were at the World's Fair, a school called the Buckley School in New York City. Then I went out to Wichita, Kansas. We were there for a year, and I went to elementary school there in Wichita. Then when my parents went to Brazil, I went to a little military school in Tennessee, a place called Bloomington Springs, Tennessee, and then when they came back when the war started and my father went back in the Army, we came back to Washington, and I went to St. Alban's School there from the fifth through the eighth grade.

Q: Well, particularly, what about St. Alban's School there. You went there when it would be about, what, 1942 or so?

HOLMES: '42, that's correct. Yes, from the fall of '42 to the spring of '46.

Q: Well, St. Alban's, of course, is a Washington institution. Could you talk about what you got out of it, the school there, and your impressions?

HOLMES: Well, I had a great time at the school. It was academically rigorous, which was good for me. I remember starting Latin pretty early. In those days it was unusual. I studied Latin there in the seventh grade, and the usual courses of study that one followed. I played football and enjoyed that immensely, baseball, played soccer, liked sports, and I liked to sing. I sang in the choir, glee club at St. Alban's.

Q: What about reading? Were there any books that grabbed you at the time?

HOLMES: Well, I remember reading a lot of adventure books. I liked adventure stories, but I liked books about musicians, too, because at the time, I was very interested in music. In fact, I was taking piano lessons, even went to a piano camp in Vermont one summer, and that was a lot of fun.

Q: How about World War II? You were fairly young, but for a lot of people - I'm about five years older than you are, so I was more engaged, but talk about adventure stories, this was the great adventure story, reading every day of where things are doing. Were you old enough to have this - your father, or course was involved - have an impression?

HOLMES: Yes, I have very strong memories of World War II, primarily because my father was overseas, and my mother and I and my sister and my very young brother all lived together in Washington, on 21st Street, and she missed him a lot, and so did we. We were able to track him when he was in North Africa, although she didn't share information with us, but my mother and father had honeymooned in North Africa, and of course, officers censored their own letters, which he did, dutifully, but he would refer to events on their honeymoon, so my mother pretty much tracked him during that stage, because he was in Europe the entire period during World War II with Eisenhower. He participated in a rather famous military event in preparing for Operation Torch, which was the Anglo-American invasion of North Africa. Algeria was still under Vichy France, and the object of this special mission, which was led by Mark Clark, Lyman Lemnitzer - my father was on it - and Gerald Wright.

Q: Captain Gerald Wright, whom I've interviewed, by the way.

HOLMES: Captain Jerry Wright was the skipper of the submarine that took them off of Algeria. How it was conceived was, Robert Murphy was the American consul in Algiers, and he had a number of vice consuls who were also intelligence gatherers. One of them was Ridgway Knight, who was in the Foreign Service and later became ambassador one or two times, a very good friend of my dad's. The object of this mission was basically to persuade the French Army in North Africa not to resist the Anglo-American landings in North Africa. Murphy and his vice consuls had been scouting out officers in the French Army who were sympathetic to the allied cause, and they had found some. They arranged a meeting in a deserted farmhouse at a place called Cherchel, which was outside of Algiers, and Eisenhower sent Clark and the team - there were five of them - to go in and talk with these officers. So they went in the submarine, they surfaced the first night, they flashed a signal, they received no response, so they went back down and sat on the bottom till the next day. They came up the second night, and this time they did get a reply, and they went ashore, each one in a two-man kayak with a British commando. My father was the first one ashore and the last one off because he spoke pretty close to bilingual French, and they figured he could fade into the landscape, although they were very careful to wear their uniforms so they wouldn't be treated as spies if caught. They met with these French officers; they came to an understanding, which was good. They were raided by the Vichy police towards the end of their discussions. They repaired to the wine cellar to hide. The police did not search the wine cellar. When they left, the American party came up and hastily beat it for the beach. The Vichy police came back, realizing they hadn't searched the wine cellar, and there was kind of a scramble to get off. The surf had come up. They lost equipment.

Q: Mark Clark lost his trousers.

HOLMES: Anyway, they were able to walk the kayaks out beyond the surf line and get back to the submarine and get away.

Q: Jerry Wright, in my interview, said he had to instruct them about something a Navy man is supposed to know - you know, there are seven waves, and you wait till you count the seventh big wave, and then you wait and go out, I think, on the sixth wave or something. Anyway, there's a technique for getting through some heavy surf.

HOLMES: So that was a pretty exciting thing, and so obviously after that became public knowledge, that fired my own imagination. I followed the war. I can remember collecting Time Magazine covers of general and admirals, and I also remember being a doodler in school - you know how kids draw things. I doodled on the edge of my book a swastika because it was a kind of an intriguing symbol, and I remember my father came back during the war - actually I didn't know it a the time, but he was carrying the invasion plans for Normandy and had come in out of a remote airfield in Scotland and crossed over and went, of course, straight to Marshall with the invasion plans and spent a few days with us. He asked me about my studies, and I showed him my books, and he saw that swastika. I can remember him treating me like an enemy. Somehow I was a traitor. He was really quite shocked at this symbol of infamy that I had doodled on my book.

Q: Well, did you graduate from St. Alban's in '46 or what?

HOLMES: Well, I graduated from the lower school, through the eighth grade, and then I went to St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire, where I spent two years. Then my father - the war was, of course, over - had come back. It's probably an interesting footnote if it's part of the Foreign Service story - he actually served most of the war as Eisenhower's deputy chief of staff for military government and civil affairs, in those days known as G-5. He was a brigadier general at the time, and his boss was a Canadian British officer, a lieutenant general named Grasset, but he was basically Eisenhower's civil affairs-military government guy and really set up... I hadn't realized at the time that he really was probably the father of modern civil affairs in the United States Army. I didn't realize it until I came to the job I had in the Pentagon five years ago, and people in my office presented me with an Army history of civil affairs in World War II, with tabs on all the documents my father had written, and I really had had no clue until that time. Civil Affairs had become part of Special Operations, so that's how I got into that. It's kind of a wonderful closure of the circle. But anyway, my father did that, and basically set up the military government in Italy, worked with the British to set up a little piece of sovereign Italian soil over in Bari, the spur on the Italian boot, and then later worked on the aftermath of the invasion of France, the object being to restore French sovereignty in the hands of the Gaullist Free French as rapidly as possible. He was very careful working with the British to ensure that when allied troops, beginning in Normandy, went through parts of France that they never took the key of the city, accepted municipal authority, for themselves, but always ensured that there was a Free French officer there who received the authority - so there would be a very rapid restoration of sovereignty, looking obviously to the aftermath of the war.

A couple of things that my father did that were quite interesting: one, the French, of course, wanted to be the first to liberate Paris, and they didn't have enough tanks, so on behalf of LeClerc, of the famous Deuxiï¿½me Blindï¿½ (Second Division), my dad went to see Bedell Smith and Eisenhower and prevailed on them to get some Sherman tanks for LeClerc, to the displeasure of George Patton. But that was one thing he did. Another thing he did was, he was into Paris within a couple hours after our forces went in - my father was - and he was approached by the prefect of police of Paris, who said that they were in danger of being beaten by the Communist resistance and that his forces didn't have any weapons, and so my dad produced somehow about 20,000 carbines and pistols for them within hours, and they were quickly distributed, and the police were able to establish control in key posts in the city. These are kind of little vignettes.

During that period, my father, because of his diplomatic experience and his fluent French, was used by Eisenhower in London as his sort of senior conveyor of messages to De Gaulle, usually bad news. So he spent a lot of time going over to De Gaulle's headquarters and discussing such things as how they would set up administration in France after we went in and what kind of currency to use. The civil affairs people had printed up scrip, both paper money and stamps, to use in France until such time as French administration could reestablish their authorities and procedures and so forth. Well, De Gaulle was absolutely aghast at the idea and was totally opposed to the idea of phony money printed in America to be used as currency in his country, so he refused. My father looked him in the eye and said, "Well, my General, if that's the case, then we have no choice but to use greenbacks." That changed his demeanor very quickly, and he said, "Yes, we'll use the scrip, but for a very limited time, until the French mint can begin to turn out francs." But anyway, there were a lot of-

Q: I had one man in a much later period who said his children thought that there was a race called the "those God-damned French." He would come back from a NATO meeting, and that's what he always said when he came home steaming about something. Were you picking up anything, when you saw your father early on, about the French or De Gaulle?

HOLMES: Yes, well, the French were extremely difficult, and De Gaulle was a remarkable man. I mean, by a superhuman feat of chutzpah, he basically swam against the tides of history and was a thorn in the sides of both Churchill and Roosevelt, and Churchill and Roosevelt would communicate with each other, "Well, yesterday I met General De Gaulle, and he was bearing the cross of Lorraine, in contrast to the earlier meeting when he thought he was the reincarnation of Joan of Arc." I mean these kinds of acerbic comments about General De Gaulle. My father had deep respect for him, and spoke up for him with Eisenhower and Smith, but always in the context of ensuring the rapid restoration of French sovereignty, France's participation not so much in the war but in the aftermath of the war, because already my father and others could see what the Soviets were doing, and were very, very concerned about the strength and the direction of the French Communist movement. They were determined to install De Gaulle's people rapidly so as to ensure that France would be on the right side when the war ended.

Q: Did Douglas MacArthur II appear? He was-

HOLMES: No. I have no recollection in growing up meeting Douglas MacArthur II or even hearing about him. It was only afterwards, many years later, that I became aware of Doug MacArthur and, of course, his time when he was ambassador in Japan. But during the war I have no recollection whatsoever.

Q: St. Paul's. I always think of St. Paul's as being more than an excellent school, and everybody gets out and plays hockey.

HOLMES: That's right. There's a lot of hockey playing, that's right.

Q: What was St. Paul's like?

HOLMES: Well, I was there the first two years before I left for a year. I left for a year when my father went back into the Foreign Service in 1948. He was persuaded... I left out one important part here, that just a few months before the end of the war in Europe, Stettinius had become Secretary of State, and Roosevelt asked Eisenhower to release my father from his staff to come back to the State Department and be assistant secretary for the Foreign Service. His colleagues were Archibald MacLeish and Dean Acheson, and it was a very small structure. But the idea was to get an experienced Foreign Service officer who also had this very rich political-military experience in World War II with Eisenhower to come back and help organize the Foreign Service for a major expansion to meet the needs of the postwar period when clearly the United States would inherit the responsibilities of empire, you know, of the British and the French, and it was not set up, in terms of its own diplomatic cadres, to do the job. My dad was brought back, and he and Selden Chapin, who was then, I think, director general of the Foreign Service, wrote the 1946 Foreign Service Act and helped set that up. My father stayed throughout that period and then went into business when the war was over, and then in 1948 the Department, which was expanding, asked him to come back, to be reinstated, as a Foreign Service officer with an enormous leap in promotion. When my dad had left in the late 30s he had been a Foreign Service officer class 8-D or something, because in the Depression years there were just no promotions. He came back into the Foreign Service as a Foreign Service officer class 1, and was immediately assigned as deputy chief of mission in London, in 1948. I took off a year from St. Paul's and went to what we would call a preparatory school but what the British would call a public school, a secondary school called Wellington College. I went to this college because the Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, had been a lieutenant colonel on my dad's staff in civil affairs and recommended the school. I spent a year there and then returned to St. Paul's for my sixth form through my final year.

Q: Is this the one off in the Cotswolds or somewhere?

HOLMES: No, it's in Berkshire, in a little town called Crowthorne.

Q: Well, could you compare and contrast St. Paul's and Wellington?

HOLMES: Yes, that was quite a contrast for me. The curriculum didn't quite match, and so I was out of phase. I had been a pretty good student. I'd been as sort of B+ student during my first two years at St. Paul's, and at Wellington I had a hard time because I turned sixteen during the year there, and everybody was preparing for... In those days, it was called the School Certificate. I think today they're called your... I can't remember whether it's A Levels or O levels.

Q: I think it's O Levels.

HOLMES: But it's the first tier.

Q: This is about getting into-

HOLMES: Yes, the Oxford-Cambridge test for all these kids, and you had to take it in eight subjects. I, interestingly, more than held my own in history and English and French and "divvers" - divinity, sacred studies - because I'd been to a church school, of course, in the United States. But I was average in Latin - I was a little bit behind in Latin - and I was not good in science. I had never had any science. Chemistry and physics were two of the courses that you had to take. Bottom line - at the end of the year, I took the exams. In order to pass you had to pass in five of eight subjects. I passed in four, so I didn't make it. But I had a great year. I played rugby, did cross-country running, played cricket. I just thoroughly enjoyed the year - and was a member of the Combined Cadet Force. I was a corporal.

Q: Did you pick up any differences in sort of American versus British attitudes at that point? Social levels or looking at the continent or anything like that, or as a kid this was somebody else's problem, not yours?

HOLMES: Well, one of the things... I had two recollections. Basically, in terms of the academics and social attitudes, they were not very different. I mean the kinds of kids who were in that school were and the kinds of kids that I'd been to school with in the United States, but there were two major differences. 1948-49, the year I was there, was a rough winter-

Q: Really rough winter.

HOLMES: -and we had no heating in the school. I can remember at night in my dorm cubicle studying with two pairs of socks on, long johns, mittens, wool cap over my head. I took the mittens off to write notes, it was that cold. Then the rations were very meager. Lend-Lease had ended. The kids had a very, very meager diet there. I can remember at breakfast we had pasta. We had spaghetti for breakfast. We got one slice of meat a week, one egg a week, one candy bar a month. I remember the Kit-Kat candy bar. I got that once a month. For kids that were 16 or over, to sort of give them a little bit more diet, they got a sort of a quarter of a pint of beer on Saturday night, which was unusual. But the rations were meager. I remember losing 20 pounds or so. We had a lot of bread, margarine, lots of jam, but it was-

Q: A lot of Brussels sprouts?

HOLMES: A lot of Brussels sprouts. So that was a preoccupation of people. The other thing was the military aspect. That's where I had my first personal connection with the military. In World War II, the British had formed the Combined Cadet Force, which was to be Britain's last line of defense, their final reserves, because at a time when they thought that Hitler would invade Britain, they took kids that were just below the age of enlistment, 15 and 16 year olds. I think 17 was the age that you could join the armed forces, but 15 and 16 year olds were organized into a Combined Cadet Force in British schools and were given basic small-arms instruction, in using the Enfield and Sten gun and Brenn gun, small unit tactics, how to man a defensive position with cross-cutting fields of fire. I mean it was quite something. We drilled several times a week, and we had military games with other schools. I mean we had a great field day against Eton College, and umpires from Sandhurst, which was the West Point of the British Army, would come over and instruct us in military tactics and then monitor the war games that we had with other colleges. That was a fascinating experience and was certainly a major - I would say the major - difference in attitude on the part of schoolboys in England and the States, because they were still very close... I mean, 1948 was when the war was barely over, and so the whole wartime atmosphere of a nation that had been bombed severely, that was very close to being invaded by the enemy, so it was a very different attitude, a very different ambience with respect to military affairs than was my experience in the United States.

Q: I can remember at the height of the war, around '42, '43... Wait, I'm a little stuck.

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You were mentioning your experience of the British school system and their defense thing. I just have to add, just to give a social contrast, I was going to a prep school called Kent in the middle of the war, and all of us young males were expecting to go to the military, and I think probably almost all did at one point, but I think this was around 1942 or '43, they decided it would be a good idea for us to learn close-order drill, and we came out with paper hats, cocked hats, and broomsticks, and it was such a fiasco that we didn't have any. That's the American approach to it. We all learned about drill, but not in the serious way that the British did.

Well, while you were at Wellington and St. Paul's, were you thinking of the Foreign Service at all?

HOLMES: No, I wasn't thinking of the Foreign Service at all, as a career. In fact, I really didn't seriously think about the Foreign Service as a career until about 1955-56, when I was serving in the Marine Corps.

Q: Well, then, we'll pick this up. Did you go to our embassy in London, where your father was, much, and what were your impressions of that?

HOLMES: Yes, I would go up for holidays, I mean for Christmas holiday and then the spring holiday I went home. My dad was in the DCM's residence there. On one occasion I met Winston Churchill, whom dad had asked to be the speaker at the Pilgrim Society dinner that year, and that was a big thrill. I went into a little side room and chatted with him. He asked me about my school and talked a little bit about my dad because my dad had had a lot of contact with him, both in World War II and afterwards, because my father was deputy chief of mission in London for five years, from '48 to '53, with three political ambassadors. He pretty much ran the place because he knew all the senior British, which was the reason that he was asked to go there.

Q: Were you picking up any reverberations of what by '48 became the Cold War while you were at school or from your father?

HOLMES: Well, certainly from my father I was picking up a lot. I had an interesting experience during the spring break of '49. At that point I should mention that our embassy in London was a huge embassy. It was organized almost like a small outpost of the Department of State. We had counselors in charge of German affairs, in charge of Italian affairs, in charge of colonial affairs - I mean, it was a tremendous organization there. There was a German expert named Bill Trimble, a Foreign Service officer who was a Germanist, and at that point we were looking at revising the Occupation Statute for Germany. So my father sent Bill Trimble on a mission to go and talk to our political advisor, or pol-ad in Berlin, who was a man named Bernard Guffler. He managed to get me a seat on the airplane as his briefcase carrier. I was 16 years old. It was a fascinating experience. We went over to Germany. We went to Heidelberg, spent the night there, and the next day we went to Berlin on the famous Berlin Airlift, when the aircraft were landing about every 30 seconds at Tempelhof. We were buzzed on the way up by a Soviet MIG, and I remember the pilot asking everybody to check under their bucket seats to make sure that their parachutes were there, and I was the only one who didn't have a parachute. That kind of caught my attention. We landed at Tempelhof. We were met by Bernard Guffler, and the first thing we did was to go over into the Soviet Sector. We had, or course, a car with diplomatic plates; we all had diplomatic passports. We drove over into the Soviet Sector. The German driver was very nervous. I remember that clearly. We went quite deeply in, probably 30 blocks or so, and at a certain point we turned down a street and there was a Soviet military headquarters on that street. Immediately, a mobile patrol came up and pulled us over to the side, and I noticed that the jeep was American and the weapons were British, because I through my Combined Cadet Force I recognized that they were basically Sten guns that they had. Soviet soldiers pulled us over and made us get out, checked our passports, took my Brownie camera and smashed it with a rifle butt, just destroyed it. The German driver was sweating profusely. He didn't have a diplomatic passport, and they talked to us for a few minutes and finally, when they recognized that these were diplomatic passports, they let us go. But what struck me about the Cold War was the extraordinary destruction in Berlin. I can remember in both the western sectors as well as in the Soviet Sector, the rubble was so extensive, that they kept piling it higher, running little railroad tracks up in the mounds of rubble that were sometimes two stories high, pushing these carts up so that they could stack the rubble even higher, and people - displaced people, homeless refugees - were digging in the bottom of these mounds of rubble to carve out little caves. They would string a string of light bulbs into the cave, so that was the only thing that they had, or a cot or whatever they could put together to survive. I mean the conditions were really depressing, so primitive, and these people were really having a hard time. So I became starkly aware of the destruction of World War II and also very much of the Soviet role in the aftermath of World War II, because they clearly were... We were in the middle of the Berlin Airlift, and they were giving us a hard time. So it came home to me.

Q: Your father, obviously, was an extremely busy person, but I was wondering whether the rest of your family, were there sort of dinner table conversations about whither American policy or what we were doing or anything like that.

HOLMES: Oh, absolutely. There was a lot of dinner table conversation, in the family and also friends and officials who came through. Yes, the conversation was constant, I would say, about what was going on, because not only in the family but there were a lot of officials and friends and people coming through, and so it was pretty much of a continuous diet of foreign policy questions. Another thing my father was working on at the time was the Trieste Agreement, for example. And a lot about the Soviets. I remember just before my father left the State Department in 1946, I think it was, the Katyn Forest Massacre had come to light.

Q: That was in Poland. We might explain what it was.

HOLMES: That was the massacre of the Polish officer corps in the Katyn Forest, and there were two versions as to who the perpetrators had been. One was that the Nazis had done it, and the other was that the Soviets had done it. As it turned out, I think history bears out that it was a Soviet operation, but having come from Eisenhower's staff, my father was interviewed by J. Edgar Hoover himself on the Katyn Forest Massacre.

Anyway, I would say that during that whole period it was a very clear focus on the cold war and what the Soviets were up to, and certainly the dinner table conversation was full of it.

Q: Well, in '49 you came back to the States?

HOLMES: In '49 I came back. I went back to St. Paul's School in the fall of 1949 for my final year there and graduated at the end of the year, in 1950. I won a naval ROTC scholarship, and I had an opportunity to go to either Harvard or Princeton and I chose Princeton, entered as a midshipman on that scholarship program in the fall of 1950.

Q: And when you were back at St. Paul's did you continue...

HOLMES: I continued singing, doing glee club and choir singing, but I had stopped studying the piano because St. Paul's didn't have a fine arts program in those days. They do now, but it was a very-

Q: It was pretty austere, as schools go.

HOLMES: Yes, pretty austere, and I also was working very hard in my final year to get the best possible grades that I could so that I could get into a good college.

Q: Yes. So you were in Princeton when, from '50 to '54?

HOLMES: I graduated in '54. I was there for four years.

Q: What was Princeton like when you entered. This was 1950. The Korean War had started-

HOLMES: In June of 1950.

Q: -and McCarthyism was beginning to show it's... It was the high period of McCarthyism. What did you get out of that?

HOLMES: We were very much aware of the McCarthy period, and of course I heard... Not only on the campus were we very much opposed to McCarthy, in fact, McCarthy tried to send investigators to Princeton - no, seriously, there was a move made to send some Senate investigators to interview faculty members, graduate students, and Princeton refused by a unanimous decision of the trustees and the faculty. There was a certain amount of demonstrating on the campus about it, too. Knowing that this was going on and strong opposition to McCarthyism or to any of his people so much as setting foot on the campus, and so they were rebuffed. I remember in my final year at Princeton, a lot of us watched the McCarthy hearings, and I also heard a lot about it from the family, because there was a McCarthy plant in the State Department in the Personnel Division called Scott McLeod, who was digging around in the cellars for information about people who possibly were disloyal, and that was something that I heard a lot about from my father because my father felt very strongly that the Administration did not oppose McCarthy strongly enough. He went and had a personal very strong conversation with John Foster Dulles about it, but in particular he was speaking up for two Foreign Service officers who were Chinese experts-

Q: John Stewart Service was one.

HOLMES: John Stewart Service, and John Carter Vincent was the other one.

Q: John Carter Vincent.

HOLMES: But it's John Stewart Service, I remember, that my father knew very well, felt he was really outraged by the treatment that he was subjected to, and went and talked to Dulles personally and privately in his office about him and about what was happening to the Department and how it was really important for the Administration to stand up and protect the professional career Foreign Service. So I was very much aware of that period.

Q: There was very much a feeling at the time that Eisenhower and Dulles were not standing up. Actually, Truman's role was not so great on this loyalty business either. He started the loyalty hearings. It was a very difficult time. Your father, when he came back from London, where did he go?

HOLMES: When my father came back from London, he worked for a while for Dulles. At a certain point my father was indicted by a grand jury in New York for, along with a member of Congress from Massachusetts, the University of Chicago, a group of people who had in the immediate aftermath of World War II bought some surplus tankers and had basically organized a company which had a complete IRS review before they went into business, and it was all above board, they were doing well, and it was one of the activities in my father's private life between the war and when he went back into the Foreign Service. He invested a little bit of money into it - I don't know, $10,000 or something - and then when he decided to go back into the Foreign Service in 1948, he obviously resigned as an officer of this tanker corporation and he ended up just being a stockholder along with others. Subsequently, about two years later, the tankers were sold to some company, and then eventually one or two of the tankers ended up being purchased by the Chinese Government, and that led to a big investigation. During the Eisenhower Administration, Herbert Brownell was the attorney general, and the government went into court and got an indictment against all these people, including my father, which was very strange because he was a simple stockholder and this was several years later. It turned out that his inclusion in the indictment was based on the fact that, as DCM in London at a certain point, the maritime attachï¿½ on the embassy staff came to my father and said that one of the Greek shipping magnates-

Q: This was Onassis and Niarchos.

HOLMES: -I can't remember if it was Onassis - I think it was Niarchos - was interested in talking to my father about the tankers, and my father told the maritime attachï¿½, he said, "Look, I'm in conflict of interest; I resigned my position in that company. I'm a simple stockholder, and I really don't think it would be appropriate for me to even see Mr. Niarchos or his representative, and so he declined to see him." It was the basis of his declining which caused the Justice Department to think that there was some suspicious activity that was being concealed, and on that basis he was indicted. Well, it took his lawyer in New York, Chuck Spofford, who was with a major law firm there, about three weeks to put a case together, a counter-argument, that had the Justice Department backpedaling furiously to drop the thing. In fact, they did drop it, but my father wanted the thing to go to trial because he wanted to clear his name, because he felt that there would be some lingering question about it, and he tried through his lawyers to actually have a hearing at least so this thing could be put to bed, and the Justice Department refused to do it because they were embarrassed by the flimsy way that they had put the case together against my father. So they dropped it and refused to go further with it, and that led to some problems for my father, because he was subsequently nominated for a number of jobs which a senator from Delaware who always thought that where there's smoke there's fire, there must be something in Holmes's past, et cetera et cetera, always promised to make trouble even though he was sort of a singular agent on this war path. Every time the White House would check with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to see if there would be any problems, this guy would say he was going to speak and oppose the nomination, and so the White House was a little pusillanimous about it, quite frankly, and then would backtrack. And so in 1955 my father had been nominated as ambassador to Iran, and was about to go forward with his hearings and so forth, and the White House, because of this one senator from Delaware - whose name now escapes me, I probably suppressed it years ago - recalled the nomination, and I think it was Selden Chapin that went instead. So subsequently a number of jobs came along. At about that time, the Department decided to create the position of undersecretary for political affairs, and Dulles nominated my father. My father was supposed to be the first one to have that job, but again they ran into the same problem on the Hill, and so his nomination was withdrawn. So for two or three years in the mid-'50s, he was basically struggling to overcome this very unjust indictment that had been returned against him. Eventually, he did a lot of NATO work, was a direct advisor to Dulles on a number of issues. I would say that he had a very interesting assignment. In 1957, on behalf of Dulles, he did a three-month survey of Africa. He traveled to every place in Africa and came back after three months having met all the high commissioners and all the colonial powers and the fledgling governments, and wrote a major report to Dulles calling for a huge change in our policy towards Africa, that from that point on we should stop conducting our relations with the emerging African states through the colonial offices of the old powers but we should go and directly establish relations with those countries. As a result of that there was a major change in our policy towards Africa. We set up embassies and consulates and so forth. He was nominated then to be the first assistant secretary for Africa, and the same thing happened. The same senator from Delaware raised his ugly head, and my father's name was withdrawn once again by the White House, displaying its usual courage in the face of what was a very limited opposition. And he went through that period... It took a change of administration, when John Kennedy was elected President. He knew about my father and knew him, and he and Chester Bowles got together and said, "Look, this is ridiculous. We're going to nominate Julius Holmes for an important job, and we're going to fight this thing through and get it done. This injustice has lasted too long." I remember Bowles asked my father, he said, "Look, there are two major assignments coming up, and I'll give you your choice. Italy - since you had that experience in World War II - or Iran." My father took Iran, thought that would be a more interesting job. And so they did, and the senator did. They put his name forward in 1961, and I think there were two or three votes against, a very small number, and my dad got a telegram from Chip Bohlen, who was an old friend that he had come in with, from back in the '20s and the '30s they'd been friends, because he'd been in some controversy about one of his jobs, and he said, "Well, I had more names against me," and that sort of thing. Anyway, then he went to Iran in 1961 and stayed there for four years. But it took him a long time to recover from that accusation. In the mean time he'd done some interesting things. He was the last minister consul general to Tangier, and helped midwife Moroccan independence, quite by accident, when the Istiqlal was fighting furiously to liberate themselves from the French Protectorate.Q: That's sort of the liberation group of Morocco.

HOLMES: If memory serves, this must have been about 1957, in that time frame, about 1957-58. We still had these sort of special consular responsibilities in the old Tangier enclave - we, the British, the Italians, and the French, I think [the Spanish?], all had "consular courts." It was kind of an international zone, and using that as his sort of perch, my father played a major role in helping the Moroccans get their independence, and part of it was quite by chance, because one day he and a guy named Bill Porter, who was later an ambassador - when my father was in Tangier, Bill Porter was our consul in Rabat at the time - were in a car at the time, driving from Rabat to Tangier, and coming from the opposite direction there was a small French vehicle, a Quatre Chevaux [French: four horsepower] Renault, that came around this curve too rapidly and turned and rolled over into a field. So my dad and Bill Porter stopped their car, and they went running over to help these guys, and they pulled them out of the vehicle, and together the four of them righted the small Renault. This led to a conversation, and one of the men was the leader of the Istiqlal, who was on the run all the time from the French. I think his name was Ben Barka, but I'm not certain. I can't recall. But anyway, they talk, and Ben Barka liked my dad, I guess, and he said, "Look, I'd like to talk with you." My dad said, "I'd like to talk with you, too." He said, "Well, I'll make contact with you, and it will be by surreptitious means." So that led to a number of meetings that my Dad had with the leadership of the Istiqlal in Fez, in the medina, and then subsequently he began to act as an informal go-between between the Istiqlal and the French. Of course, he knew a lot of people in the French Government from the De Gaulle years, so he would fly to Paris and talk to the French. He was an intermediary, but he continued to have these private meetings with the Istiqlal. And one time, when another very close Foreign Service friend, Ted Achilles - who was the DCM in Paris at the time... One afternoon, Ted got a phone call from the Quai d'Orsay, and the head of the American Desk there said, "We would like to know what Julius Holmes was doing talking to So-and-so in such-and-such a hotel in Madrid this morning." It seems the French intelligence service was doing a pretty good job.

Q: The Deuxiï¿½me Blindï¿½.

HOLMES: The Deuxiï¿½me Blindï¿½. But anyway, he did that and was actually very effective in helping arrange the terms of Morocco's separation from France and the end of the Protectorate, and at the end of that, my father was given a sort of a wonderful photograph by Mohammed V, who was the king of Morocco at the time, thanking him for his help and so forth. It was an interesting period in our relationship with North Africa, and again, then, my father was nominated to be the first ambassador to Morocco, and once again the name was withdrawn because of the opposition of the senator from Delaware. I think his name was Williams. It's coming back to me.

Q: John Williams. Well, let's go back to Princeton. What were you majoring in?

HOLMES: I majored in English with a sort of a bridge with French literature. It was mostly English, but English-French. I minored in music. I took my naval science courses as an obligation for my scholarship because I was going to be... and I had no... I never even thought about the Foreign Service. Had I thought about it, I would have prepared myself better. I would have taken more political science and economics, which I did not. So I was really preparing myself for a teaching career, and at the end of my time at Princeton, I was nominated for a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship by Bob Goheen, who at the time was an associate professor of classics.

Q: Later an ambassador to India.

HOLMES: Later president of Princeton and an ambassador to India, maintaining that tradition of Presbyterians, because his father had been a Presbyterian missionary in India. But anyway, I got this fellowship, and they said that they would hold it in abeyance until I'd done my three years on active duty in the Marine Corps. I was really counting on a career in English, and in my second year in the Marine Corps out in California, I went to Cal Tech and was interviewed by people, and I actually was offered the fellowship for a full-course study for a Ph. D. at Berkeley in English.

Q: Well, back to Princeton - this has been '50-54. How did you find the social life there? This is the Eating Club period. I guess it still is, but how did you find this as a way of life?

HOLMES: Well, it's interesting you raised the Eating Club rushing. A number of us in our class, the class of '54, took exception to the Eating Club system because we felt that it was unfairly administered and it always excluded a certain percentage of every class, and so we basically - we were kind of rebels - and we got a group together and told the clubs that unless they changed their system and would guarantee that every member of our class would receive an invitation to join at least one of the clubs, we would break up the system. We knew what we were doing because they couldn't afford to have an entire class drop out, since, in effect, instead of going to a mess hall, you ate at the Eating Club - they were eating clubs, in other words. We won, and we had our day, and we forced the club system to take the entire class, which they did.

Q: Yes, and they've maintained that ever since. Princeton had the reputation of being a place where southern gentlemen went. It was the one time when southerners from the deep South came up to get a look at the North, if you want to call it that. Did you catch any of that feeling.

HOLMES: No. That was certainly a little bit of a myth that had perhaps been true at one time, if you read Scott Fitzgerald. Yes, certainly there were people who came from the South. There were a lot of people who came from Maryland and from Virginia who went to Princeton, but Princeton had an extremely rigorous academic system. The passing grades for courses increased every year. In other words, what was a passing grade in freshman year was no longer a pass in sophomore year, and so forth and so forth. Being an honors candidate was not an election. Every undergraduate was, by definition, an honors candidate. You had to do independent work in your junior year. You had to write a senior thesis. So it instilled a rigor in the system which actually resulted in a certain number of casualties. People dropped out or flunked out along the way. So I would say that the old "southern gentleman" thing had long since faded into history. It was a tough place to compete in.

Q: You graduated in '54, and I guess as a naval candidate you had your choice of... What did you do then?

HOLMES: I actually had elected a couple of years earlier to take my commission in the Marine Corps. The head of the naval science unit there was a Marine major, and I was attracted to the Marine Corps. I also had some difficulty with a few of the naval science courses, and so I elected already in my sophomore year to go into the Marine Corps. My first summer's cruise I was a midshipman on the USS Newport News, and one of my classmates and shipmates and fellow NROTC guy was Don Rumsfeld, who was a close friend and later ended up as Secretary of Defense. But by the end of my sophomore year I decided to go into the Marine Corps, and so for my summer training between my junior and senior year I went to Quantico and did training there and took my commission in the Marine Corps.

Q: Well, you were in the Marine Corps until '57 then, '54 to '57. Where did you serve?

HOLMES: I served in California. I was actually assigned to go to Korea, but by the time I got to the staging area, after the basic school, which was early in 1955, or the fall of '54 maybe, they had decided to bring the First Division home. So actually, I married up with the Seventh Marines in California and served out my term there. I had a wonderful experience. I was a platoon commander and a company commander, and I had a special amphibious reconnaissance platoon at one point.

Q: What was your impression of the Marine Corps in those days?

HOLMES: Well, I loved the Marine Corps. I had a great experience as a junior officer. When they first came back from Korea, came off the line, so to speak, the troops were a little salty. I mean they weren't as disciplined as Marines usually are known to be, and actually the regimental commander understood that, and so we trained vigorously, more so than would normally be the case. I spent a lot of time in the field doing exercises for about a year, just to sort of put them back into shape, and it was an extremely interesting experience. They were, of course, all volunteers, and some of the troops we had were from the inner cities of America and some of them had some bad habits. There was always a percentage of troublemakers in every battalion, and at a certain point, after I had left my company, in my second battalion (I was the assistant intelligence officer of the regiment), the regimental commander called me in and said that he wanted to form an amphibious reconnaissance platoon. He wanted to have his own platoon. And this wasn't recognized. This was to be an informal thing, so he said that he would give me the best gunnery sergeant in the regiment and then we would ask for volunteers from the battalions. So of course we got all the troublemakers. What the Navy calls the "brig rats" were all dumped on us, and so Gunnery Sergeant Hatfield, who was a veteran of Guadalcanal, and I shaped this group into a platoon. They were always in trouble. I mean every Monday morning, a third of them were missing. We had to go to Tijuana and get them out of the jails. So we ended up spending endless weeks in the field with this group. We had a wonderful time; it was a great experience.

Q: When did you get married?

HOLMES: I got married in 1959.

Q: So this was after the Marine Corps.

HOLMES: Yes, I came out of the Marine Corps in May of 1957, came home to Washington. By that time I had decided that I wanted to go in the Foreign Service.

Q: Why?

HOLMES: Because, primarily, sort of faute de mieux. I had stayed in close touch with two of my roommates from Princeton, both of whom were teaching, one at Harvard and one at Berkeley. I didn't like what I heard about what they were doing. There seemed like an awful lot of faculty politics, a lot of non-academic assignments that were kind of administrative. There was the publish-or-perish syndrome, and frankly, not a hell of a lot of teaching, and that's the part I was interested in. So after considering it very carefully, I decided I didn't really want to do that, and I notified the Woodrow Wilson Foundation that I would not take their fellowship, notified Berkeley, and then took the Foreign Service Exams - flunked them twice before passing. I was always very close. One time I missed by a point, another time by four points. I realized that I didn't have the political science and economics and that kind of background that I needed, so I decided that I would do some graduate work to prepare myself better before I took the exams again. So I came back to Washington in the summer of 1957, enrolled in economics and political science courses in summer school at GW, and then applied to go to the Institute of Political Studies in Paris in the following year on the GI Bill. They said I could come with my college degree from Princeton and so forth if I could pass the French exam. So I went over early. I went in September and studied French intensively. I already knew French academically, but I couldn't speak it, so I went and tutored. I went and lived in a pension in Tours, a place my sister had known about when she did her junior year abroad, studied French at the Institute of French Studies in Poitiers. I hired a tutor, an 85-year-old woman who was as tough as nails and drove me. I went up to Paris at the end of October, passed, and got into what was than called the Sciences-Po, now called the Institute of Political Studies at the University of Paris and spent a year there. In December of that year, '57-58, I went up to the embassy and took the Foreign Service Exams and passed them this time. But it was a wonderful year to be in Paris for a future political officer because that was the year that the French colonels pulled off their putsch in Algiers in 1958, which brought De Gaulle back to power, disbanded the Fourth Republic; and the Fifth Republic of France was formed with a new constitution, a new system. It was a fabulous time to be in France.

Q: Was this the time when they were expecting para-drops in Paris?

HOLMES: Oh, absolutely. As a matter of fact, it's interesting you say that because I played rugby on the Sciences-Po, my university, team, and the guys on that were sort of an interesting mixture of young French university students. They were either very left, including some of the Communists, or very conservative. I knew them all, and we were all buddies and played together all year. After the first of the year, several members had finished their studies and had to do their military service, and they went into the French Army and went into the paratroops. That summer I saw a couple of them, and they explained to me that during this very tense period when they were trying to persuade De Gaulle to come back and take power, he said, "We went to bed at night with our boots on, not knowing if we were going to fight for France or for the colonels." For several days, he said, for about 48 hours, it was very uncertain. So it was a fascinating period.

Q: Oh, I would think so. What about the debates within the school? Were the students sort of... I keep thinking of their manifestations, walking in the streets and all that.

HOLMES: Well, we did. There were all kinds. I mean basically the student population reflected the political make-up of France, but of course students are always a little bit more radical than their parents, and we did a lot of manifs [French: manifestations], they call them, the street demonstrations, I included. The French police would come and arrest us and push us in the paddy wagons. Their way of breaking up these demonstrations was to drive us out beyond the gates of Paris, and knowing that students are always broke, they would then just release us, and most people had to walk back because they didn't have any money, even to buy a Mï¿½tro ticket to come back. So I was very much in the middle of that, and while I was there doing that and enjoying life hugely, there was a recruiting effort against me by a CIA agent from the embassy. I gave him about five minutes. Not interested.

Q: That brings up a subject, though. At Princeton and all, did the CIA play much of a role? I was '46 to '50 at Williams, and the CIA was just coming up, and boy, they were all over the place. Four or five people out of a small class in my fraternity went into the CIA, and made noises about it, too. I was wondering whether this had tempted you, or no.

HOLMES: Interesting that you raise that. Yes, there were recruiting efforts by the CIA on the Princeton campus, not surprisingly - after all, Allan Dulles was a Princeton graduate himself, and that class of people-

Q: That's where they were coming from.

HOLMES: That's where they were coming from. But I never had any contact with them because I wasn't studying in a department that interested them. I was a dilettante. I was majoring in English and minoring in music and going to Bach concerts. I never had an approach from the CIA. I wasn't even aware of it, other than some friends of mine, who were doing political science or history, would tell me. But I wasn't aware of them.

Q: Well, in '57 or '58 you came out of Paris. By the way, were you picking up American history and things of this sort, because this is often... You know, one talks about political science, but there's often a dearth of knowledge about the United States in many of the candidates.

HOLMES: You're quite right, and I've always known a certain amount of American history, but I did do some reading. I actually read the Morrison and Commager in my sixth form year at St. Paul's, and we had a fabulous teacher who had been a full professor of American history at Harvard, but for reasons of health had left the faculty and was teaching American history at St. Paul's. He was my teacher, and he made us read the New York Times every day, and it was a pretty rich diet of American history, particularly modern, 20th-century, history and a lot of contemporary affairs. So I continued reading articles, and that interests me. I didn't have as much American history as I would have liked, but at the Institute of Political Studies I was not studying American history there; I read a lot of theory, reading John Stuart Mill and Hobbes and that sort of thing, the history of political ideas. I basically picked the courses for the famous professors. There was a famous professor Maurice Duverger, who wrote about the history of political ideas, political philosophy. I took his course, and he had also written a wonderful book on all the French political parties, so I studied them assiduously and read about the Middle East a lot, and I particularly studied the French experience in Indochina and Algeria. That formed the basis of my very early opposition to our Vietnam policy, because my independent course of study at the Sciences-Po had been about the French experience in Indochina, and I went into it quite deeply. There were a lot of practitioners who'd come and talk at the Sciences-Po, people who were not academicians but who had served in Indochina. I read all the books, all the Lartï¿½guy books and novels of the "centurions," and you know, when we began to drift into Vietnam, I can remember thinking it was a horrible mistake to send Maxwell Taylor as our ambassador to Saigon, because I could just see it beginning. I remember saying to somebody, you know, their building the totem pole up so that when it crashes it will really come down hard. Even then I was concerned that we were getting... It was too much of a commitment of United States prestige for a cause which was lost from the beginning. Based on my study at Sciences-Po, I was absolutely convinced of that. Fortunately, my number never came up during my Foreign Service career. I never was tapped to serve in CORDS or anything else, which surprised me, given the fact that I had 4+/4+ French and I had this Marine Corps experience. I was amazed, and quite honestly - I have to tell you this - I was so opposed to our policy in Vietnam, I wasn't certain how I would react had I been assigned to Vietnam. I would have done one of two things. I would either have resigned or I would have gone, but I would not have tried through contacts to have my assignment changed, because I had too much respect for those people, my colleagues, who were assigned to Vietnam who didn't want to go there, some of them, any more than I did. So I would have either resigned as a matter of principle, or I would have gone. To this day I don't know what my decision would have been.

Q: Where you were was at Sciences-Po?

HOLMES: Yes. Sciences-Po is the old fashion. It used to be called the Sciences-Politiques, but now it's the Institute of Political Studies.

Q: Well, while you were there, were you getting any feel for, for want of a better term I'll call it, European Marxism and the Communist Party? In the United States, traditionally, people have looked at Marxism, but it doesn't take very well in the student body for the most part, but the Europeans always seem to take political theory more seriously than Americans do.

HOLMES: I think that's true.Q: Here you are in a place which, among other things, obviously had to be a hotbed of this, and does this-

HOLMES: I wouldn't say it was a hotbed. There were students at the Sciences-Po who had grown up in Communist youth organizations of the French Communist Party - not a lot of them. But they were there, they were visible, they worked for the party. Some of them were recruited as escorts and trainers and buddies, friends, for Africans who were sent by the French Government from various territories. I knew, later, some of them who came from Cameroon. They would come to Paris and sort of be dumped on the scene, and each one of them, they would try to assign a student to become a friend and sort of begin to influence their thinking. Well, there was a pretty well-organized process that they had. I was only vaguely aware of it when I was at the Sciences-Po. I became more aware of it later when I served at my first post in the Foreign Service in Cameroon and met some of these young Cameroonians who had been courted by French Communist students, including at my old institution. So I realized later that it was a pretty extensive system that the Party had set up. But it was less ideological in that respect and more practical. I mean, they were basically recruiting cadres of people that would later become influential players in those governments when they became independent, so it was at the direction of the Communist Party, but it was hopefully that they would transform those countries into Communist-dominated countries.

Q: Well, just to get a feel for understanding it, did you run across - I'm not sure if the term is right - but the Cartesian way of thinking... synthesis-

HOLMES: Thï¿½se, antithï¿½se, synthï¿½se - yes, thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

Q: Still, the French think of things as being logic, and for Americans, things sort of happen. Did you run across this?

HOLMES: Yes, a certain amount. I would say more for those that were into that kind of discussion - and we would have discussions like that - I would say that it was more the dyed-in-the-wool French Communist who was also an instructor, who was more into that sort of dialectic, than the students. The students had a pretty healthy disrespect for a certain kind of Cartesian logic when it came to Marxist dialectics. But it's true. There is a kind of a... just the way... not so much thinking about Communism, but certainly in the way young French are taught, there is a so-called Cartesian logic, and they're very good at dissecting problems and exposing a complicated situation in a pretty well-organized, logical, lay-down of the elements of the problem. The judgment that results from the analysis of the problem may be totally faulty, but the analysis is usually clearly laid out. That was, I think, one benefit of French education. You have to remember one thing. When the young Frenchman finishes his lycï¿½e [French: high school] and he's done his bachot [French: Baccalaureate] and he comes to the university, he's basically stuffed with knowledge. He has learned years and years by rote.

The young Frenchman coming out of the lycï¿½e has a head crammed with facts and information, but he's not given much encouragement, up until the bachot, the baccalaureate examinations, to do much free thinking, so when he gets to university, all of a sudden, all the restraints are off, and he's subjected to this sort of world of ideas and discussion and passion about politics. What helps the young French university student is the preparation that he's had. He's already has a base, but he has less of an ability to think on his own and come up with sort of sound judgments about issues than his American counterpart, because by the time his American counterpart gets to that same level of university, particularly if he's been to a good secondary school, he's already done a certain amount of independent analysis, and he or she has been encouraged to think more on their own, under the tutoring of a good teacher, rather than being told dogmatically, this is the way it is - which is what happens in a French lycï¿½e. So I would say, in terms of being suddenly subjected to the world of ideas, that perhaps the young American at the university is better equipped to handle that than the young Frenchman. But that's a gross exaggeration.

Q: I realize that. The reason I think it's interesting is that, as a fledgling diplomat or a diplomat-possibly-to-be, as you were, and others, an idea of how the French approach problems - and it's not just the French, of course, but their colonial peoples and former colonial peoples - I mean, they come out with this particular way of looking at things, and sometimes it's difficult for Americans in official positions to kind of understand where they're coming from, and so it's very handy to have some of this perspective.

HOLMES: Well, absolutely. One thing I learned when I was a student in Paris, and I learned it over and over again, particularly when I was in Cameroon, in what was basically a League of Nations-UN mandated trust territory, that first of all, French cultural policy is a huge dimension in their foreign policy. I mean, they really do feel that they have a civilizing mission. I mean, they really believe it. They are distressed when the French language is displaced by English. I think now, since the '70s, particularly in the '80s and '90s, there is sort of a different attitude now towards "the American incursion" into the world of ideas and culture, but certainly in the '50s and '60s your average product of the French university system really believe that. It explained a lot of the investment that they made, which, if you looked at it uncynically, in a place like Cameroon and Togo, which were trust territories which the French had no hope of holding on to for very long, the commitment that they made in terms of the infrastructure, the education - sure, they were creating people who would be markets for their exports, but they also put a lot into those countries. The French, I believe, prepared their Africans, from what I saw, much better for independence than their British counterparts, certainly better than their Spanish or Portuguese counterparts. They did a lot in preparing those countries, and they went through some rough times, particularly after De Gaulle came back to power and the French community was furious that Sekou Tourï¿½ in Guinea did not buy into the program. He pulled the French out with a vengeance. When they cut the ties, they took everything.

Q: They took the water faucets.

HOLMES: They took the phones. They just cleaned the place out.

Q: Allen, I think we'll stop at this point, and I put at the end where we are so we can pick it up. The next time we'll have you coming back, leaving Paris, coming back in '58, taking the Foreign Service Exam, having you pass it. But I'd like to cover the oral exam and then the entry into the Foreign Service and all that. We haven't taken that up.

HOLMES: Great.

Q: ...and we'll pick this up. But you were saying you had to pick up some money because the GI Bill didn't get you very far, so what were you doing?

HOLMES: The GI Bill didn't get me very far, so I had two jobs while I was at the Sciences-Po. One, I gave English lessons to an attractive young woman who was a protï¿½gï¿½ of the French singer Charles Aznavour. She composed her own folksongs and had a contract for six weeks to sing at the Blue Angel in New York, and she wanted to be able to learn enough English to explain the essence of her songs. So I charged the going rate and made a little money on the side. I also got a job later in the year as an extra in a movie called The Reluctant Debutante, which was filmed mostly in Paris with Rex Harrison and Kay Kendall, Johnny Saxon, and Sandra Dee, I think it was. I was an extra. They wanted some Anglo-Saxon looking people who could be in debutante party scenes dancing in their tuxedos. So I rented a tuxedo. In that film, I got an extra special job as a bartender, and I even had a little, small speaking role and made, what to me seemed like a small fortune and allowed me to take a skiing vacation that spring.

Q: Well, then, I'll put, once again, at the end of this, we'll pick this up, you left France in 1958, came back, and I'd like to talk about your impressions and questions that you can remember of the oral exam and all and then about entry into the Foreign Service.

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Today is April 21, 1999. Allen, we're in 1958 and you're, what, back in Washington from France?

HOLMES: I'm back in Washington from France. I've taken the Foreign Service Exams for the third time, I might add, and passed. I took them at the embassy in Paris in December, 1957. I'm back in Washington waiting for an appointment, and while waiting, I get a job in INR, in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the department, as a civil servant, working in a very sensitive area of intelligence, and I don't believe I can talk about it, which is too bad because it's extremely interesting. I worked there for almost a year on European-related questions while awaiting an appointment, and I finally got one and I joined the Foreign Service the following May.

Q: In 1960?

HOLMES: 1959. You should know, Stu. You were in the same class.

Q: No.

HOLMES: Weren't we in the same class?

Q: No, we weren't.

HOLMES: A-100?

Q: No, we were in the Senior Seminar together.

HOLMES: Oh, okay.

Q: I came in in '55.

HOLMES: Okay, well, it must have been May. I believe it was May, '59.

Q: What was your class like - you know, gender, race, outlook - would you say? Could you characterize some of the people in it?

HOLMES: Well, I can certainly do a contrast between my class and a class that I mentored here at the Foreign Service Institute in 1992 - a striking difference in the composition of the Foreign Service class.

Our class was primarily male with an upper age limit of 32. The ages went from 21 to 32. There were a few women. I can't remember exactly how many, but probably four, and a few of us had Foreign Service backgrounds. One classmate, in fact, was probably the only fourth generation Foreign Service officer that I've ever heard of - Homer Byington. He had one tour in Genoa and then left the Foreign Service and did something else. But certainly the attitude was one of commitment to public service, to a desire to play a role in America's new international responsibilities that basically we had inherited at the end of World War II with the dissolution of the power centers of the French Empire, the British Empire, and so forth. There was a high spirit of idealism and dedication and a sense among most of us that we were in this for a career. This was not quite a cradle to grave commitment, but pretty close.

By contrast, the class that I mentored in 1992 was evenly divided. I think there 36 officers, evenly divided among men and women, a fairly high number of minorities, men and women, Hispanic, Asian, African American, tremendous age spread - from 21 to 58 - which astonished me, particularly the woman who was 58, because she'd already had two careers, including an early stint in the Peace Corps, but according to the prevailing Department regulation at the time, as long as you were still young enough to complete two tours of duty abroad, you could serve. So this is a very different approach. Also the background of the students was different. Quite a few lawyers, who had gone into law but were frankly bored by corporate law and really just... I mean, the prospect of making high fees down the line once they had made partner was interesting but was basically overcome by the desire to do something different, something interesting. A number of teachers. Two military officers, each of whom had done 20 years in the military. They were now embarking on a second career but who'd had quite a bit of service abroad and were impressed by what could be done in diplomacy. But the bottom line was that most of the people there were in it for an experiment. They were going to try it. They were going to go out and have a couple of tours and see whether they wanted to make this a career or not. So it was a very different attitude, which I would say was more representative of young people in today's world - that they're quite willing to move around and change jobs and try different things before they actually settle down for their life's work.

Q: I would think that there would be an automatic division between those who really were doing this as a second career - up in their late 30s, early 40s and older - and those who were younger, because in a career path, time is a factor as far as moving up the ladder, and there isn't any sort of quick road to success. So that some would almost by age be people who look upon this as a career and other who would look upon this as a different lifetime experience. It's not that they wouldn't be contributing, but it would divide the officer corps, I think.

HOLMES: Well, clearly those people who were already in their mid-40s to late 50s, obviously it wasn't going to be a lifetime career because they'd already had at least one career, but among the younger ones, those who were in their late 20s and early 30s, the same sense of giving it a go, try a couple of tours of duty and see whether or not they wanted to stay in - it was still a very clear absence of long-range commitment.

Q: Well, going back to this time in '59, what was your impression - I mean, you'd already been involved - of the Foreign Service that you were getting from you training? Was it just sort of a rather introductory basic stuff, or were you getting any feel for the Foreign Service from this?

HOLMES: That's a good question. It's hard for me to separate out what I already knew about the Foreign Service, since I'd grown up in it, and to put myself in the position of those who'd had no previous contact with the Foreign Service. I would say that we really didn't get much of a feel for it. The instruction was pretty rudimentary. There was a lot, obviously, on consular work because most of us were going to have to do that initially. Some of us already had passed a language so that we were ready to be deployed to an area where that particular language was spoken. I applied for French-speaking Southeast Asia as my first choice and French-speaking Africa as my second choice, and that's what I got, was Africa. But I would say that today's preparation for Foreign Service life, what is done at the Foreign Service Institute in the A-100 course and in other courses, is much more thorough than what I experienced.

Q: What about the "old boy" thing? Did you find yourself running into this, like it or not, the fact, "Oh, we knew your father," and that sort of thing? Did that kind of get in your way, or help, or what? HOLMES: Happily, it did not. First of all, I did not seek it, and people were sensitive to that. The only old boy network which ever worked in my favor was my wife's. Through her parents' AID service in Cambodia, I was introduced to someone, which ended up in a job as a staff assistant to Ambassador Frederick Reinhardt in Rome a few years later.

Q: After, what, about three months, I guess, of basic training you would ask for either, one, Southeast Asia or, two, Africa, French-speaking, and you went where?

HOLMES: I went to Yaoundï¿½, Cameroon, and I left Washington, and I got married and left the same day.

Q: Have we talked about your wife before, her background?

HOLMES: I think earlier we may have talked about her exodus from Paris - did we talk about that? - as a young woman escaping the Germans and the bombing and-

Q: Yes, we did that, but what about-

HOLMES: What she'd done more recently.

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: No, I don't believe so. When I met her in 1959, just a few months before we got married, she was working as a script writer for USIA, having already had several years' experience in professional documentaries, in films, working for Encyclopaedia Britannica Films and other organizations here in Washington, and she was working full time for USIA. When we got married, in July, 1959, just before going to Yaoundï¿½, she still had an unfulfilled contract with USIA. She completed that contract during our first assignment in Yaoundï¿½, where she was writing scripts for USIA to introduce Africans to other Africans. It was kind of interesting because, or course, that was the period when most territories and colonies in Africa were approaching independence. So it was a very interesting project, and she finished that.

Q: Well, now, can you describe Yaoundï¿½ and the Cameroons in 1959?

HOLMES: In 1959, when we arrived, we were the second wave, so to speak. The post had been opened two years before. It was a two-man post, a consul and a vice consul, and so when I arrived I replaced the vice consul, who was Walt Cutler, who later was ambassador in several places and today is the head of the Meridian House.

Q: Yes, I've interviewed Walt.

HOLMES: They'd been there two years, and then we took their place. We were a two-man consulate that grew very quickly into a consulate general. This was basically August, 1959, when I replaced him, and by January 1st, 1960, we were an embryonic embassy, because that was the date of Cameroon's independence. It had been a trust territory. French Cameroon had been administered by France as a result of successive decision by the League of Nations and then the United Nations. After World War I, Cameroon and Togo had both been German colonies, and they were established as trust territories, and each territory was divided into a French zone and a British zone. In Cameroon, the French zone was the dominant part of the country.

And so we arrived there. It was an extremely interesting place that was not exactly a colony but had been treated in some respects like other French colonies, but what surprised me was the commitment of resources on the part of France to a country that they knew they could not hope to keep, because after all it had been mandated to them as a trust territory. When I got there, there were over a thousand Cameroonians in lycï¿½es and universities in France, for example. There was an enormous aluminum smelter at a place called Edï¿½a that the French had built. There was a hydroelectric plant there as well. They had damned the Wouri River. This wasn't just to produce rural electrification for the Cameroonians, but also this was helping French industry, and they also owned bauxite mines. They were active in Guinea. That was a French colony, and the alumina product was then shipped to Cameroon where it was transformed at this plant into aluminum ingots, which were then exported. So there was a high measure of French commercial self-interest, but at the same time, there was a sense of preparing a country for a future where they would be on their own, and I'm particularly thinking of their education and their government structure. So that was the atmosphere. There were cadres of Cameroonians that worked in all the ministries that were directors of services and chefs de cabinet and so forth that were obviously preparing themselves to step forward. There had been already two series of elections, beginning, I think, in 1956. The beginning of the democratic process was well underway.

Q: Who was the senior officer when you first arrived?

HOLMES: A guy named Bolard More was the consul general.

Q: What was his background? Was he an African hand?

HOLMES: He had served in Africa. He had served in the American consulate in Lagos - I think it may have been his first post - in the late '30s, just before World War II.

Q: He was quite a-

HOLMES: He was a senior man, an eccentric - a decided eccentric.

Q: How was he eccentric?

HOLMES: Well, he kept a case of Hershey bars locked up in the consulate safe, and if you wrote a particularly good dispatch, he would reward you with a Hershey bar, accompanied by the explanation that when he'd been a good boy growing up, that his mother would give him a Hershey bar. He also was extraordinarily stubborn and had an almost warped sense of duty. I noticed that he wasn't well, didn't seem to be well. I knew that he was going to make this treacherous drive 125 miles south to a place called Ebolowa, where there was a Presbyterian mission station. By the way, the American Presbyterians were the first colonists in Cameroon. They were in there right after the Civil War, long before the Germans came. There were three excellent American doctors there. So he went down basically to have a dental checkup. I tipped him off. I knew them because I had already been down there, and I sort of said, "Try to persuade the consul general to have a physical while he's there. He's very stubborn, but I'm concerned about him." So they did that, and they found an enormous tumor on the side of his rib cage, which he could easily touch while showering, and they phoned me to say that he had to be evacuated immediately to the United States. He was in quite a bit of pain. So I just went out to the local aero-club and I hired a little airplane, with no authority of course, and had it flown down to pick him up, because the road - the potholed road - it took about nine hours to drive 125 miles, the road was so bad. I was concerned about his condition, so I sent this plane down to bring him back. He was furious with me for having done something irregular without any authority from Washington. He had with him, though, the very stern recommendation of the American doctors in Ebolowa that he should be evacuated, and he was determined that he would send this by sea pouch. I made a nuisance of myself, and said that if he didn't do it, I would send it by telegram, and I did, and he was evacuated. He left about four days later, and he got back here, and he actually went to Walter Reed. It was never quite clear to me why, but they did remove the cancer, and they basically saved his life, and he lived for quite a few years thereafter.

Q: This was maybe a little later, but at one time, did you feel the heavy hand of Dakar on you, because many of the French posts, early consulates and all, were being run out of Dakar? Was that still going on when you were there?

HOLMES: No, that wasn't going on. Dakar was, however, the communications relay point for our com system. Our communications went to Dakar and from there to Paris and then to Washington.

Q: But where did you report, from the Cameroons, before you became and embassy? Straight up to Paris?

HOLMES: No, no. We reported to the fledgling African bureau. We reported to the Department.

Q: So you were basically a-

HOLMES: Because actually my father - I think I recounted that in an earlier session - had spent three months traveling through Africa at John Foster Dulles's behest, and his trip around Africa was over by the end of 1957. He'd made recommendations for an independent American foreign policy apparatus in Africa, instead of going through the old colonial offices of the European powers, that we would deal directly with these new countries. By then there was - and I believe it was Joseph Satterthwaite who was the first assistant secretary for African affairs.

Q: That sounds about right. Even though there were just the two of you, were you being treated really as an embassy even when you were a consular post?

HOLMES: No, we only really started functioning as an embassy after the independence celebrations, which were on the first of January, and which were quite an extraordinary event, because it was really the first country to become independent in Africa other than Ghana, which became independent in 1956, and Kwame Nkrumah and so forth. We had an extraordinary delegation that came out. There were five ambassadors, and the senior ambassador was Henry Cabot Lodge, wearing - I kid thee not - a white linen suit.

Q: He was wearing it later on in Saigon.

HOLMES: We also had another ambassador that I remember very well because he was a fascinating figure, General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., who was an African American Air Force general, and his father had been the first African American ever to get flag rank in the Army, shortly after the end of World War II.

Q: And to graduate from the military academy, too.

HOLMES: Anyway, B. O. Davis was an amazing man, and we enjoyed having him there. We were really stretched in this tiny little embassy we had. We didn't have an ambassador at that point. We had a chargï¿½, who replaced Bolard More, Leo Cyr, and myself, an administrative officer, whose spouse was the secretary, and we had a CIA representative, and he had a secretary. That was the entire embassy, so everybody pitched in. My wife was the escort officer for General Davis. The facilities were fairly minimal in a place like Yaoundï¿½, and so there was a lot of scrambling about, but it was a quite fascinating event, crowned, I remember, in the gardens of the governor general's palace, which looked like a huge marshmallow sitting in the middle of Yaoundï¿½, a Miss Indï¿½pendance election, and there was a jury made up of representatives of the various countries that were there, and the chairman of the jury was Golda Meir, representing Israel.

Q: All these sultry beauties came out?

HOLMES: That's right. There was one from every province of Cameroon.

Q: Well, in the first place, were we sort of under instructions to let the French have their way? In other words, were we trying to keep a relatively low profile at that point, or not? How were we treating this?

HOLMES: Well, we were trying to do it in a cooperative way, very definitely, moving, I would say, deliberately but gradually, not to displace the French certainly... I found myself, frankly, in the embassy, I was a kind of committee of one. I didn't see the French presence in the same malevolent way that some of my colleagues did because I saw the enormous investment by France, and I though that was a benefit for the Cameroonians. So we moved, basically, to establish an American presence, including an American cultural presence, and eventually we had a very fine USIS officer who came, who was an African American, and then he started an English language program, which was needed. It was the beginning of establishing our cultural presence. That was resented to some degree - I don't want to exaggerate - by the French embassy. But another African American came in, and he started a series of courses that were available to Cameroonians. I as a young vice consul, third secretary, had a ball. I did everything in the place. I was the political officer, the consular officer, the economic officer, the AID officer. Until USIA arrived, I was USIA. The first AID mission came. The Cameroonians were interested, as most new countries are, in having a monument to their independence, and so their idea was to extend the railroad that went from Douala, the seaport, to Yaoundï¿½, the capital, to a place called Ngaounderï¿½, up north. They wanted to take it all the way up to the top of the country. So an AID official came, and he was an expert in railroads, and he and I went out on one of these little inspection cars and went up and down the length of the railroad. It took us several days to travel up and down, and we made an interesting discovery, that at a certain point we stopped because he noticed something about the rails. We got down on our hands and knees and examined these rails, and they were all German. What the French had done to save money, since there was a certain amount of erosion on one side, when the French took over, they reversed them, and they were still serviceable.

Have I already recounted the night we had a crisis?

Q: In Yaoundï¿½?

HOLMES: Yes.

Q: No, we haven't. Whatever. I certainly don't have it on tape.

HOLMES: Well, that's an interesting story, again, an experience for a young Foreign Service officer. A couple of months after independence, Richard Moose, who was later undersecretary for management and in the Carter Administration was assistant secretary for African affairs, Dick Moose came out - he was a Foreign Service officer, and he'd had a tour of duty in Mexico City - as the administrative officer, and we became fast friends. In fact, he lived with us for the first several months at post until his wife came. Dick was new to Africa and the French language, but he was the senior guy, so at a certain point he was chargï¿½ and I was the number two. One day I got a call from the diplomatic advisor to the president saying that the president wanted to see me immediately. So Dick and I went over there, and there were the prime minister and the foreign minister, the three of them. They seemed quite agitated because they had reports of a Czech freighter offloading weapons in burlap bags onto African pirogues, which were then being paddled into the beaches, and people had reported that they were weapons and they had been distributed to tribal elements down somewhere near Douala. They were concerned that a dissident movement called the Union of the Cameroonian Peoples (the UPC), which had opposed the French presence and then independence under the terms that had occurred, led by a fellow named Fï¿½lix Moumiï¿½. They had carried out quite a few assassinations while we were there. In fact, the week after we arrived, they killed a number of French people right downtown with machetes. But the Cameroonian President Ahmadou Ahidjo was at pains to point out that this group, with the help of the Warsaw Pact, was obviously trying to unseat his new government. They wanted the United States to help. So we got as much information as we could on this. The CIA representative back at the embassy had no information about it. So Dick Moose and I sat down and wrote the dispatch of our lives. This was going to make our careers. You know, this is a crisis. So we wrote a dispatch. To give you an idea of the kind of communications we had in those days, after writing the dispatch, we then went and opened the vault, got out the "one-time pad" and transliterated the message into code, carefully choosing the right letters, typed it up ourselves, and then, since it was nine o'clock at night, I then went down to the PTT, the post office, which set up by the French was now run by the Cameroonians, and it was after hours, so there was only one person on duty. I couldn't get him to answer the door, so I went around to the back and looked through the window, and I could see that he was sort of snoozing, slumped at a table, and there was a half-empty bottle of palm wine there. So I finally got him to answer the door, I made him some coffee, sobered him up, and finally, I think about two hours later, he sent the message. Well, of course, it was relayed to Dakar, to Paris, to Washington. By the time it got to Washington, it was totally garbled, and it was a "night action" cable, you know, secret night action. So they then sent a service message saying "We couldn't read your message. Please repeat." But by the time we went through the whole process a second time the whole crisis had passed. It turned out to be a very inaccurate report that the new Cameroonian government received. So there was a lesson in that for me.

Q: How did you find the new Cameroonian government. People I've talked to who've dealt with the early ones usually have a... Europeans who want to do business would call up a ministry and say, "Let me speak to the white." In other words, there was a certain bypassing of the native-

HOLMES: There was some of that for a while - I would say probably in the first six to eight months. In every ministry there was a director of services, whereas under the old French trust setup there had been French ministers with Africans. The best educated ones were director of services and chefs de cabinet and so forth. The situation reversed after independence. So, yes, there was very often a French civil servant who was in the back room and who was helping make things run, and obviously if it involved contracts and obviously funneling as many as he could to French companies, which was not surprising. But that didn't last for a very long time. I noticed there were some remarkable Cameroonians that came out of university and that rose up and quickly established themselves. I remember in particular the second foreign minister. The first one was a man named Charles Okala, who spoke remarkable French and was extraordinarily well educated. I remember he made a dramatic speech to the UN where he talked about the Solomonic judgment of the League of Nations in having divided Cameroon into two babies, one for the French and one for the British. He was extremely cultivated and very smart, shrewd. But he was eventually replaced by another extremely cultivated and shrewd Cameroonian named Jean Faustus Bï¿½tayï¿½nï¿½. There were people that emerged that had been prepared, basically, by French schooling. That's what kept coming home to me. Remarkable people who very quickly assumed responsibility of their offices and were sailing on their own and frequently turning aside the advice - often uninvited - of their French counselors.

Q: How was the amalgamation of the British and the French sides into this one country? How did it work?

HOLMES: That happened really after I left. I was there for two years. But it happened in stages. The British sliver of Cameroon, which nestled between the large French Cameroon and Nigeria, was divided into two sections. The northern section was largely inhabited by Hausas, which was a very large Nigerian tribe, and so there as a great deal of agitation to join Nigeria. If memory serves correctly - this was happening just as I was leaving - they had a referendum, and I believe that they joined Nigeria. It was subsequent to that, perhaps a year or two later, that the larger part of British Cameroon then joined French Cameroon into one large state.

Q: Were you finding that you were naturally attracted toward the British side? I mean our embassy?

HOLMES: No. We had extraordinarily little contact with the British side. One reason for that is that while we were there we only had this very small embassy in Yaoundï¿½. We didn't have a consulate in Douala. That came later. Douala was the seaport and the commercial center and was much bigger and more active.

Q: Was that on the British side, Douala?

HOLMES: No, that was on the French side. That was actually the major seaport of Cameroon, and it was on the French side. I would go down there periodically, every two months or so, just to talk to people, find out what was going on, and sometimes do some consular services. I took our new ambassador, Leland Barrows, down there to meet the mayor and the municipal council, and that was a very interesting encounter. It was rather stiff. We had lunch, and the mayor, Mayor Tokoto, was trying to break the ice. He was working harder at that than Ambassador Barrows was, so finally he said, "You know, Mr. Ambassador, I come from a very..."

So Mayor Tokoto, trying to impress the ambassador with his authority, said, "We've been around for a long time. In fact, we sold a number of slaves from the hinterland to the United States and made a lot of money." There was a kind of a silence around the table, and then Barrows, rising to the occasion, said, "Well, I'm sure that Mr. Holmes's great-great grandfather bought a lot of them." Laughter broke out around the table, and all the Cameroonians just thought that was a hoot. That really did it. After that we got along famously.

Q: Was Barrows African American?

HOLMES: No, he wasn't. He was from Kansas.

Q: What was his background?

HOLMES: Well, he basically was an AID officer, and in World War II, something I found out - I had a hard time dealing with this - he was senior official in the War Relocation Authority, basically that authority which interned Japanese Americans. How anybody could possibly have agreed to serve in that capacity still troubles me.

Q: How did he relate. He doesn't sound like a very promising-

HOLMES: He spoke French.

Q: Oh, he spoke French.

HOLMES: Oh, yes. He spoke French quite well. He knew a lot about development economics, which was extraordinarily helpful, but he did have an ingrained prejudice against the French. He saw the French as the enemy, and that they were only interested in exploiting the Cameroon, and that resulted in many long discussions between the two of us.

Q: I would think that this was something that took, really, almost a generation of Foreign Service officers to work out in Africa, in a way. I mean, this idea of we were the "independence country," and our anti-colonial attitude and coming into this, and the French, from our point of view being beastly on things, which continues to today. I would think it would be very easy to find this idea even though we weren't trying to have the takeover from the French as the official policy as being the dominant power at the same time be very hard to restrain our people.

HOLMES: Well, I would describe it in a different way. By the time we were in Africa and for several years after, there was already a process underway of various countries acceding to independence, but under French tutelage. In other words, the French were not trying to prevent this. If you remember, by that time, Charles De Gaulle had come back in 1958, the Fifth Republic had been established, and one of the things that De Gaulle established was a new French equivalence of the commonwealth, basically a French community. I can't remember exactly what it was called, but it was a French community of nations in Africa, and he invited representation in the French Senate from African countries, and there were benefits, obviously, for African countries to become associate members of this new French community. The one country that opposed this invitation staunchly was Sekou Tourï¿½ in Guinea, and De Gaulle was furious that they hadn't accepted his grand offer, and so when the French left they took everything. I mean they took the phones out of the offices. It was extraordinary.

Q: And the faucets.

HOLMES: It was a real severing of the umbilical cord. But the rest - French West Africa and then the southern part, the sort of Brazzaville sector - these countries were moving towards independence, and the French were not opposing it. In fact, they were helping the process, but with a view to maintaining their influence - in fact, wherever possible their control, not only of the foreign policy of those countries but also of their economies. Of course the CFA franc was still pegged to the French franc, so the French treasury had a lot of influence on the situation. But they weren't opposing independence; they were just carving out an area of influence, which of course has remained, in increasingly diminishing ways, to this day.

Q: I would have thought that one of the most sensitive things would be to set up English classes and things of this nature, because France and the French language and all, and all of a sudden to throw English into this pot would have been very annoying.

HOLMES: Yes, they were annoyed. There's no doubt about it. But first of all, it wasn't very widespread. I mean, our English language classes were pretty small. It was a very small program, and I daresay the program was also small in other parts of West Africa, and they really kind of blanketed their countries with French. You see the French - as opposed to the British - they had a very different approach to instruction. They basically sent successive generations of Frenchmen and French women to teach in African schools, whereas the British, after an initial generation, the Nigerians, for example, next door, then became the teachers. So the British began to bow out of the actual primary and secondary schooling that the French maintained. By doing that, they maintained a certain measure of influence. In fact, I remember there was a song that was played, and everybody used to laugh about it. It was a cha-cha-cha, and it was called "Nos ancï¿½tres, les gaulois [French: Our ancestors, the Gauls]." The humor in it was that the French had been so successful with their civilizing mission, that many young Africans thought that their ancestors were the Gauls.

Q: Were we concerned at that point about the "Communist menace," the Soviet menace? Did we seen Cameroons as any kind of a battlefield?

HOLMES: Not at the time that I was there, although there was the story I told you about the Czech weapons. Whether this was true or whether this was a rather shrewd attempt on the part of the new Cameroonian leadership to open up what they would hope would be a floodgate of AID, recognizing that even if they weren't, they might be a battlefield in the Cold War. But there were influences. I mean, this fellow Fï¿½lix Moumiï¿½ of the UPC, who was living in Geneva, and we knew that at one time the Soviets had him on the payroll. But he was eventually assassinated by an organization called the Red Hand. No one ever quite knew who they were or who sponsored them, but he was assassinated in Geneva.

Q: Were you getting any feel for what American policy was? I mean, was it just to keep the flag flying, or were we-

HOLMES: No, we were establishing our presence and our influence, and as I say, there was some initial skirmishing with the old colonial offices, with the British and the French, but by and large I think there was a sense that we were embarked along similar strategic lines to further the development of these countries for joining the family of nations and also, down the road, to ensure that they did not become prey to Soviet-style coups and areas of influence - which happened in Guinea, of course. Sekou Tourï¿½ was pretty smart about keeping control of his own country's destiny, but willingly worked with the Soviets and milked them for whatever he could get in the way of assistance.

Q: I realize that you were at one level, and the Cameroons were probably one exception in the whole African place, but was there at that time a firm conviction in the thought process that no matter what happened we didn't want to see Africa start splitting up along tribal lines? I mean in other words, keep the borders.

HOLMES: Now that's a hard one for me to give much of a perspective on for the simple reason that Cameroon was the racial crossroads of Africa, because it was every kind... I mean, we had the Nigero-Sudanese group, we had the Bantu group, we had Pygmies, we had the sort of Hamitic and even Semitic influence in the north of Cameroon, the Fulani tribesmen, who were Muslim. There was a reasonably clear line of demarcation between the Islamic north and the animist/Christian south, and it was basically where the jungle started, because that's where the tsetse fly decimated the Fulani cavalry when they came 150 years before out of the north and moved into that part of Africa. They only went as far as the tsetse fly permitted them to. There was a place, I remember, in the area close to British Cameroon and Nigeria, a river called the Noun River, and to the north of the river was a tribe called Bamoun. This was all in French Cameroon. The Bamoun tribe was Muslim, and on the other side of the River were the Bamilï¿½kï¿½. The Bamilï¿½kï¿½ were animist/Christian, and they were the sort of entrepreneurs of Cameroon - very, very smart, very shrewd business people. They fought periodically. They would raid each others' villages, and the central government in Yaoundï¿½ would have to go take care of it. But it's kind of an example of a kind of natural line of division that vegetation and wildlife produced in the settlement of that part of Africa, but it was really quite an extraordinary grouping of different peoples in Cameroon. It really was the sort of racial crossroads of Africa.

Q: Did you have any thought at that point - this was sort of the high point of enthusiasm and all that - of becoming an Africanist? Was this where you were pointing yourself at that point?

HOLMES: No, not particularly. I was fascinated by it. I had an extraordinary two years and enjoyed every minute of it, learned a lot. I might have gone in the direction of becoming an Africanist except that my wife was very, very ill and nearly died. I nearly lost her in Cameroon during the last two months that we were there. She had an unexplained pain. The one doctor that was there, the one surgeon, was up-country looking after some chieftain's wife, and so we were just waiting for him to come back anxiously, and she had three days of terrible pain, and when he came back he decided to have exploratory surgery and found that she had an amoebic abscess on her colon, which quickly developed into peritonitis, and this little bush hospital in Yaoundï¿½ had six French sisters, a nursing order, and one of the sisters was the anesthesiologist, and so she stayed with Marilyn all night to nurse her, care for her during the critical postoperative period. Then for about five or six days it was really pretty dicey. But she got through it. By that time we had our first child, and so the DCM/chargï¿½, Leo Cyr, and his wonderful wife, took over the baby and took care of her. I just stationed myself as a full-time monitor/nurse by Marilyn's bed, because the French sisters couldn't stay there the whole time and I didn't have confidence in some of the other orderlies. We got through that, and then we requested... We were about three or four weeks short of our two-year mandatory assignment there, and we requested permission from Washington to leave early because she was in such terrible condition and the doctors strongly recommended that she be evacuated, basically, that we leave early. Her parents were stationed by that time in Morocco, in Tangier, and there was an American naval hospital in what had been called Port Lyautey - it was then called Kenitra - so that seemed advisable, to go there and recuperate. Well, in those days, the State Department's medical division was pretty primitive in the way it operated, and they refused permission. They said we could not be evacuated because I hadn't completed the two years. There was provision in the law for emergency evacuation, but not for emergency recuperation, and so they refused permission to evacuate her. So I basically, with the ambassador's permission, borrowed money from my father, bought my own tickets, and left early - took Marilyn to Rabat. I said Tangier, but I meant Rabat, and that was a very good thing that we did. We left about three and a half weeks before the end of our tour. She did finally recover from that and we were reassigned to Washington, but her case and an officer named McKinnon who died, I think it was in Ouagadougou during the same period and was very ill... because the Department's procedures for taking care of people were so inflexible, that the French ambassador personally interceded in this - I think it was Ouagadougou - and was able to get McKinnon - his name was Bob McKinnon; he was chargï¿½, the number two - get him evacuated to Paris on an Air France plane, but he either died on the way or shortly after getting to Paris. So these two cases, Marilyn's and McKinnon's, were used by the Department to go and get special authority and special funding from the Congress to establish a crash medical program for all these new posts in Africa. That eventually was done, and the regulations were revised. But Marilyn's was one of the two test cases.

I was pretty upset, as you can imagine, but it meant, of course, that the idea of having a career in Africa was out, because she had subsequent problems as a result of this. The early experience that she'd had with amoeba and various other tropical diseases in Cambodia, where she had been evacuated a number of times to Hong Kong for treatment, plus the African experience, together meant that she was kind of damaged. So wisely we were not able to get clearance to go to places that did not have good medical facilities and a reasonably salubrious atmosphere.

Q: Well, you came back in '61 and-

HOLMES: -and I was assigned to the Operations Center as a reports officer. We had three eight-hour shifts, and we changed every two days, which was madness. We should have been on it a week at a time so that you could get adjusted, but despite the fact that I was an honors graduate in English from Princeton, I learned more about the English language and good writing from a guy who was the chief reports officer named Sam Gammon in the six months that spent in the Operations Center having my nightly summary critiqued the following day by Sam, things that we would write for the Secretary out of all the avalanche of cables that came in overnight. That was a great experience, and I did that for about six months.

Q: The Op Center was relatively new at that time.

HOLMES: It was relatively new, and our job - particularly if you were on the graveyard shift - you would go in there and-

Q: The "graveyard shift," for somebody who didn't know, would be-

HOLMES: The graveyard shift would be basically from midnight to eight in the morning. We would sift through - there were three or four of us on duty - and we would divide up the world geographically, and then somebody would handle Europe, somebody would handle Africa, somebody the Middle East and the Asia and Pacific area, and so forth, and go through all the cable traffic and basically write up the most compelling issue stories for the early morning summary for the secretary. They would typically be maybe a dozen stories - depending on what was going on in the world. There might be a few more or a few less than that, but it was quite an experience.

Q: So you were probably doing that, what, until-

HOLMES: I did that into sometime in early 1962, when I was recruited by the undersecretary for political affairs, George McGhee, to be the staff assistant in his office. He had two assistants, a senior and a junior, and I was the junior assistant, and I did that kind of work for him.

Q: Let's go back to the Op Center for a minute. You had been away and there had been sort of a real change with the Kennedy Administration coming in. Did you get any feel for the style of Kennedy Administration?

HOLMES: Oh, absolutely. This is really quite wonderful. Of course, Kennedy was a self-styled diplomatist and internationalist, historian, and he always wanted to get the view of the Desk officer. This is something unusual in today's world. I lived next door. I lived in a little row house on 23rd street, just around the corner from the Department, which is now the Pan American Health Union. We were dispossessed by the right of eminent domain. They tore it down, and we had to move. I lived next door to a guy who was the Nepalese Desk officer, and there was a visit coming to Washington by the king of Nepal, I think it was - the Nepalese leader - and there was an issue that we had because there was a problem with India. Kennedy, in reading the briefing materials, wasn't satisfied that he had the full story, so he phoned the Desk officer. That night, when Bob came home, he knocked on my door and he told me how he'd been summoned to the White House and he sat down with the President and briefed him for about 25 minutes on what was going on. That was not an isolated case. Kennedy did that a lot. He cared about the Foreign Service, and he wanted to make an impact. As a matter of fact, I got promoted that year from FSO-8, I think, to FSO-7, and that year the entire class of promotees were invited to the Rose Garden, and the President swore us in and spoke to us and then came and shook hands with every one of us. That was an exhilarating experience, as you can imagine.

Q: I know. I was in Washington during part of this time, and sometimes I would call people up from another office and say, "My name's Kennedy," you know, and I would get a very long "Hello-o-o," you know, people very touchy. I mean, who the hell is this Kennedy?

Were there any particular things during the Op Center time that particularly stirred the pot when you were there?

HOLMES: Do you mean in terms of crises?

Q: Crises, or were you getting-

HOLMES: Nothing that comes to mind, except, of course, things were going badly in the Congo, and because I had served in Cameroon, I ended up doing a lot of the summaries about what was going on in Africa, and I think that because of what I was writing during the night about what was going on in the Congo is perhaps one of the reasons why my name came to the attention of George McGhee, the undersecretary for political affairs, probably became some people that I knew on the Congo Desk, knowing that he was looking for a staff assistant, proposed me. One of them was Frank Carlucci, and Frank and I had been in college together. He was a couple of years ahead of me, but of course Frank was serving in the Congo when Kennedy was President, and there was a riot, and actually he was stabbed in the shoulder while trying to protect some people on a bus, and he came to the attention of Kennedy. Anyway, I think that was the one sort of crisis that got my attention, because that's what I was working on, and that led to my next job in the Department.

Q: There's a book called Congo Cables, wasn't it, by Madeleine Kalb, I think.

HOLMES: I never read it but I know it.

Q: It talks about that crisis. Well, then, you worked for McGhee from what, it would be '62?

HOLMES: Yes, from early '62 until 1963, when I was assigned to Rome, which was a welcome change, I must say. That was a wonderful assignment, and my first period there I was assigned as the special assistant to the ambassador.

Q: Well, let's talk about '62-63 with George McGhee. McGhee is still with us. What was his style of operation, and how did he use you, from your observation?

HOLMES: I was really the junior staff assistant in the office, and I sat in on a lot of meetings, took notes, wrote up reports on important meetings and tracked certain issues for him. He was the sort of Seventh Floor principal responsible for what was going on in Africa, and particularly the Congo, and for a long, long period, during all the crises over Patrice Lumumba and Katanga and our own people who got in trouble there and the Belgian paratroopers who went in-

Q: The Operation Dragon Rouge.

HOLMES: Yes, all of that. This was a very active period, and McGhee was spending the major amount of his time on that issue. He would have staff meetings every few days of all the regional assistant secretaries, and one of the amusing things I remember was... McGhee was very proactive and very positive and sort of a take-charge guy, and I could tell, just sitting as a young officer, watching assistant secretaries, there was a little resentment. They were assistant secretaries and there were sometimes some exchanges that were a little testy, because McGhee would always have a very strong view, and sometimes he was just flat wrong. Then there were some interesting exchanges. But the most interesting thing that would happen periodically was to watch Averell Harriman, who was then assistant secretary for the Far East, and he was totally bored by McGhee. Whether McGhee noticed this or not is not clear, but whenever McGhee began one of his soliloquies, Harriman would take his hearing aid out and handkerchief and laboriously clean his hearing aid, for the longest time, and as soon as McGhee wound down, he would put the hearing aid back in.

Q: I was wondering about the relationship with Harriman there, because Harriman had been governor of New York and advisor to Roosevelt.

HOLMES: The guy was enormously experienced.

Q: I would have thought he would sort of tower.

HOLMES: He did. Whenever an Asian-Pacific subject would come up, he would tower over McGhee, and he was not shy about going directly to the Secretary when he needed to, to talk about a particular issue, and he was always invited by the Secretary.

Q: McGhee was undersecretary for political affairs - the title keeps changing - but this was supposed to be the top professional job. How did he relate to Rusk? Did you get any feel for this, or were you too far removed?HOLMES: Too far removed. I can't really say. But he had a special connection later on, after Kennedy's assassination, with Lyndon Johnson because he's a fellow Texan, and one of my jobs was to monitor his phone calls. He had a toggle switch on his desk, and when he wanted me to listen in so that it would spare him having to debrief me, I would monitor the phone call and then make notes on this conversation - again, to keep a record of what was going on and for follow-up, particularly for actionable items; that was one of my duties. So I remember there was a fairly substantial leak in the New York Times of a very delicate policy issue, and I don't remember what the issue was. What I do remember was monitoring this phone call and Johnson just really chewing out George McGhee. I remember the way he started. He said, "George, Ah'm [I'm] so damn mad Ah [I] could say skat" - something like that. It was very much of a Texas expression. McGhee was very much on the defensive on this and was apologizing and saying, "Well, I have no idea where this leak occurred, but I'll look into it and I'll find out." So I dutifully recorded all of this, but I didn't have to wait very long. He came into my office and told me to get right on it and track it down, where this leak had occurred. Well, by the time we'd investigated it - it took us about four or five days - you know where the leak came from? Right out of Johnson's office.

Q: This so often happens.

HOLMES: You know, he was covering his tracks by blaming it on McGhee, his fellow Texan.

Q: Well, you left that job in '63. Did you get involved during the Kennedy assassination?

HOLMES: The Kennedy assassination, I was already in Italy by that time. Wait a minute. That doesn't quite jibe. I guess when Johnson called McGhee, he must have called him as Vice President, because I remember very clearly Kennedy's assassination, because I was the staff assistant to Ambassador Frederick Reinhardt. He was on a trip in the north. I was out at Ciampino Airport, which is the military airport in Rome, standing in the dark on a little strip there, which was where the air attachï¿½ was allowed to land and take off. There was a small aircraft in those days that the air attachï¿½ had, and Reinhardt was on a trip in the north. It must have been around eight or nine o'clock in the evening. I was waiting in the dark for this. I knew this plane was going to come in. I had the car to meet him and tell him what was going on. Suddenly I heard somebody yelling, in Italian, and it was a young Italian officer, and he came up and asked me if I was from the American embassy. I said, yes, I was. He said, "Are you named Holmes? Well, there's a message in that President Kennedy has been shot, and we wanted you to know that because we know that you're waiting for your ambassador to arrive." So while waiting for Reinhardt, I quickly went to a phone and got as much information as I could, and there wasn't much information, other than that he'd been shot. Then by the time Reinhardt got there and we went immediately to the embassy, it wasn't too long after that that word came in that he had died from gunshot wounds. So then that precipitated an extraordinary night and several days of the emotional outpourings of the Italian people, with people coming around to the embassy, and that night, to offer their condolences. I remember the taxicab drivers of Rome organized a cortï¿½ge the next day, and there must have been a hundred taxicabs or more that came to the embassy and deposited wreaths and flowers. It was incredible.

Q: I went through that in, of all places, Belgrade, a place we are as of today bombing. When you went to Rome, was your initial job or full job as staff assistant?

HOLMES: Yes, my job was to be the staff assistant, and I did that for about 9 months, I guess, before rotating into the Political Section as the assistant pol-mil officer.

Q: Were you concerned about going from one staff assistant job to another staff assistant job rather than going into-

HOLMES: Well, I wasn't too concerned because I knew that the job was a rotating job, and that the ambassador did not like to keep people in that job for along time, that I would be rotated in to the Political Section, which is what I wanted to do. So I knew it was just a matter of time and also that I would learn something from an extremely experienced career Foreign Service officer and that this would be a good entrï¿½e for me.

Q: Could you talk a bit about Frederick Reinhardt?

HOLMES: Yes, Frederick Reinhardt was a great professional with a lot of experience. By the time he came to Rome as ambassador, he had been ambassador in Cairo and before that I believe he was our first ambassador to Saigon, after Dien Bien Phu, basically. He was an extraordinarily experienced, very analytical guy with tremendous judgment and a sort of a historical vision of where the United States was going, where it had been. In World War II, he was a Russian language officer in our embassy in Moscow, and when the German Army was advancing, most of the embassies were evacuated, and the only two that stayed were Freddie Reinhardt and Tommy Thompson. One looked after American interests and the other after British interests. I think Freddie was looking after British interests, which I always thought was kind of curious. But he was a terrific linguist. I mean he spoke fluent Russian, French, Italian, German, and Swiss German, and he spoke them all really well - enough to be able to negotiate and do his business in all those languages. He liked learning languages well, thoroughly. He was extremely professional.

He was much more interested than some of his predecessors had been in reaching out to new Italian political formations that had been unpopular in the past. For example, before the Kennedy Administration, there had been a kind of a hands-off attitude towards contact with the Socialist Party of Italy, which is kind of amazing when you think about it, but Freddie Reinhardt recognized that there was an Albanian American named Steve Peters, a remarkable officer, who looked like Ben Gurion. He was short and had flowing white hair, like a lion's mane. He was an amazing figure. He spoke beautiful Italian, and he had contacts (which were not entirely approved) with members of the Socialist Party. Reinhardt encouraged him to bring his friendship with Pietro Nenni, who was the head of the Socialist Party, out into the open because he wanted Washington to recognize that this was important to do. He succeeded. Actually, in the Democratic Administration, Kennedy, it wasn't that difficult to get them to do that. Of course, the Communist Party was out of bounds. We still handled relations with the Vatican through one officer in the Political Section in those days, and Reinhardt wanted to change that as well. But he was an extremely professional guy, and he was frequently asked to comment or make recommendations on policy areas outside of Italy because of his tremendous experience.

I remember one incident in particular that says something. He was staunchly, as you might imagine... we were all sort of Cold War warriors, and particularly given his experience in World War II, and he wasn't really allowed to go after the PCI, the Communist Party of Italy. But there was an interesting event that occurred. One of Reinhardt's duties as the American ambassador was to be part of the committee that looked after the Testaccio Cemetery in Rome, which was a cemetery for non-Catholics, basically - Russian Orthodox or Episcopalian or what have you. This, in the 18th century, had been a cemetery for nonbelievers and prostitutes, and it became sort of hallowed ground for the diplomatic community because there were all kinds of interesting people buried there, like - I can't remember if it was Keats or Shelley that was buried there - and various literary figures. It was quite an amazing institution, and it was run by this council of ambassadors. At a certain point, one of the early leaders of the Italian Communist Party died, and his family wanted him to be buried in Testaccio Cemetery because they couldn't get him into a Catholic cemetery and he had spent many years in Russia, in the Soviet Union. So Reinhardt was absolutely determined that he would not be buried in Testaccio Cemetery, and watching him operate - and we all worked with him on this - watching him mount a campaign of diplomatic persuasion and phone calls and moves and countermoves with the Italian Foreign Ministry was really quite remarkable. It was politically astute for the Christian Democratic-dominated Government of Italy to allow this to happen, because these sort of early glimmerings of what would come into full focus in the late '70s of a possible compromise - the compromesso storico, the "historic compromise" between Catholic Italy and the Communist Party of Italy - the early adumbrations of that were already occurring there in the '60s. So various people who had ambitions were trying their damnedest - including the President of Italy - to have us bury this guy in Testaccio Cemetery. Reinhardt was determined that this wasn't going to happen, and he succeeded. He even tracked down the guy who was head of the burial subcommittee, who was on leave - the Swedish ambassador - and he was on leave in Sweden and they had no forwarding address for him because he was up in the north woods in his cabin. So Reinhardt somehow got a friend in the embassy [in Stockholm] to track him down and get his vote, to prevent this from happening. Eventually this guy was dumped in some unhallowed ground of the municipal cemetery. He was concerned that if it happened that this burial spot would become a shrine for the Italian Communist movement. Anyway, it didn't happen; he succeeded. It was quite marvelous.

Q: Such is the world of diplomacy. I can see his point. This would mean that you would have sort of like Lenin's Tomb in... No, who's buried in... It's Marx that's buried in some British graveyard.

HOLMES: Yes, he's in a London cemetery, oh, absolutely. [Highgate Cemetery] We had that in mind, sure. I'll try to remember who it was now, the Communist Party leader. It wasn't Gramsci. I'm quite sure it was not Gramsci.

Q: I was just thinking - I can't pronounce it - Togliatti?

HOLMES: Togliatti. It may have been Togliatti. It may well have been Togliatti. [died 21 August 1964]

Q: I would think so because Togliatti was really a big, big figure.

HOLMES: Yes, I believe it was Togliatti, but I'm not 100 percent certain, but I think you're right.

Q: When you went to the Political Section, what were you doing?

HOLMES: Political-military work. I was the assistant pol-mil officer.

Q: How is your feeling on time? Should we maybe stop?

HOLMES: At 11:00 I have to go.

Q: Okay, let's talk a bit about this. How did you view, both working with the ambassador and then in the Political Section, our involvement in the Italian political process? The percentages of change seemed so damn small for about 30 years practically after the '48 election and all. It seemed that we got awfully involved at a pretty minor level as far as reporting on the local nuances of Italian politics.

HOLMES: You're absolutely right. That's another striking difference between what is considered important today, in terms of political reporting, and what was considered important then. We had a large political section. We had one officer who devoted full time to reporting on the Christian Democratic movement, who would sometimes get a little help from other junior officers because he also had to cover the Vatican. We had another officer reporting on the Socialist Party and the social democratic movement, another one on the right, and then there was the political counselor himself. So we probably had four or five people that were reporting on Italian politics, and then somebody reporting on the Communist Party. Of course we weren't allowed to have any contact with them. We had a very large CIA section, with officers who had cover as diplomats and who were accredited, and some very experienced Italian hands there, who were practically bilingual in Italian and really knew the place - in the Agency's section.

My work at that time was largely political-military because we had probably 60 bases and installations throughout Italy, and there were all kinds of status-of-forces problems, and there was a lot to do.

Q: It's always struck me - I'm speaking now, I was consul general in Naples in the '79-81 period and I had been outside the area - and I was always struck by how we were reporting on the minutiae of politics there, and really not a hell of a lot had changed. It just seemed like we'd gotten caught up in this Rome-centric dance that went on, by the politicians there. It was beginning to change, but earlier on it must have... Did you have the feeling of sort of maybe we're overdoing this? Or were we so caught up with it that we didn't realize it?

HOLMES: I did not have a view that we were overdoing it, no. I think probably it's because the American stakes in what happened to Italy were very important in World War II and the immediate aftermath of World War II, and I had been sort of brought up with that realization, beginning with my father's role working as the civil affairs chief for Eisenhower. My dad played a major role, and Eisenhower and Bedell Smith agreed with him, in persuading... Major role - I mean, he proposed the idea of turning Italy into a co-belligerent against Nazi Germany. This was not easy to do because the allied strategic goal was unconditional surrender of all the Axis powers. My father was persuaded that it would take so many divisions to garrison Italy, and we were struggling to assemble an invasion force sufficient to do the job in Normandy. It just didn't make any sense to him, nor did it to Eisenhower. It took two runs to Roosevelt and Churchill to allow them to then proceed with a plan to put in Badoglio. Badoglio was very nervous because the German Army was not that far north. The condition that Roosevelt and Churchill put down was that he would have to declare himself publicly on the side of the allies against Nazi Germany, and he was very nervous about that. But that finally happened.

So early on I had a kind of a dose of the importance of the Italian boot, and then afterwards, when Jimmy Dunn, who was a friend of my father's, was ambassador there in '48, it was a critical turning point - as you'll recall - when the referendum after the war, as to whether or not to become a republic or to remain a kingdom, it barely passed for the establishment of the democratic republic. It carried because the south voted largely to retain the kingdom, and the north voted strongly to establish a republic, with a lot of help from the Communist Party. It was a close vote. Then, with a lot of help from us... There was a movement to basically turn Italy to the Communist world, and Dunn played a big role in that in 1948, preventing that from happening. So it was always in people's minds. It was a very strong party. The Communist movement in Italy was huge. They had played a role, the partisans-

Q: It ran close to a third of the vote at any time. I mean it was well entrenched.

HOLMES: Yes, but looking back on it, of course, we were overstaffed and we were a little bit obsessed. Yes, that's certainly true.

Q: Well, on the political-military side, how did you find the military fit in - I mean our military - because I've often heard people say that sometimes dealing with the Pentagon was a lot worse than dealing with a foreign country in which you're stationed?

HOLMES: Well, it's interesting that you say that because I can recall an incident. I was a young officer. I was a very eager political-military affairs officer, and the ambassador was very concerned about, basically, keeping control of the US military and where they were and what they were doing and getting his permission to carry out certain activities in the country. My boss and I were very attuned to that, and so I discovered at one point that there was an unauthorized Seventh Army unit operating in Italy, one that had not sought-

Q: The Seventh Army being stationed up in Heidelberg.

HOLMES: Up in Heidelberg. But this was Italy. We had a lot of forces, of course, in Vicenza and Verona and Pisa and all over the place. We carefully kept track of all these because also we were the sort of linchpin with the Italian authorities, with the Ministry of Defense to make sure that we were operating with complete approval by the Italian authorities. We had very good deal in Italy, and we didn't want to disturb that. So at one point I discovered a unit which had not been declared to us, and it was a purchasing operation to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables for the forces in Germany, so I exposed this. It turned out that I blew the cover of an Army Intelligence operation, which did not please the Pentagon very much. The ambassador was basically... They didn't have his permission to do that either, and he recognized that people were pretty sore in Washington, but in a way he was sort of pleased that I had done this. He said, "Next time, check it out a little bit more carefully."

Q: At that time how did you find our status-of-forces agreement working with the Italians?

HOLMES: It worked pretty well. The Italians - and I had a second experience with that later, when I went back as deputy chief of mission - basically were very good hosts. You had to work at it and keep them informed and, oh, seek their authorization even though you knew it was almost automatic but it was just a question of diplomatic politeness. But they basically worked pretty well. We had amazing access in Italian ports for nuclear powered ships and even for ships that had nuclear weapons on board. The Italians, it didn't trouble them at all that we exercised the policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons on our ships. At one point we had access to as many as six ports in Italy, in the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian.

Q: Did you find that the Communists in this period kept trying to throw a monkey wrench into the works?

HOLMES: Yes, particularly when they had an opportunity to deploy their labor forces, to have strikes. That was their major weapon. Or if we made a mistake, they would exploit that. Of course, a famous one in later years was when we pursued the terrorists that had attacked the Achille Lauro, you know? We forced them down in Sigonella, and then there was a standoff because we share a base there with the Italian Air Force. There was a standoff between our people and the Italian forces. That was embarrassing. That kind of incident obviously was always a setback, which is why we had a two-man political-military section working full-time on keeping everything regular, seeking approval where we needed to, keeping the Italians informed, and most of all tracking our own military to make sure that they did what they were required to do and coordinated on all of these things.

Q: Well, tax is a problem, because later I'm sure you got hit with the whole tax problem. These were Italian civilians who were working for our troops and all that. Was that a problem at the time?

HOLMES: I cant recall now in any detail, but there were, as part of the status-of-forces arrangements, there were tax problems, and there were disputes about what was exempt and what wasn't, and we would have our lawyers sit down together and hammer it out. Some of those discussions went on for months, if not years.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point. We have talked about... You were in Italy from when to when?

HOLMES: 1963 till 1967.

Q: Now we've talked about your time as the ambassador's aide and political-military. Do you want to think about it if there are any incidents or anything like that during this political-military time before we move on?

HOLMES: Yes, I'll think about it.

Q: Keep it in mind.

HOLMES: All right, great.

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Q: Today is April 28, 1999. Allen before we move on, we're still in Italy, '63-67, in your political-military time there, what was your impression that you were getting both from your own experience and from what you were hearing from our American military colleagues, about the Italian military at that time?

HOLMES: Well, you mean about the quality of the Italian military?

Q: The quality of response and all that.

HOLMES: Certainly Italian military leaders were, I would say, extremely responsive to the United States and to NATO in general. It was important to them, they knew, to be on good terms with the leader of the Alliance in the Alliance, not only from what they could learn from the association in terms of training and strategy, but also in terms of resources, because that meant that they could, in trying to align the military equipment of the Alliance along compatible systems, it was in Italy's interest to tap into that system of systems, if you will. The quality of the military - certain units were of extremely high quality. Certainly the Alpini, the Alpine troops, the Bersaglieri, the fellows that wear the wonderful green plumes that fluttered on the side - they were a crack unit. Certainly the Italian Navy frogmen - a long tradition going back to-

Q: -sinking a ship in Alexandria harbor.

HOLMES: Right, in World War II. Their paratroopers were first-rate. They had excellent fighter bomber pilots, and they certainly participated to the full in their combined NATO activities in the Mediterranean and obviously in the Tyrrhenian and the Adriatic working through AFSOUTH (Allied Forces South) in Naples, working very closely with the United States, with Greece and Turkey, and occasionally France. Despite the fact that that was the period when France was leaving NATO, there were still French NATO exercises from time to time in the Mediterranean.

Q: Which continued, of course, until the present.

HOLMES: Until the present, yes.

Q: Allen, I served in Greece, and I was wondering - there, of course, Greece, as a member of NATO, was and continues to be more interested in Turkey than anything else. Were there any particular hang-ups that from our perspective the Italians had in the Mediterranean world, or not, as far as what they were concerned with and others weren't concerned with?

HOLMES: Not that I can remember. I do remember discussion with Italian military leaders who had served at NATO headquarters but more particularly at AFSOUTH. They shared almost the entire set of common headaches with us over squelching small, medium, and large Greek-Turkish disputes and staying on schedule with respect to exercises. They had the same frustrations that we had, but I can't think of anything special.

Q: I can't think of anything either. That's why I was asking, because nations have their own interests and all. What was the feeling from there, if it came up, towards Yugoslavia at that time? It was just basically a buffer zone, or was it felt to be-

HOLMES: No, it was really in the later period where Trieste became a land bridge for daytime tourists, people coming over from Istria, that part of Yugoslavia, to Trieste on day trips and then waddling back across the border wearing six and seven pairs of jeans and whatever number of shirts and coats they could put on. The Yugoslav authorities allowed them to go over to Italy for the day. They could not come back with suitcases and packages filled with purchases, but they could come back with anything that they could wear. So you saw these curious stuffed individuals coming back across the border. That was beginning to happen then. The Italians were watching with interest Yugoslavia's own experiment in blended Communist-capitalism where they gradually allowed family-sized private enterprise and then that succeeded, and it grew, and they allowed bigger families - families would band together so you'd have all the cousins and aunts and uncles, and before you knew it you had a small business enterprise underway. The Italians watched that with great interest because it meant a growing marketplace for their own economy, including their gray economy.

Q: Well, this is a thing. With the Italians, of course, the gray economy is the one unreported. Maybe I mentioned it before - Naples doesn't have a single registered glove factory, but when I was there it was the glove capital of the world.HOLMES: The same could be said of shoes in Tuscany or actual apparel, suits and sweaters and jackets the more you move north in Italy. So the gray economy was a thriving business in Italy. Nobody has ever succeeded in getting a very accurate estimate of the percentage of the Italian economy, but I can remember estimates ranging from 18 to 30 percent, fluctuating, clearly. The Italians are extremely industrious people; they just don't like to pay taxes.

Q: People would talk about, oh, these people don't work, and all. That was down in the south. This is 20 years later, but you'd go in there in the cellars and everybody is stitching away. The thing is they're not on their regular jobs; they're on their real job.

HOLMES: That's correct. They were very cagey about it though. Italians were very careful to acquire what they called copertura - 'coverage.' That meant that you got a job either in a government agency or in a parastatal business, and through that you got your health insurance and your retirement and the whole package of benefits, and then you basically shaved your workday to the extent that you could get away with it. If the workday was from nine to five, you'd show up maybe at 10 and leave about 3, and then you went to your real job, your productive job, where you were not reporting the income and you just made as much money as you could and stashed it away. You didn't have to buy health insurance or life insurance because that was all under the government copertura system. So that was the way they operated.

Q: And it worked.

HOLMES: And they still do so today. I really don't know.

Q: Well, in '67, whither?

HOLMES: In 1967, I was assigned from Rome to go to Benghazi, which I was looking forward to very much, but when we got back to Washington we encountered a medical problem in the family, and it was strongly advised that we not go there, that while our particular medical situation was under observation we were strongly advised to have a stateside assignment for a couple of years or so to watch this development. It was sort of a cancer scare. So we took that advice, obviously, and stayed in Washington.

Of course, I didn't have a job, but I managed in fairly short order to get a job as the Benelux Desk officer, which was a lot of fun. It was my first and only country officer detail, and I quickly found out that the secret to success with my three client nations was I never referred to myself other than as the "Dutch Desk officer" or the "Belgian Desk officer" or the "Luxembourg Desk officer," depending on who I was talking to. It was a very good assignment. I had a deputy and a wonderful secretary. It was extraordinarily interesting if for no other reason than general Eisenhower's son, John Eisenhower, was appointed while I was there as the ambassador to Belgium, and so that brought me back into contact in a more direct way with the Eisenhower family, which my father had been, of course, very close to.

Q: You were there '67 to when?

HOLMES: I was in Washington from '67 to '70, for three years. I was the Benelux Desk officer for about two years, basically, and then I was hired for a sort of a crash program that lasted nine or ten months by Bill Macomber, who was then undersecretary for management. I sort of organized and spearheaded and did the legwork for - actually it was Bill Macomber who spearheaded it, but I did the legwork - a searching analysis and review of the Foreign Service in every respect from organization to policy. It was called Diplomacy for the 1970s. I'm pretty sure that's what it was called, Diplomacy for the Seventies. So those are basically the two assignments I had during that three-year stint in Washington.

Q: Well, let's start first with the Benelux Desk, for a tour d'horizon. Belgium, '67-69. Eisenhower was their ambassador-

HOLMES: During part of that time.

Q: How did you find him as an ambassador?

HOLMES: John Eisenhower was a historian and wrote a very fine book centered primarily on the Battle of the Bulge.

Q: The Dark Wood, or something like that.

HOLMES: I forget the name of it, but he was a good ambassador, of course had had no prior... He'd been a career Army officer for, it think, 20 years or so, and then-

Q: Graduated, I think, around '45, just when his father-

HOLMES: Just at the end of the war.

Q: At the end of the war, yes.

HOLMES: He did a good job. He had a very strong understanding, obviously, of what was happening in the cockpit of Europe and the significance of all the things that were happening - the growth of the European Union, not known as such at the time, the growth of the Common Market, the sort of seminal role of the Benelux countries in that, the relationship to NATO. He was in a very good position to observe all this. He was only one of three United States ambassadors in Brussels, the other two being one to NATO and the other to USEC, the US mission to the Economic Community. But he would join in happily in discussions on the place of the Alliance in US policy towards Europe. Don't ask me about Belgian politics because, one, I don't think it's particularly important. What's important about Belgium at the time is, of course, the growing estrangement among the linguistic communities, between the Flemings on the one hand, the French-speaking Walloons, and then a sort of third set of actually the people who lived in Brussels who spoke French but were frequently Flemish. There was a growing insistence about cultural autonomy and the requirement that politicians, government representatives, teachers have a facility in both languages, and all of this was exacerbated by the economic plight of Wallonia. Wallonia was the soft underdeveloped part of Belgium that needed and received help from the European Community in terms of development. This exacerbated the tension between that community and the wealthier, frequently more enterprising Flemings.

Q: This was the late De Gaulle period, I guess. He left in, what was it, '68 or '69, I think he resigned?

HOLMES: Was it '69? That's right. It was after the May, '68, student revolt in Paris. I think you're right; I think it was after that that De Gaulle resigned.

Q: I think I remember that he resigned in '69. Were we concerned? Was France fishing in these troubled waters?

HOLMES: No.

Q: Because De Gaulle had certainly gotten mixed up in Canada.

HOLMES: No.

Q: But this was something too close to home, maybe?

HOLMES: No, they really weren't. Actually, in terms of linguistic communities, the most important, interesting enterprise of the time, which started in 1963, was the De Gaulle-Adenauer treaty, which spawned the most extraordinary generational attempt among the French people and the German people to come together, to create a sense of community. I think by the time I was assigned to Paris, which was in 1970 - that was only seven years after the signing of this treaty - there were at least 500 twinned cities between French and German communities, so in terms of bringing together two linguistic communities, that was a huge effort and one that De Gaulle committed himself to with real passion. So I don't recall any fishing in Wallonian waters. The French-speaking population of Belgium tended to look in some respects culturally to France. Going way back they had a common history, but I wouldn't put too much emphasis on that.

Q: Did the May of '68, the student thing, which was not just confined to France but in other places - I mean the Benelux - was that something of concern to us?

HOLMES: Well, it happened. There was some spillover effect at Louvain and some of the Belgian universities, but it certainly did not shake the ground. It didn't have the same seismic effect in French-speaking Belgium as it did, obviously, in France. What's the name of the student leader? Was it Cohn-Bendit?

Q: Yes, he's a deputy in the European parliament. I see him on French TV all the time. "Red Danny."

HOLMES: Very respectable.

Q: Very respectable. I thought he'd be some kind of socialist or Green or something, but I think he's right behind bombing Serbia.

HOLMES: Well, that's usually the pattern. The young radicals end up being conservators of something later in life.

Q: Well, what about... Did the king play any role, or did we see this in Belgium, or was this a figurehead type thing?

HOLMES: It's an interesting concept. The king of Belgium is not a traditional monarch in the way that established monarchies have operated in other countries. He was really always known as the king of the Belgians, and as such even though... Salic Law, hereditary law, didn't really play out in Belgium the same way it did in other countries. Successive kings of the Belgians had to achieve a certain approval from the Belgian people, and I'm not quite sure constitutionally - I can't remember how that happens except that the king of the Belgians has a somewhat different status from other traditional monarchs. But leaving that aside, his role was largely that of a figurehead head of state certainly.

Q: Were there any concerns that we had about Belgium at that time that you can think of.

HOLMES: No, not really. I remember there was an important Atlantic Alliance summit that Belgium was host to. It happened in Brussels while I was the Desk officer.

Q: What about the Netherlands during this time? Was this the time when mobs were stoning our consulate general in Amsterdam over the Vietnam War, or did this come a little later?

HOLMES: No, you could always count on that kind of activity on an almost routine basis happening in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The Dutch were a wealthy country and probably the most compact in terms of the size of the population to the size of the national territory. I think that the density of population in the Netherlands, the equivalent in the United States would be that we could have housed the entire population of the world. That gives you an idea. The Dutch really live like sardines and have a remarkable political discourse among themselves that doesn't lead to violence. The Dutch are fond of saying that every man has an opinion. Two people together constitute an embryonic political party. They have a very vigorous democracy, wealthy. Rotterdam, the biggest port in the world, including all of the POL that comes in and out of the place. But in terms of total tonnage of goods including POL, the biggest port in the world.

Yes, there were demonstrations against our policy in Vietnam, yes, but again, there were no particular problems with the Netherlands at that point.

Q: Did we sort of take it as a given that in these Western European countries when you were there that Vietnam was going to be something they felt we were over-obsessed with and we weren't going to get very strong support, and that was just the way it was?

HOLMES: Well, that view evolved and became more strident almost as a reflection, politically and in terms of the media, of what was happening in the United States. It was a transferred emotion and political attitude.

Q: How about for you? I mean for most of us, when we serve abroad, we're not aware of the political forces that are going on in the United States. We read about it, but we don't get that same feedback. Did you find, say, on Vietnam, that this was impacting on you and your wife and all that at all?

HOLMES: Yes, very directly, yes. First of all, I was always surprised and relieved that I wasn't picked through the personnel system to go to serve in Vietnam during the war. I had fluent French, I had a Marine infantry officer background, I had requested French-speaking Southeast Asia as my first assignment, but the personnel system never came up with my name for Vietnam. I would have had a real professional life crisis had that occurred. I was strongly opposed to our policy in Vietnam, not along the usual lines that you frequently encounter of sort of moral position, but from the point of view of United States national interest. I had spent too much time as a graduate student in Paris in 1957-58 studying the French experience in Southeast Asia, and I could see a pattern that we were about to relive. I mean, I predicted a lot of the things that happened just because I had so studied the French experience that I knew it would happen. I knew it was not in our national interest. I also knew enough about the Viet Minh/Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese to know that this was a very strongly-felt nationalistic movement which was also communist. We were bound to lose it. I thought it was a terrible error on our part to get involved to the extent that we did, so I sort of dreaded the day that I would get a telegram from the Department assigning me to Vietnam. I didn't know what I would do about it. I knew one thing with absolute certainty - that if I received such an assignment I would not try to get out of it. I had too much respect for my fellow Foreign Service officers who didn't like the assignment very much either but who went and did their turn. So I would not have played games and tried to get out of it. I would either have gone, biting my tongue, or I would have resigned from the Foreign Service. To this day I don't know which way I would have gone, but I had done enough thinking about it to know that if the day came, that would be my choice.

Q: Back to Holland. From an American policy point of view, was Belgium one nation and Holland another? I'm not being facetious, but did we have sort of different... or did we lump them together?

HOLMES: No, Belgium and Holland are two very different nations. We had the same Desk officer, but we handled them very differently and the issues were not the same. Where there was some lumping together was between Belgium and Luxembourg. I mean, they had the same currency, they had the same language - other than, of course, the Luxemburger Germanic tongue that was spoken as a second language - but we worked very hard at treating them as individual nations while, at the same time, recognizing that they were the core group, of course, of the European experiment - the Common Market as it developed in different configurations.

Q: I don't know if this is the time or not, but I'm told that at one point one of the major issues with the Dutch, close to this time, was landing rights for KLM. Did that come up, or not?

HOLMES: Yes, it did. You really know your history. I'm impressed. Yes, the KLM was very aggressive, and I remember particularly they were intent on getting into Chicago.

Q: Absolutely.

HOLMES: That was a long negotiation, and we did get something in return, but it was very hard fought, absolutely.

Q: Of course, it's one of the most difficult things, because generally the State Department kind of wants, well, this is fine; we want to have good relations with this country. But then you get your very powerful commercial interests in the United States saying "Keep them furriners [foreigners] out of our turf."

HOLMES: Yes.

Q: Because you were at the guts of the European Community that was developing, what was the feeling? Was it pretty well on track and all at this point?

HOLMES: Do you mean the growth of the Community? Oh, yes. Absolutely. But of course, they were struggling with... the same problem countries that exist today for the Community - will the French eventually go to a common currency? It was hard enough just agreeing on fixed bands of fluctuation among the salad of European currencies. I mean that was one of the early battles that was fought, over the currency. Of course, today we have the Euro, which, quite honestly, I would never have believed that it would be possible before the end of this century to have the Euro actually emerge, given the early fierce battles over something as preliminary as fixed bands in the currency market place among the basket of European currencies. But that was a major struggle, but it was on course. The French were very nervous about the Germans. Their national goal, in fact, later when I was- (end of tape)

Several years later, probably about four years later, while serving as political counselor in Paris, I had an opportunity to have about a 15-minute conversation with the President of France, which was unusual, at a dinner party, and he talked openly about the French economic goal of overtaking German GNP. The other thing - to give you just a kind of an idea of the difficulty of evolving the European Union - he had campaigned on bringing France more organically into the European Union at a certain point, and he barnstormed in the north and the eastern part of France, and he had just returned from that campaign to Paris the evening of the dinner party. I asked him what his impressions were, and he said, "The roads run parallel to the border." Which I thought was very symbolic - and he meant it to be - of how difficult it was to overcome the attitudes of small communities scattered along the northern and eastern borders of France.

Q: On the economic side, were the chicken wars over by this time, or were they still-

HOLMES: Breasts and thighs at a cut rate? The United States? I can't remember the exact dates, but the chicken wars would erupt every now and again - the chicken wars and, let's see, corn - what's the word?-

Q: Glutinate?

HOLMES: -corn glutinate and soy glutinate as feed for cattle. We grew it very cheaply, and this was a matter of great concern to the highly protectionist agricultural marketplace in Europe, not only in France but other places as well.

Q: As the development of the European Union, were we watching the farming communities as being probably one of the most difficult ones to break up, and also this was where our market was. I would have thought we would be watching it with great care.

HOLMES: Yes, we did watch it, and we weren't the only ones. So did every political leader in western Europe. When Franï¿½ois Mitterrand came back and pulled the large socialist family back together again, one of his greatest challenges was southwestern France, because socialists are supposed to be liberal, and yet what he encountered among that largely farming community was deep conservatism, and protection of the farmers was almost a hallowed canon of French politics. That complicated his task; he just had to accept that.

Q: What about NATO? One doesn't really think of the Benelux countries... I mean, they're in NATO, but one always thinks of the French Army and the German Army and to some extent the British Army, but Benelux doesn't get much play. How were they as NATO people?

HOLMES: They have been very strong NATO supporters all along, I would say the Dutch stronger than the Belgians, I would say more respected as military professionals than the Belgians. Dutch fighter-bomber squadrons were highly regarded, and it's interesting to note that in practically every engagement, including today in the bombing runs over Yugoslav, over Serbia, that Dutch pilots are there, and they're first-class. And also they hosted important bases for the United States and for NATO, and later, when we deployed the cruise missiles, the INF, the great INF strategic gamble, the Dutch signed up right away and allowed Cruise missiles to be stationed in their national territory.

Q: It's interesting because the Dutch do... at least they had almost a professional protest group that seemed to come out a lot. Did we consider, were we concerned in that time about any shakiness on the part of the Dutch as far as the Alliance was concerned?

HOLMES: Not really. Every once in a while there was a little tremor of concern that ran through official Washington at the thought that some of the more radical Dutch parties would put such pressure on their government as to require us to remove our special ammunition sites, the nuclear weapon storage facilities that we had for our aircraft, and also the dual-key nuclear weapons that were available to Dutch squadrons that were basically committed, assigned, to NATO. So every once in a while that bothered people, and they watched it.

Q: Because it was always very visible, Dutch crowds, when they would come out. They're usually long-haired kids, and they painted themselves and - you know - it was good TV.

HOLMES: Well, the Dutch have always been in the forefront of new ideas and new movements. Certainly, for a while, if not the legalization, the tolerance of drugs. There was a vigorous drug culture in Amsterdam, other than the criminal element - and of course the Dutch police didn't like it much, but that happened. It was certainly there in terms of Catholic theology. Perhaps the most advanced liberal Catholic Church in Europe, centered mostly at Louvain. They had been in the forefront of authorizing euthanasia. I mean, you can just find throughout current Dutch history a number of issues where they've been sort of way ahead of the most experimental parts of the Western community.

Q: Luxembourg - what was the role of Luxembourg as we saw it at that time?

HOLMES: Well, Luxembourg certainly had great reverence of the United States, and at the big American cemetery there was a tradition that every American grave was adopted by a Luxemburger family. It was very touching.

Q: Oh, yes. Were there any other developments during this time? Were the Benelux people sort of looking over their shoulders at developments in France at the time, because this was a time when you had your May of '68, but you also had De Gaulle sort of in his last days, throwing down challenges internally. Was there reflected concern about France?

HOLMES: They certainly, as partners of the French in the European Community, observed; their diplomats in France reported on developments. I never sensed that they were deeply disturbed. I think they liked the fact - particularly a country like Belgium, which had a system of proportional representation, which meant that it was very difficult to keep coalition governments together very long... they looked enviously at the new French experiment brought in by the Fifth Republic and Charles De Gaulle and Michel Debrï¿½, when they set up the new hybrid system where they went from pure proportional representation to single-member districts; and they admired that, and they thought it was good. The institutional transformation in French politics that took place as a result of that, they looked enviously at that. I think we're basically comforted by that development.

Q: What about the Communist Parties there? The Communist Parties are always a concern. Say, France had a fairly substantial one; Italy had almost a third or a quarter. What about Communist Parties?

HOLMES: It wasn't a matter of great concern or an issue. I think, again, that thoughtful political analysts in the Benelux countries followed and looked anxiously at the developments of the communist parties in western Europe. I think some people were pleased by the emergence of Euro-Communism, that softer brand of Communism that wore a friendlier face. Not true in Portugal, certainly, but very much the case in both Italy and later on in France.

Q: You were there during August of '68, when the Prague Spring was put down by-

HOLMES: I wasn't in Europe.

Q: I mean you were on the Desk. I was wondering, did that in a way help solidify backsliders, as far as NATO went? Did that have any particular impact, or was it just confirmation that these were bastards on the other side?

HOLMES: I don't remember it having any particular impact, certainly not in the Benelux countries. There wasn't any backsliding taking place. Most of the NATO problems usually had to do with the "Greek footnote."

Q: I spent four years in Greece. God help me! All right, well, then, let's talk about this "diplomacy for the '70s." Could you explain what Macomber was after and your impression.

HOLMES: Basically Macomber's kind of philosophy was to reform and yank the Foreign Service into the modern era, preparing for the '70s and the '80s, to avoid having us be reorganized yet again by some outside group. So his concept was, we the professionals - and he considered himself a professional, even though he was a political appointee - he'd been around, and he was a very thoughtful diplomatist - but he said, basically, If we get the right people, the best people, the leaders of the Foreign Service, we can do a better job of identifying those things which need to be evolved and changed within the Foreign Service than an outside group. The concept was to develop - and I can't remember exactly the number, but we had maybe 13 or 14 task forces - and the concept was, if we go to the personnel system and ask them to assign people, we'll get people who are not assigned because perhaps they aren't the best. We wanted the best. We wanted people who were leaders, and so we did it on a part-time basis. The idea was we would reach out and pick, and then go and shmooze people to lend themselves to this effort, and they would give a certain number of hours a week to the effort so that we would get very strong people involved in the process. It worked pretty well. There were some signed up that you really had to do a lot of phoning to try to make them come to meetings, but actually we came up with a lot of ideas and institutional reform which made good sense. The easy ones were picked off and adopted, and of course the difficult ones languished and were encountered years afterwards in subsequent reform efforts.

Q: About this time there was the so-called "Young Turks" movement.

HOLMES: Yes, that was born out of AFSA, Charlie Bray and Lannon Walker were in that as well. But that was later. That was about ten years later, as I recall.

Q: Wait a minute. No, it was about the same time.

HOLMES: Was it in the same time?

Q: Because - God help me - I'm 71 years old, but I was a young Turk in those days. I mean-

HOLMES: This was before you became an "aging Ottoman."

Q: Yes, or I joined up with the sultan. It was my harem that won me over. But I was wondering whether-

HOLMES: Was it at the same time? I guess you're-

Q: Yes. I was in Personnel at that point.

HOLMES: Late '60s. The young Turks were obviously the kind of the point of the spear. They were kind of out ahead of others, but there was, I would say, a general confluence of thinking between that group and the diplomacy for the '70s group, but it was easier for them to reach out and make pronouncements and push the institution. It was a pretty good effort, and they had more than one hearing in the building.

Q: Well, it was, of course, a time when young people were looking at... there was a feeling of change in the air, and all. In a way, there was a feeling that one could change systems. Can you think of any of the particularly difficult problems that you wrestled with?

HOLMES: Well, one in particular that I remember, and I believe it was incorporated in the Diplomacy for the '70s was... The Foreign Service always prided itself on being a disciplined career - not as rigid as the military, certainly - but with a fairly strong top-down system of command and control and guidance, and there was a concern among a lot of us - and I was one of them - that not too frequently, for the sake of convenience and comfort and ease, policies towards certain issues and certain countries and certain organizations tended to get frozen, and subsequent administrations would come in, and it was seen as a convenience also to maintain certain relationships. So what we wanted to do was to free up the creative energies of substantive officers, mostly political and economic officers, obviously, to have the courage to speak up and push ideas, even unpopular ones, and so we set up a Dissent Channel. I don't know if you remember that.Q: Oh, very much so.

HOLMES: But that was hotly debated, but we stuck with our guns on it and got it through. I actually had an interesting experience with that. When I was DCM in Rome we were struggling with the problem with the compromesso storico, the "historic compromise" between Catholic and Communist Italy. The ambassador, Richard Gardner, was strongly opposed to this, as was most of Washington, and we had one political officer in our Political Section who thought that we were making a huge mistake to lean so strongly on the Italians, that this was a natural evolution and that it would draw the Communists into the more traditional, respectable part of political discourse in Italy. I remember that Dick Gardner went back on consultations just at a time when we were about to make a major representation to the Italian Government. We feared at the time moving too quickly in that direction, and Gardner went back in consultations and was talking with Brzezinski, and this guy on our staff came up with a Dissent message. I read it, and it was totally at variance. It was a tremendous challenge to our policy, and I was delighted to send it in. It hit Washington, and within about an hour, I had an enraged Dick Gardner on the phone saying that he'd been stabbed in the back and that this was outrageous that an ambassador was in consultation and a member of his staff would jump ship. I said, well, we'll talk about this when you get back, and I explained to him the history of this. The idea here was to stir up vigorous new ideas that would challenge the status quo. Actually, when he came back and he'd settled down and had sat down and talked with the officer, he rather liked it - afterwards. But that was a turning point also, frankly, in the way we organized our evaluation system. I believe it was at that time when we began to insist that in every evaluation there had to be an "area for improvement," if you remember, that had to be noted and documented and talked about. Embassies and bureaus in the State Department were instructed not to allow cop-outs. There were review panels that would send back reports that simply said, "so-and-so should go off and learn an exotic language." I think that in terms of the promotion system and rewarding professionalism and a certain intellectual boldness, these are two elements that were introduced as reforms that I think made a difference in terms of encouraging and rewarding intellectual courage.

Q: Well, then, you saw the publication of this before you-

HOLMES: Yes, I did. I did see the publication of it just as I was leaving. I was in that job for about nine months, and then I was assigned to Paris. As the Benelux Desk officer, I had been in the same Office of West European Affairs, which basically was Benelux and France, and so I and the French Desk officer worked for the same boss, and so nine months later I was recruited to go to the Political Section in Paris, where I headed up a small internal political unit within the Political Section that concentrated on France, on French politics, labor relations, that sort of thing. We were a subsection of about four people.

Q: Before we move to that, I would like to ask your impression of working for Bill Macomber because his temper was well-renowned, but he was also an innovative person. How did you find working for him?

HOLMES: I liked working for Bill Macomber. He was very energetic, sparked a lot of ideas. Not all of them were great, but some of them were excellent, and he released a lot of energy among the people that he came in contact with. He did have a temper, he was difficult. You just had to stand up to him. I noticed that people that allowed themselves to be bullied continued to be bullied. At a certain point in developing a relationship with Bill, you just had to establish who you were and what you would tolerate and what you wouldn't. But I think he was a very creative guy. I think he was one of the best under secretaries for Management we've had.

Q: I remember just a very small detail. When I went out to Athens to be consul general, he had me to his office and some members of the family and swore me in. I mean the idea was to boost the idea of the consular side of things.

HOLMES: Oh, yes, he felt passionately about that.

Q: It's something I'll always remember because most of the time nobody gave a damn anyway. This was not just a gesture. It was important.

HOLMES: No he had very strong leadership qualities, and he also cared, despite his gruff exterior. He was a very compassionate individual, sensitive to people's needs. He's the guy that set up an ombudsman to hear personnel disputes and problems. He had somebody in his office whose position was publicized and to whom employees could turn in a very private way to unload, basically, their problem and their grievances. It had a tremendous effect within the Department. I'll always remember, the guy that was first assigned to that was Robert C. F. Gordon, a wonderful Foreign Service officer who had actually been my boss for part of that first period in Rome. Bob was progressively blind, and by the time he got this job he was almost entirely blind, and he was a wonderful, compassionate, understanding leader. I remember an African American woman came to see him and talked to him about her problems, and he gave her a lot of good advice, gave her a tremendous hearing. She commented at the end of this that this had meant so much to her, that she could actually go and talk to someone in authority, in the senior reaches of the Department and get a fair hearing and know that she would not be burned, that it would be kept confidential. Then at the end she said, "And to know that you treated me just like any other person. You had no idea that you were talking to an African American woman, because you couldn't see me." It was a very poignant moment. That was Bill Macomber. It was one of the things he institutionalized. He thought of it and-

Q: I think he's one of the seminal figures in the administration of the State Department. You were in Paris from when to when?

HOLMES. From 1970 to 1974.

Q: Who was our ambassador when you arrived?

HOLMES: When I arrived the ambassador was leaving, and that was President Kennedy's brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver, who was just departing at that point. The new ambassador, who was sent there by President Nixon, was Dick Watson, who was the younger brother of Tom Watson, both of them sons of the founder of IBM.

Q: How was Ambassador Watson? I mean what was your impression of him?

HOLMES: Well, Ambassador Watson - by the way he spoke very good French and played a significant role in putting IBM on the world map; I mean he was really in charge of its international operations - came to Paris with a singular mission. He'd had discussions with the President, and his mission, as he told us from the moment he got to Paris, was to close down the heroin labs in Marseilles, so that the pollution of American youth, particularly in New York, would cease. This was the much-ballyhooed "French connection." That was his mission, and he felt very strongly about it. This was what the President had spoken to him about, and all these other traditional Foreign Service diplomatic roles were not unimportant, but they were definitely of secondary importance, and this was his goal, to achieve this. This unleashed quite a tidal wave of activity in the embassy, and he brought everybody into it. We had one DEA agent who was assigned to the embassy, and it was quite a big undertaking because he quickly discerned, after talking with the French Government, particularly the Ministry of the Interior, that there was really no interest in the French Government to do anything serious about this, that the feeling was this was an American problem and it was a demand problem, not a supply problem, primarily. They thought it was greatly exaggerated. Yes, there may be some criminal activity in Marseilles, but this was really an American problem. Watson and a number of us had many long discussions about how to turn the French around, because unless we had their cooperation there was no way that we could make any progress. So the USIS representatives suggested at one point, "Why don't we talk to French television and see if they're interested in using some of the material that we have, some films about what happens to children when they shoot up, and drug addiction and so forth?" We tried that, and I was very skeptical that we would get a hearing with French television, and they said, no, they weren't interested because having viewed the films, they said, "This won't have any impact on French audiences because this is very clearly an American setting and these are American kids, and it's obvious." But one man in the French television said, "If you will show us the places in France where this sort of activity is taking place, we'll make our own film and show it." Well, again, we were very skeptical, but the DEA guy took a small French crew around to parts of Paris and Lille and Marseilles and several large cities in France, and sure enough, they actually produced a film and showed it on French television. This caused a firestorm of response from the French electorate, and all of a sudden the French Government got interested in cooperating with us. There were all sorts of discussion that took place, and eventually an agreement was signed between the minister of the interior or the minister of Justice and our attorney general that we would work with them in trying to close down the heroin labs, which were mostly the Corsican mafia. The morphine base was coming into Marseilles from Afghanistan and Turkey, largely, and there was transformed into heroin, and from there it went through a variety of channels to the United States.

Well, we then had started a period of cooperation, and nothing came of it, largely because the police that were assigned to work with us in Marseilles were on the take, and they were frequently Corsican cousins of those who were actually in the trade. So then the French Government decided that they would send a non-Corsican very highly regarded police officer from Paris who had devised a way of producing... There had been a lot of bank robberies, and this man had devised a way of prediction where the next bank robbery would take place and was very successful, and so they thought that he might be able to use this methodology in Marseilles. So he went to Marseilles, and again, there was no reaction, primarily because he was frozen out by the local cops.

So one day, sitting in a staff meeting... We had a wonderful science attachï¿½, who was a distinguished professor, and older man with white hair, who spoke up, "You know, it takes a lot of water to turn morphine base into heroin. Has anybody ever thought of checking the utility bills of the various villas in and around Marseilles?" So this very sensible idea actually broke the case. I mean it was incredible. The French police got onto that, and sure enough, within weeks they had busted dozens of these laboratories that were in villas scattered around the Marseilles area. This was a huge success, and it basically started us on the road to breaking the French connection.

Q: That's wonderful. Who was the head of the Political Section when you were there?

HOLMES: Bob Anderson was the head of the Political Section, Robert Anderson, who had been my boss in the Office of West European Affairs in the State Department.

Q: If I recall, I've talked to people who've served in France, and I think they point to Bob Anderson's political section as being one of the premier ones at any time of people, including yourself, who were there. Did you have that feeling, that you were with a particularly elite group?

HOLMES: Well, Bob spent a lot of time recruiting good officers for that section, and those that handled all the international portfolios, and we had an officer that dealt with west European questions, another one that dealt with NATO questions, another officer that dealt with Asian-Pacific questions, another one on Africa and the Middle East, a labor attachï¿½. It was a very large section, very energetic people that he inspired, that he pushed very hard to get out and do their jobs. It was fun. I mean people were excited about the work that they were doing there, and Bob knew France. He had served there several times and spoke good French and his wife was fluent in French and they had a lot of French friends and entertained a lot. They knew a lot of senior political leaders, and he encouraged me to get out and find out what was going on, and of course the Socialists were in opposition.

We were not allowed to talk to the Communists, as was the case in most European countries, but the Socialists were a kind of a radical group, so I was trying to meet people in the Socialist Party, and I met the future minister of defense of France, a guy named Charles Hernu. I used to go over to the Socialist Party headquarters and talk with him and took him to lunch a couple of times. I discovered at a certain juncture that he was also a contact of one of my Agency counterparts at the embassy, which could have been very embarrassing, but the two of us worked it out and made it very clear to Hernu that we were friends. I think probably Hernu understood what was going on, but he never revealed it.

But I still had a hard time getting my arms around the French socialist movement. I had a lucky break. I knew a lot of French journalists, and one man in particular who wrote for a left-wing magazine called Nouvelle Observateur called me up one day and invited me and my wife to an informal lunch at his little cottage in the country. He said, "We will be a small group, next Sunday, and you probably won't know one of the people there, a sort of forgotten figure from the Fourth Republic named Franï¿½ois Mitterrand." I said, "Oh, I know who he is. I spent a year at the Sciences-Politiques, and certainly I'd be delighted." So we went for this lunch, and Mitterrand was accompanied by one of his young admirers, an attractive young woman, and we had a lot of interesting discussions at the table, and I asked him a lot of questions about his politics and his views. He was showing off a little bit in front of his... the young woman who was with him. We spent probably three or four hours at table, and later we had a long walk afterwards. Mitterrand basically laid out his Mein Kampf, his plan for coming to power in France. It was quite extraordinary, because at the time he was a kind of forgotten figure from the Fourth Republic. He headed a small little splinter group called the Convention of Republican Institutions, and he was very specific. He said, "In a few weeks I'm going to call my party into a special congress. I'm going to ask their permission to join the greater socialist family, to reintegrate into the Socialist Party. They will give me that authority. I will then go next spring to a little town called Epinay, where the great socialist family will come together, the party. I will have about a hundred delegates of the thousand, and I will emerge as the first secretary of the Socialist Party with a program of cooperation with the Communist Party intact. Using that as a platform, we will increase our numbers in the National Assembly, and then after that I will run for president and I will become president of France." I mean he laid it all out - it was absolutely incredible - in detail. I went home that night, and I wrote a little memo to myself, to the files, and I just tucked it away. When I left France several years later, about three years later, reassigned, he had achieved every step. I went to Epinay, by the way. I went to that congress on the weekend and watched him operate. It was quite extraordinary. He did exactly what he said he was going to do, and he'd achieved every goal except that he hadn't become president of France because the first time he failed, in his first run for the presidency of France. Quite an extraordinary figure and great fun for me, I must say.

Q: As soon as you say the word Communist, I would have thought that would set off all sorts of warning bells and "Don't touch this man" and all that.

HOLMES: Oh, it did, it did, it absolutely did. It was a great concern in Washington, and they were very suspicious of Mitterrand. They did not believe what he was saying, that the only way to control the Communists in France was to bring them into the government. They thought that he would be taken over by them and that basically Moscow would tell him what to do and so forth. All this came into very sharp focus in about March of 1981. This was about 10 years later. President Reagan had been elected, and the first trip of a senior member of his Administration to Europe was taken by George Bush, who was the Vice President. This was about March. He had two places to go. One was to go to Paris because they were really worried because the French under Mitterrand had put together a government that had Communist ministers in the government, and you can imagine this very conservative American Administration was worried about that. I was, at the time, the senior deputy assistant secretary for European affairs. My boss was Larry Eagleburger, and Larry had other things to do, and he asked me to go with the Vice President on the trip. So 10 years later this thing was all coming into focus, and I went on the trip with the Vice President. He invited me to sit with him up in the cabin on the way over, and we talked a lot about what was happening in France, and he asked me how he should handle this Communist problem. I told him that it was important that he be very clear with Mitterrand about the concerns of the US Government but that we had to be careful not to intervene too openly in the process. We did have some private conversation with Mitterrand so that he would understand that we would be required to say some things publicly that might be not appreciated in France. He said, "Well, why do we need to do that?" and I said, "Well, because the Italians will be watching how we handle this because we'd just been through this period of the almost historic compromise between Catholic and Communist Italy, and the Italians will be very surprised if we go and say nothing." He said, "Won't that be very insulting to the president of France to have lunch with him and then on the steps of the Elysï¿½e to say some disobliging things to the French press?" I said, "Yes, so my advice to you is that at the end of the lunch you and Mitterrand go off and have coffee together in a separate room, and you tell him what you want to say so there are no surprises." And that's exactly what happened. The fascinating thing is we went right from the airport to the Elysï¿½e, and we arrived as the first cabinet meeting with French Communist ministers in the government was leaving the Elysï¿½e, and we arrived and went in and had lunch with Mitterrand. There were about 10 of us around the table. Mitterrand spent almost the entire meal describing his plan of how he was going to "suffocate" the Communists by bringing them into the government and forcing them to do things, to participate in French government policy that was basically anathema to Communist doctrine. I watched the Vice President as he went through this explanation, and he was extremely skeptical. By dessert you could see that he was beginning to think that this man might be able to do something. He was beginning to listen. Afterwards he and Mitterrand went into a side room, they had coffee together, and on the steps of the Elysï¿½e Bush said just enough of a note of displeasure about the United States's great ally France having Communists in the government. He didn't overdo it. It was very deftly done. It caused some predictable commentary in the French press, but the Italian press reported it big-time. But, of course, we all know what happened afterwards. I mean, Mitterrand succeeded in suffocating the Communists. He did exactly what he had planned.

Q: Allen, did you find that in dealing with the Socialists at this time, the ambassador and maybe even Anderson were saying "Don't get too friendly?" I mean, were we watching the Socialists? Did we really not like them within our orbit or anything of that nature at this point?

HOLMES: No, not really. Certainly not on the part of Bob Anderson, who was a professional. At that point I was too junior that it didn't really make any difference from the point of view of any, quote, embarrassment to the US Government. In my view, this is exactly at the level of political discussion and enquiry that a political officer should do. As it turned out, it was advantageous in getting some understanding of where the Socialist Party was moving.

Q: Well, as we watched with Mitterrand, you went to Epinay? Did we see the developments with Mitterrand moving into the presidency as a... How did we view that at that time?

HOLMES: I think people were concerned that in his attempt to create a working majority with the left - it was called the Union of the Left - that it would be Communist-dominated and that it would further loosen French ties to the Atlantic Alliance and that this would cause us problems. At the time this was happening, we were beginning to creep out of Vietnam, if you will recall. Nixon, of course, was in office, and we were negotiating. The Paris Peace Talks were taking place, and there was still a tremendous amount of agitation on the left against American involvement in Vietnam. I found myself defending our policy. I felt passionately that despite my own personal views on the wisdom of ever having made this stake in Southeast Asia, it was abhorrent to me that the American people treated the American servicemen who returned from Vietnam so badly. Here these kids had been drafted and gone and served their country and served their country well under enormous difficulties with enormous difficulties not only the war itself but the drug culture that was then prevalent in the armed forces, and I was absolutely outraged by the way our service people were treated by so many sectors of the American public opinion when they came home. I felt passionately about that. That made it in many respects easy for me to defend American service in Vietnam. I spent a lot of time talking to groups and arguing about it. As I say, the Paris Peace Talks were underway at the time, and we had at a certain point - and I can't remember what year it was; I was there from 1970 to 1974 - we had the opening of China at that time.

Q: Yes, it was '71, '72.

HOLMES: I'll come to that in a minute, but just to finish up on the Vietnam piece - when a very well-known American general, Vernon Walters, Dick Walters, was our defense attachï¿½ there at the time, as a general officer - which was unusual. When he left, he was replaced by a brigadier general who had served in Vietnam. At a certain point, Life Magazine came out with an edition where he was literally the centerfold, on bended knee, with a rifle in the crook of his arm, with the body of a Viet Cong at his feet, almost like a hunting trophy. This photograph was reproduced endlessly in the French press. This was our new defense attachï¿½. This kind of stirred up a lot of activity for our USIS branch and the political officers.

At some point I should talk to you about the Chinese connection in Paris because that was a fascinating episode.

Q: Okay, but before we move to the Chinese connection, I would like to ask about dealing with the left. You had served before in Rome, and my experience in Italy was that our opposition to the opening to the left was profound. I mean it was like either you believed in the virgin birth or you didn't believe in the virgin birth. Yet the Italian Communist was in many ways much softer. They were sort of Italian, and like everything Italian, it wasn't quite as dogmatic. But when you move over to the French Communist Party, it was - I can't remember-

HOLMES: Yes, it was Maurice Thorez who was one of the leaders of the French Communist Party, and they were very hard-edged. They were tough.

Q: They were both tough and they were very much considered the tool of the Kremlin, in a way.

HOLMES: Yes, they were very tough. They had been born, of course, in the crucible of the resistance in World War II and had fought the Germans and then later us for political influence. Yes, they were a very different breed, and difficult to deal with, and played hardball, and played hardball in the French unions as well.

Q: Did you find the same sort of theology within the embassy in Paris that you did in our embassy in Rome about opening to the left, or was it different?

HOLMES: I would say it was more sophisticated, and obviously the same prohibitions existed. We were not allowed to openly have contact with the Communist Party. Most of the contact with the Communist Party was done indirectly. I would occasionally meet Communists, but most of my reporting was through French journalists and French Socialists. I mean, that's where I got most of my information about what the Communist Party was up to. I did not have regular contacts with the Communist Party. I think one or two trusted members of the "other Political Section," the Agency's group, did have some very carefully controlled contacts with a handful of Communists.

Q: But obviously you were reading the Communist newspaper.

HOLMES: Oh, sure, L'Humanitï¿½. Yes, absolutely. They were very, very hard-edged and working very hard to maintain the strength of their constituency in France.

Q: How did you feel at that time about the French media?

HOLMES: The French media were terrific. That was a tremendous advantage for me as a political officer in Paris. Of course, I knew a lot about French politics and France. I already spoke fluent French, so I had an ease of access that was very fortunate from my standpoint. I cultivated half a dozen wonderful French journalists, sort of across the political spectrum. First of all, I learned a lot from them, but also I met people through these French journalists. We were frequently working the same side of the street in terms of getting information and putting it together, making judgments on where-

Q: But did you find with the media that it was very much in reading it each newspaper you read came from a particular spectrum of the political thing, or were there ones which encompassed more?

HOLMES: Well, it depends what you were reading. The sort of stodgy but highly professional what I would call newspaper of record was Le Monde, and Le Monde did not have any particular political label on it. It was just the most professional foreign policy daily in France, and they prided themselves on not having pictures or any glossy photographs. It was just a very straight kind of reporting, and some very talented reporters for Le Monde. Humanitï¿½ was obviously completely the official newspaper of the Communist Party. You had satiric newspaper, like Le Canard Enchaï¿½nï¿½, the "Duck in Chains." It was a marvelous newspaper, and there were some interesting tidbits that came out.

One experience that I never had in the four years that I had as a Foreign Service officer that I did see when I was there as a student is that in times of crisis French newspapers are picked up by the police. There is a special statute that allows them to do that when a national emergency is declared, and I can remember after the 13th of May, 1958, when the colonels' Putsch had taken place in Algiers and when there was this very nervous period of about a week when there was this negotiation going on with De Gaulle, when the police were out in the street and the army was out, and every morning the police would go out and hit all the newsstands and pick up those newspapers which they felt were subversive, including - I remember being amused - Le Canard Enchaï¿½nï¿½.

There was a guy named Servan-Schreiber.

Q: Oh, yes, Le dï¿½fi amï¿½ricain, was it? The American Challenge.

HOLMES: Oh, yes, Le dï¿½fi amï¿½ricain? He had a weekly magazine. They had their sort of Time and Newsweek, which were L'Express and Le Point. He, as I recall, published Express. I saw him occasionally. I knew several people at Le point. There was a wonderful newspaper pundit named Bernard Le Fort, who was very plugged in with the senior French leadership. I learned a lot from him. I had a range of people. Some of these papers tended to be a little bit more conservative or a little bit to the left, but other than party rags like Humanitï¿½, they weren't slavishly devoted to a certain credo. They weren't doctrinaire.

Q: The French media seem to be more out to impart information than, say, the British ones. In the British press you have to wade through sex and scandal to find out-

HOLMES: Well, there are a lot of tabloids in England, but there are some great newspapers. I mean the Financial Times to me is a wonderful newspaper.

Q: What about your impression during this time of the importance of dealing with the French intelligentsia?

HOLMES: Well, it was important. That sort of outreach was of critical importance, and I think that Sargent Shriver did a better job of that than Dick Watson did.

Q: I've heard people talk about Sargent Shriver and say, "You know, he's given a bad rap. He really had a very good feel for things."

HOLMES: That was my view as well. I think he did, but then again, I only had a few weeks overlap with him, so I really wasn't in a position to gauge.

Q: I always come away with the impression that there's sort of a built-in disdain for Americans in the intelligentsia. Was this your impression?

HOLMES: Oh, sure, that absolutely is true, yes.

Q: How did one deal with this?

HOLMES: I mean, you just talked with people, you explained your government's point of view, you exchanged ideas. I never had any problems with that. Actually, one of the most difficult sort of discussion evenings I can remember spending in France was not with a Frenchman; it was with Mary McCarthy.

Q: Oh yes, she was the Catholic authoress.

HOLMES: Yes, and she was rabidly anti-Vietnam and anti-US policy and was an embarrassment. I had a knock-down drag-out fight with her that went on for about four hours after a dinner with a great deal of alcohol being consumed, mostly on her side, where basically her thesis was that any American that served in Vietnam, even if he were drafted - and they were practically all drafted; there were some volunteers; the Marine Corps still had volunteers - was ipso facto by association with that a war criminal. I mean, that was her thesis, and that's the thesis that she expounded in France when she talked to French media. It was one of the most unpleasant evenings I can remember, and I'm sure she went away feeling the same way about me.

But I never had any problems. There was a very enterprising labor attachï¿½ that we had in our embassy named John Condon. John had a lot of contact with the French intelligentsia, and he entertained in a nontraditional and much more appealing way than most Foreign Service officers. He would invite people for breakfast or for supper in his kitchen, and people would kind of come and go. It was kind of an open house, and he became known for that, and so he had terrific contacts, and I tapped into some of that. That was a lot of fun. So we had people that were out there really talking to French intellectuals, French labor leaders and political leaders, writers.

Q: Did you find that there was a curiosity about the animal American on the part of the intelligentsia?

HOLMES: People were trying to understand what was happening in the United States because of the reaction to the war in Vietnam in the United States. This was something that was analyzed and discussed and reported on in great detail by the French press.

Q: How were Nixon and Kissinger treated?

HOLMES: Well, now, Nixon was treated... I can remember friends of mine who were left-of-center liberal political types and journalists more than once saying that we were committing regicide the way we were going after Nixon. They were appalled. They liked Nixon.

Q: Nixon and Kissinger were the most European of-

HOLMES: Well, they understood. They felt that these were two American political leaders who understood Europe and understood France - and wanted to understand more about their country. They were flattered about the attention of people like Nixon and Kissinger. It was very interesting. They were appalled by Watergate, and they thought it was a huge exaggeration on our part.

Q: You mentioned the Chinese connection.

HOLMES: I failed to mention something. I started out my first year in Paris of a four year assignment as head of a small internal political unit. At a certain point about the end of that first year, the DCM came to me and said that the ambassador wanted me to be his special assistant. I just absolutely did not want to do that. I had been a special assistant and I thought that I had moved in my career beyond that. I was strongly opposed to it. I tried to get out of it, and I basically was told that I had no choice, that it was a done deal, but that I would be rewarded. I said, "What do you mean 'rewarded?'" and he said, "Well, after you do this for a while, when Anderson leaves, he wants to make you political counselor." I said, "Well, that'll never happen. I'm not senior enough, and it's a big section, and Washington will never permit it." I was really opposed to this, but anyway, I was just told to shut up and grit my teeth and do my job, and this was good for the Foreign Service. So I did that for about six to eight months, I guess. I was his special assistant, and we worked a lot on drugs, you know, bringing down the French connection in Marseilles. Then eventually, to my surprise, when Anderson was leaving, he did put my name forward to be the political counselor, and there was a reaction in Personnel in Washington. They didn't want me to do this. They said I was too junior and so forth. Watson insisted, and so finally they agreed. So I became political counselor, which then opened up a whole different range of international responsibilities and activities operating out of the political section of that embassy. The Chinese connection was the big one.

Q: Let's talk about that.

HOLMES: This was absolutely fascinating because what happened was that when Nixon came out of China, after the Shanghai communiquï¿½ was published, everyone knew that there would be a long period before we would be able to effect the opening of liaison offices (they weren't called embassies) in Beijing and in Washington. In the interim, Paris was established as the official point of contact between our two governments. The Chinese selected Paris. Why? Because, Huan Chen, the Chinese ambassador there, was the senior Chinese diplomat serving abroad at that point. He was a member of the Central Committee; he was a veteran of the Long March; he was a trusted colleague of Mao and Zhou En-Lai. It was a very big embassy, very disciplined, with a few special characters. Anyway, when this was announced, our ambassador, Watson, was called back to Washington to receive special instructions from the President and primarily from Kissinger, who was still the national security advisor at that point. Al Haig was a colonel working on Kissinger's staff. He got all these special instructions on how to handle the channel, and there would be no freebooting, that this was to be tightly administered, that he would receive instructions from the White House, not from the State Department, et cetera et cetera. Watson returned from that trip and called on Huan Chen and took me along. I was by that time political counselor, and he took me to see Huan Chen. Huan Chen had with him a man named Tsao, and after some initial pleasantries and some tea, Huan Chen told Watson, he said, "You and I will not meet very often, but for secondary matters I will appoint Mr. Tsao to handle the Chinese side." Watson said, "Well, for secondary matters, I appoint Mr. Holmes." So then that established a relationship that ended up - I must have gone to the Chinese embassy 40 times or so for many, many meetings on a variety of subjects. By the way, we worked through a Chinese interpreter until I was able to get Washington to assign a Chinese language officer into our political section. I spent a lot of time with Mr. Tsao, who was a very interesting individual. He was the hand-picked personal representative of Zhou En-Lai in that embassy. Zhou En-Lai, of course, had a big stake in the American relationship, and very frequently criticized inside the Chinese politburo.

Q: Oh, yes. This was the "Gang of Four" time. This was a very difficult time.

HOLMES: It was a high-risk venture for Zhou En-Lai. So Mr. Tsao was his personal rep. Tsao could be described as a blend of political counselor, station chief, and USIS officer. Those are sort of the press, the politics - that was his area. He was the only member of the Chinese embassy who seemed to be allowed to travel by himself, who wore a European suit. He always wore the same tie. I finally felt like buying him and bringing him a selection because I got tired of seeing the same necktie. But we had a file on this guy. He came from a Shanghai bourgeois family. There was an American college in Shanghai before World War II and he had spent a couple of years there, so I knew he understood English, and I knew he also spoke French, because he had served in Southeast Asia, in Cambodia. But until we got to know each other, he always insisted on working through Mr. Lin, his interpreter. We both had very tight instructions. My instructions were actually written by Haig and sent, not through the Department but through special White House channels, and I was told always to go back through that channel and not to discuss anything but what I was told to discuss. It was very, very controlled.

But the interesting thing was that whenever I went to see Tsao we wouldn't get down to business. There was always tea and a period of munching on dried lichee nuts and candied apples. It was during that period, which was kind of informal, that Tsao, after a certain time, was absolutely badgering me with questions about what was happening to Nixon - obviously, Zhou En-Lai was very concerned - and whether Nixon would survive or not, and if he didn't, as it became apparent more and more that he might not, did that mean that we would all be fired, the entire administration, people like me? Would the embassy be fired? Would there be a wholesale roundup of all the accomplices of Richard Nixon? So, you know, even though I didn't have my little instructions from Al Haig, I spent a lot of time giving him basically Political Science 101 on the American government and our system and how it operated.

Q: I would think it would be very difficult, really, to give good comment on the Watergate system because most of us abroad - I was consul general in Athens during this time - I mean, we were at some remove. We weren't feeling how the heat was-

HOLMES: And so was I, and I was very careful not to speculate on what might happen to Nixon, but there were always a series of hypothetical outcomes. What I could explain to him were the impeachment process, how it worked, if it were to happen what would ensue, and our presidential succession system - the Vice President - the administration, how people were appointed. I gave him a lot of sort of fundamental information about our Constitution and the workings of our government, which I think was probably enormously relieving. I never speculated on, if such a thing were to happen to Nixon, what would this do to our policy to China. I never speculated on that. I never speculated explicitly, but there were plenty of opportunities for him to draw inferences from what I was saying, that although, yes, the opening to China had been done by the President on his visit to Beijing and, of course, Kissinger's role in this, but that this had become a part of American foreign policy. I didn't say that if Nixon goes and another man comes in the policy will remain intact, as sort of frozen in time, but the implication was that there was a commitment here to an opening to China that was broader than just the President operating out of the National Security Council. Anyway, it was a very, very interesting period. Of course, I did report all of that, what this guy was saying to me. It was important that Washington understand that.

We had a couple of amusing incidents. When Nixon went to China, the Chinese gave two panda bears, which ended up in the Washington Zoo, and we gave a couple of musk oxen. The musk oxen, at a certain point, got sick and had this terrible scrofula. So here was this very secret channel of communications, and I was sending back a message encrypted about going to the Washington Zoo and finding out how they could treat the musk oxen. You know, this is really high policy. Then other things would happen, like one time we bombed Hanoi harbor and hit a Chinese ammunition ship. And Mr. Tsao made a visit to the embassy with a very grave face - there was a certain amount of theater involved because basically they wanted to get on with business; he had to carry out this dï¿½marche - and I told him solemnly the point of view of my government, and he said, "Okay, can we have some coffee?" And it was over. It was business as usual.

At a certain point I invited him. We'd had no contact with the Chinese. After I'd had quite a few meetings with him, I invited him to dinner at my house. I guess the occasion was that his wife had arrived. She'd not been at post. So I invited him and his assistant, Mr. Tsai, and his wife, who was the acupuncturist at the embassy, and Mr. Lin, the interpreter. They all came to dinner. At this point we were bombing Hanoi, and we'd hit this ship. By that time we had a Chinese language officer, so that helped, and my wife was very concerned that they were going to stage a walkout. Oh, and her parents were there. That was what was interesting. Her parents were retired in Nice and had come up. He was a retired AID officer, and her mother was French, and so everyone was very fluent in French. At a certain point in this dinner, Tsao discovered that he had served in Phnom Penh shortly after my father-in-law had, and at a time when our relationship was very bad, and a road that my father-in-law had started as an AID project Mr. Tsao had continued as a Chinese project. This was an amazing coming together. They got along together like a house on fire, so much so that at a certain point toward the end of the dinner, Tsao got up and - he had been talking in French by this time, got beyond that point - but at a certain point he stood up and had something to say, and he said it in Chinese. I waited nervously for the interpretation to be something about bombing, but no, he wanted to insist - he knew that my parents-in-law were going back to Nice in a couple of days, but he absolutely wanted to have them for dinner, and this was very important to him that he had discovered this wonderful person, and he just had to do this. So I inferred from all of this that the respect for elders was not something that had got completely washed out of the Communist experiment in China. We had a wonderful dinner afterwards. We went to a Chinese restaurant in Paris, and of course there were hundreds of them. This one was clearly in the hands of the Chinese Communists because when you walk in, nothing about ancient China but here was a tapestry of a dam being built, obviously in the '50s. We had a wonderful, wonderful evening, and the ice was broken. We had developed a relationship with him that went a little bit beyond the more formal part of our dealings with each other.

Q: It's interesting, too, that you're talking about this almost unwillingness on the part of Henry Kissinger and Nixon to let go. I mean, this was their baby, and they didn't want the State Department... You know, they had to use you, but you were their tool and no one else's.

HOLMES: Yes, I think it was a question of control. It was their baby. They wanted to have absolute control of this channel. They didn't want a lot of... They didn't want it to become diffuse and become just another one of the issues handled by the Bureau of East Asian Affairs.

Q: Well, tell me, the whole time you were in the Political Section but particularly when you were a political counselor, one of the things about the French - what is and will be - has been that no matter what it is, the French take a different tack than the United States. It drives Americans up the wall. I mean, I had one man whom I interviewed who was in Belgium, Phil Merrill, who was saying-

HOLMES: Oh, I know Phil Merrill.

Q: -his children thought there was a breed of people called "Thosegoddamfrench" out there because every time he'd come home he'd talk about "those God-damned French." You must have been sort of on the point of contact where the French were always taking a stand different from the United States.

HOLMES: Well, not always. I think that this attitude toward the French is greatly exaggerated, and it's almost in inverse proportion to the truth of it. The less the diplomat who talks about the "God-damned French" knows about France and French policy, the more he's likely to say this sort of thing, because it's true, the French always have a point of view, very clearly articulated, you have to listen very carefully. I discovered early on when I would go to the Quai d'Orsay to carry out dï¿½marches on a variety of subjects that it was very important to know... If there were twelve points to know about the subject, you might feel pretty good about knowing eleven of them, but if you didn't know all twelve, with absolute certainty the Frenchman would know the twelfth. You had to be intellectually equipped, and in terms of information, you had to have full information about the subject in order to be able to have a conversation. Once you got beyond that initial barrier, you could work things out with the French. I got to the point with the director of North American affairs, who was a senior French diplomat who'd been ambassador. His name was Saint-Lï¿½ger - I remember him. I proposed that we meet once a week, and we did. We would meet every week. On one occasion, after we got to know each other, he said, "Let's take a walk" - because it was a delicate subject we were discussing, one where French interests were seen as diametrically different from ours. We went out, and we walked in the park. When we got out in the park he explained to me. He said, "I asked you to come out and walk with me in the park because I've discovered that my offices are bugged and that the Gaullists are so catatonic about what I might say about what I might say to an American colleague, or anybody who comes to my office, that they're listening to my conversations with fellow diplomats. So from now on, I think we should walk in the park so that we can have a real conversation and I'm not nervous." I thought this was absolutely extraordinary, but the point is: the French bring a lot. Yes, they can be difficult as hell, but they also bring a certain intellectual rigor to a conversation, and there's a certain logic. Sometimes they call it Cartesian logic; sometimes it's not. But if you listen very carefully, if you take the trouble to understand their point of view as well as understanding your own government's views and objectives, you can make progress on subjects. I never had a big problem with this. And then there are certain things that are just insoluble - you know, this is our view, and that's your view, and I'll report it that way to Washington, and we'll see if at the next senior meeting maybe we can make some progress on that. But I never had trouble with this aspect of dealing with the French.

Q: How did we feel at this time about the French and the rest of the world and the United States and the rest of the world? Were we in basic agreement? Let's take the Middle East.

HOLMES: Look, the French never really accepted the dissolution of the French empire at the end of World War II because they always felt that they were a major power and that even though they no longer had Indochina and Algeria and other parts of the world, that because of their... The French always had a cultural policy. They had a responsibility to defend the French language, French cultural institutions, and that this gave them a certain entrï¿½e around the world, and they used it. They were basically working very hard to maintain influence. They were absolutely unwilling to accept a sort of second-class status. One of the reasons for this was they were always afraid of Germany, and they were working very hard to develop this comity with the German nation and the twinning of the cities and kids, students, going back and forth and spending time in each other's lycï¿½es and gymnasiums and university exchanges, but at the same time they were working very hard to become an economic power and not have to always be the caboose of the European monetary system with the central bank of Germany being the engine. One way to counteract that financial and economic prowess of Germany was for them to be able to maintain a certain status as a power in the world. They were absolutely determined to do it. So this did lead to some conflict. They exaggerated, for example, and they continue to exaggerate to this day, I think, their influence in the Middle East. They had a kind of traditional role in Lebanon and Syria. There was a certain French influence going back to the early part of the century, French lycï¿½es. Even today in Lebanon there are Lebanese Maronites whose Christian names are French. We always felt that we were the one country that could talk to both sides, to both Israel and the Arab countries, and we were not very inviting, to say the least, to French attempts to exert influence in the Middle East. Today there is a commission that takes place to tamp down the violence that takes place between southern Lebanon and northern Israel and the intervening security zone, the Katusha attacks. There is a group that's French, American, Israeli, and I believe Lebanese that meets every two or three weeks. So they have been able to salvage some sort of position, so I think that that desire on the part of the French Government - and it's bipartisan, across the board, something that they want to do - that still exists today; and it is the reason why sometimes we have difficulty.

Q: Did you find that Africa-

HOLMES: Africa was a special place for them.

Q: I was going to say that I've often had the feeling that-

HOLMES: After the Fifth Republic was set up and the institutions of the Fifth Republic and this hybrid system - you had a president who had executive responsibility and a prime minister - the French presidency, as started by De Gaulle and maintained by subsequent presidents of France, had what they call a domaine rï¿½servï¿½, their special office that dealt with Africa. So there was an office in the Elysï¿½e where African leaders - prime ministers and presidents - could turn and have direct access to the president of France. They took this very seriously, always have. My own point of view is that we have not worked with that in a creative way. We had tended to feel that we're in competition somehow with the French in Africa. Different administrations, different secretaries, different assistant secretaries for African affairs have used this relationship in varying ways.

I'll give you an example of a current problem, and that's peacekeeping and the turmoil that's taking place in Africa today. The French have had, up until recently, when they've begun to cut back as well, they've had much more of an establishment - French economic aid, French military - throughout the French-speaking part of Africa, basically a zone of influence, something that is good for all of us. It's good for the west; it's good for our relationship. We haven't used this sufficiently; we haven't recognized it. We kind of turn to the French at the last minute and say, oh, yes, would you mind joining us, rather than treating them as full-fledged partners from the beginning. An example of this was the African Crisis Response Initiative, where a couple of years ago the State Department, led by a guy named Marshall McCallie, started a project to train cadres or battalions of Africans to do peacekeeping. One of the early success stories was the Senegalese battalion. Well, eventually, the French joined us in this, but we bumbled our way along and tried to do it unilaterally, and then we brought the British in, and finally, the French were opposing us because they weren't being invited in. We finally realized that we're missing something here. This is a typical example of us not listening to and understanding the realities on the ground. The French bring a lot to the table in Africa. They have a lot of influence; they put a lot in there. It's an example, I would say, of how to deal with the French intelligently...

Q: Back to this '70-74 period, you mention at the Quai d'Orsay that the Gaullists were sort of sitting there listening. Who were the Gaullists? Did we have the feeling at that time that there was a Gaullist cadre within the French Government with whom we were dealing that was essentially, this early, anti-American, or not?

HOLMES: Yes, I think that's safe to say, not all of them viscerally anti-American, but I would say viscerally pro-memory-of-De-Gaulle. I would put it more that way. Yes, there were cadres of people who were absolutely Gaullist, and people knew who they were, and other Frenchmen were wary of them because they felt that it was some sort of a priesthood that and it prevented them from letting French policy evolve, seeking opportunities to do things in different ways that were in the French national interest and so forth and so forth. So yes, they were there.

Q: Did we sort of try to identify who they were and how to work around them?

HOLMES: Oh, we were dealing with them. We knew who they were. I mean, there were no secrets about it, and we just went about our business trying to make our point of view heard, but we didn't limit ourselves to those people. We talked to a variety of Frenchmen.

Q: During this period Pompidou was the president?

HOLMES: I can't remember the exact dates, but during this period or most of it, Pompidou was president. In fact, I think that shortly after I arrived in Paris, in 1970, De Gaulle died, as I recall, and then Georges Pompidou came in. I'm trying to remember when Giscard d'Estaing was president. He was president before that - or just after. After, I guess.

Q: Afterwards-

HOLMES: That was after I left.

Q: -because De Gaulle resigned in '69, and I think Pompidou succeeded him, didn't he, or more or less. There may have been something in between.

HOLMES: De Gaulle resigned in '69, and then he died in 1970. Pompidou succeeded him. Then, I guess, after that it was Giscard d'Estaing and then Mitterrand. Anyway, it was Pompidou.

Q: How did we view Pompidou? I mean, was he a little De Gaulle or were we seeing a difference in dealing with him?

HOLMES: No, we were seeing a different man, a man who was much more of the sort of crony politician and very skillful maneuverer, somebody who had a very different kind of experience in World War II, that was frequently pointed out by his detractors, that he had been a high-school teacher and had written sort of critical editions of French classics during the war. His detractors would make a lot of that. Ambassador Watson developed a special relationship with him. Presidents of France, just because we lived practically next door to the Elysï¿½e, didn't mean that... Presidents of France did not go to ambassadors' houses for dinner. Watson kept working on this, and finally he said, "Look, suppose I invite you to come over for dinner as your neighbor, not as the ambassador of the United States? Would you accept?" He did. He came for dinner, and it was a very interesting evening with him.

Q: You've mentioned Watson so far as being sort of one-dimensional - the French connection - but obviously there was more to it. How would you say he evolved as an ambassador?

HOLMES: Well, he met a lot of people, and he did have a good command of French, and when necessary he would go and talk to the foreign minister about this subject or that subject. He didn't really evolve that much. He was very active in the business field. He knew a lot of French business people. IBM was one of the first big American corporations after World War II, when it was developing its overseas operations, not only to hire but to prepare for senior leadership local business people. I remember Jacques Maisonrouge. It was kind of unheard of that he was elected early on to the board of directors of IBM. I think he was the only non-American when he was elected, and that was considered an unusual move. Watson had a lot to do with that, so he had easy entrï¿½e into the French business community and met with them a lot. That was an advantage, too.

Q: Was Servan-Schreiber and The American Challenge, was that in vogue at the time, or did that come a little later?

HOLMES: Well, Jacques Servan-Schreiber was also a political figure. As I recall he was running the Radical Socialist Party, so he was a well-known figure.

Q: But I was saying, was there concern in French circles about the American challenge? We're talking about business, we're talking about American corporations.

HOLMES: Yes, there was a certain amount of that, certainly. I think there was a concern that American business, through their overseas operations incorporated within France - they were watched very carefully... The French wanted to develop their own industrial and commercial prowess. I mean they didn't want to be dominated by American companies. They worked very hard at that. Kind of - if you will - emblematic of that desire to have their own strategic sense, both in the military and the economic sense, was De Gaulle's decision to develop nuclear power in a big way, to develop nuclear weapons. They went their own way, they did it on their own, although it has come out - I think I can say this now - that there was some American help, mostly on safety, but this was a very deep secret for a long time, but it was going on during that period, as early as the late '60s, early '70s. But this was a decision that De Gaulle made for France, that France should have its own sweep of nuclear weapons. They called it the force de dissuasion, the force de frappe. The offshoot of that was that France also made a decision to develop in a major way nuclear power for their national energy grid, and today, if I'm not mistaken, as a percentage of power generated by nuclear energy, I think France is the second country in the world. I think the first is Lithuania. Something like 85 percent. France has just slightly more than 80 percent of their national power generated by nuclear power plants. So this was a major commitment of French resources and, of course, a long-term commitment to go that way. It was De Gaulle who set them on that track, and succeeding French governments pursued that. French technology developed tremendously during the '60s, '70s, and '80s. We've all had this experience traveling in France - just taking computers, for example. Today it's commonplace. If you go downtown to Union Station to take a train to New York, you make your reservation with your credit card and you go and you tap into the system and put your reservation number in and your credit card and out come the tickets. Well, France had that years ago, long before we did, and of course their successful experiment in high-powered fast trains and their transportation system. They've done a lot to develop their own high technology, and they've tried initially to do it in a way that was independent. Of course, that was impossible, and eventually, like all of us... You have multinational corporations that are the only corporations that have the resources to be able to develop the financing and the technology to do a lot of these very expensive projects. But this was a deliberate French policy started by De Gaulle. If it hadn't been for somebody like Charles de Gaulle and his will power to do it, probably it couldn't have been done.

Q: No, I think France would have really moved very much into a satellite or not very powerful European power, which today, of course, it is. Just one last question before we move off France. Did you get involved in the movie wars - I mean Hollywood versus the French films and all that?

HOLMES: No, I didn't, but you're speaking about culture. I'll recount one little incident, talking about French pride. My wife and I were friends with a New York lawyer named Lee Eastman (he's now dead), whose law practice was focused on artists and actors and musicians. He had, in the early days, the American abstract expressionists, beginning with Jackson Pollock and that whole school. He helped them, and they frequently couldn't pay their legal fees, so they gave him paintings and drawings. He ended up with the most extraordinary - now worth hundreds of millions of dollars - collection of American abstract expressionist art in private hands. He wanted to establish somewhere in Paris - because he was struck by the fact when he would visit Paris that it was very nationalistic. You go to the Orangerie and see French expressionists and once in a while they'd have a show of some American paintings, but he felt that there ought to be a room, at least, or one gallery in one of the big museums in France that was dedicated to American art, so he offered to gather together a collection, mostly from his own collection, and sort of send it on permanent loan - sort of 99-year loan - if we could negotiate with a French museum to do this. Well, we tried - my wife and I did - and we struck out big-time with the national museums. Then we went to the Municipal Museum of Paris, and there's a very good painting museum there. We made a lot of headway with underlings, but when we got up to the director, it turned out he was a card-carrying member of the Communist Party, and he hated Americans and there was no way that he was going to allow this cultural infiltration from a fly-by-night school. Oh, yes, Jackson Pollock and company, they were pretty good painters, but he wasn't going to allow them. "Once in a while we show one of those paintings." We said, "This is not going to cost you anything. It will be a 99-year permanent lease." No, it never happened. This is sort of an interesting little footnote.

Q: It really is. Well, on that interesting little footnote, why don't we stop for today, and if you think of anything, obviously-

HOLMES: Well, one other thing I might quickly mention because it's just another footnote.

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: The kind of work that a political officer or a political counselor in a place like Paris is called upon to do. I was assigned the responsibility at a certain point to maintain contact with Papandreou, who had been president of Greece.

Q: Yes, it was the time of the colonels, '67 to '74.

HOLMES: The colonels had taken over, and there had been a coup, and he was in exile in France, and we wanted to stay in touch with him.

Q: This is Andreas Papandreou.

HOLMES: Andreas Papandreou. Yes.

Q: George Papandreou was his father.

HOLMES: Well, today the defense minister of Greece is a Papandreou, and he's either the nephew or the son. I think I'm talking about George.

Q: No, George was dead, I think by this time. This had to be Andreas.

HOLMES: I guess it was Andreas. But he was in exile there, and we wanted to stay in touch with him very quietly, so that was one of my jobs. I was just told, go and find him and be in touch with him. So I would go to his hotel, and we'd have tea and we'd talk. I probably did that half a dozen times. But it was just a little vignette of the way a good assistant secretary of European affairs, sort of thinking ahead to the future, was taking advantage of a rather well-staffed embassy in Paris to sort of keep a relationship going there.

Q: One question. Here you are dealing with political affairs in France, and obviously it's a complicated subject. It covers a whole spectrum. We have a large, I assume, intelligence agency there, talking about the CIA and all that. Was there much cooperation, swapping of information, or was it a one-way street. In that particular aspect, how useful was it for you?

HOLMES: Actually, for me personally it was very useful. Others had difficulty, but first of all, the defense attachï¿½, General Dick Walters, was a very, very old friend who actually had known my father in World War II when he was a young lieutenant, and he and I had served together in Italy, and so we had a close personal friendship, and that made a big difference, although, as garrulous a man as Dick Walters was, I never knew that the Kissinger trip to Pakistan and Indochina to set up the Nixon opening to China had all been negotiated by Dick Walters with the Chinese embassy in Paris. That's how close... I learned that he had done that in about my third meeting with Mr. Tsao, when I said, "I really like these candied apples." He said, "So does General Walters." Bingo. The light went on. I went back to the embassy and said, "Dick, you've been holding out on me." He said, "You didn't have a need to know." But actually I had good relations with him. We worked very closely. The station chief and I had a good relationship, primarily because I discovered the CIA officer that was working the Socialist Party was a very intelligent, engaging individual, and we became very good friends, and so we got a lot of cooperation. But institutionally, it didn't always work that way. It was a very difficult relationship.

Q: And in a way it's, you know, both people are working on the same subject, and yet the reports go in and do they come back? Are they useful? And the answer often is-

HOLMES: Institutionally, I got to see what they allowed me to see, because typically the way they operated in those days was to gather the political reporting and they would write it up in ways similar to the way we did, in full paragraphs and organized and as well-written as they could make it, and get it off; but then at Langley it would be edited and sent back to the field as an official report. That's the way it worked. But the raw reporting you would never see - I never saw. But coming back, occasionally, there would be certain things that were centered on France that a couple of us were allowed to see. It was pretty tight.

Q: Okay, well, why don't we stop at this point, and we'll pick this up: in 1974, you left Paris for where?

HOLMES: For the Senior Seminar.

Q: Okay. That's right, we were in the 17th Senior Seminar together. So we'll pick it up, and I'll ask a few questions about your impression of the Senior Seminar, and then whither, and all that.

HOLMES: Okay.

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Q: Today is May 10, 1999. Senior Seminar, '74-75. We were in it together. What was your impression of how it worked and what you got out of it?

HOLMES: A necessary and marvelous sabbatical. Every professional should have a sabbatical. The academic community is more structured about it, but I though it was very important, particularly the way we did it in the 17th seminar, which, I gather, was the last time that we had the luxury to do some of the things that we did, but for many of us who had served years abroad and had missed the not so much revolutionary activity but the accelerated evolution in so many fields of life in American society, it was a great reintroduction to our own country, and I thought it was extraordinarily valuable. Touring the inner city of a large American city beset with crime and drugs, going around with the police; studying the Puerto Rican phenomenon both in the South Bronx, where people were dealing with super-rats, going and visiting Puerto Rico itself; seeing what was happening at the military basic training facilities - as, of course, we had four officers from the armed services in our group - and on and on and on. Mr. Fuller - was that the name? - the architect of the geodesic dome-

Q: Oh, yes, Buckminster Fuller.

HOLMES: Yes, I said it right, Buckminster Fuller. There were just so many different aspects, social, political, economic, cultural, scientific, things that had been happening in the United States - it was a great reintroduction and equipped us all, I think, well to have an updated understanding of our own country so we could represent our country's interests abroad in our future assignments. Personally, I chose as my independent project, the six-week project... I think I was one of the few if not the sole member of the class that did not pick a foreign or defense policy issue. I picked ethics in journalism and had a wonderful time traveling around the United States visiting news councils, ombudsmen, radio stations, both chain- and independently owned newspapers and news organizations to look at the whole phenomenon of responsibility in the press. I had a lot of fun doing that and writing my findings up in paper. I was just finishing that when I was yanked out of the seminar to go and take over the NATO office in the State Department.

Q: I think one of the things that I came away with was a much greater appreciation about the challenges and the caliber of people who are dealing with issues at the state and local levels in government. You know, we tend to think everything comes out of Washington. And looking at Detroit and Minneapolis and other places like this was really-

HOLMES: It was. And the farmers in the Willamette Valley in Oregon.

Q: Well, you were yanked out in what, '75?

HOLMES: '75, yes. I believe it was May, 1975, to go and be the director of RPM, the Regional Political-Military Office in the European Bureau, largely acting as the backstopping office for our mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Brussels.

Q: You did this from '75 to when?

HOLMES: I did it from '75 to '77, just about two years.

Q: When you came in '75, the Ford Administration was in place. What were the issues that particularly engaged us in the '75 to '77 period on NATO political-military matters?

HOLMES: Well, I remember one of my early tasks was to help prepare the way for first of all a Ford NATO summit. Every new president at some point or other likes to have a sort of laying-on of hands, putting his signature as the leader of the North Atlantic Alliance. The other thing was the baptism of the CSCE, the treaty that launched the cooperative security in Europe, that organization.

Q: What was the attitude that you were getting and sort of within your sphere of operations towards this CSCE when it was just in its initial phases. Ford was President; Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State. Could you talk about the feeling towards it at that point?

HOLMES: Well, looking back on it, I don't have any very well-formed opinions on what I thought about it at the time, since I was down in the trenches doing my job, but looking back on it from today's vantage point and seeing what has happened with the expansion of NATO, it was in some respects a forerunner of the expansion of the North Atlantic Alliance. We, in my humble view, should have worked harder at making this the all-inclusive organization which it has become in a somewhat inchoate, clumsy way - an organization which I think I have encountered recently with the new states spinning off of Yugoslavia. But at one point it was 34 or 35 very quickly, and of course that kind of dimension was an unwieldy organization but did give all European countries (and, of course, the United States and Canada, as the two North American members) a chance to discuss common security and cooperation issues beyond the confines of NATO. I think that if we had worked harder at developing the security dimension of that relationship and organization, we might not have had to move as precipitously as we later did after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early '90s to bring central European countries into the North Atlantic Alliance, which I fear is already leading to a dilution of focus and making it increasingly difficult - and it will continue to expand, of course; I mean already Slovenia and Romania are knocking at the door - to operate given the sacrosanct rule of consensus. So I think that it was an important effort, the CSCE. It had to be done. I just wish, looking back, that we had worked harder at forming it as a companion organization, if you will, an organization that in the large European sense complemented the work of NATO.

Q: I'm just wondering whether there was any feeling that you were getting maybe on the military side or something, that this whole treaty thing was sort of a sideshow and that it might sort of just get in the way of what we were trying to do. I'm talking at the time.

HOLMES: That the CSCE would get in the way?

Q: The CSCE, I mean the negotiations and the preparation, that this was not going to be very important. Henry Kissinger obviously didn't think much of it.

HOLMES: That's true.

Q: I was wondering whether it had penetrated down, or people looking at it from the military side, which is where you were, were thinking about this as being maybe more of a problem than it was worth, or something like that.

HOLMES: Well those kinds of attitudes existed in the Defense Department and on the, quote, third floor of our delegation headquarters. The third floor was the way that the State Department people referred to the Defense Department component, the OSD component, of the mission in Brussels. And yes, one encountered that attitude, not so much in the State Department. We in RPM were primarily concerned with the diplomacy, with more of the sort of political cooperation of the Alliance than the actual military work that was done that was led at Mons by SACEUR and the military structure, both the Supreme Allied Headquarters in Mons and actually the military committee of NATO. Those bodies tended to be dominated by the OSD representatives, and of course we were aware of them and coordinated on policy issues, but we were primarily concerned with the diplomacy and the politics of the Alliance.

Q: Looking at sort of from your perspective again, the '75-77 period, how did we view the role of France at this particular time? This had been your specialty and all, and here you were. It was not in NATO but it was and it wasn't.

HOLMES: Well, France never ceased to be a member of the North Atlantic Council. Obviously, the political overseeing body of the Alliance - France was always a member, and an active member, sometimes in what was perceived as a negative way because it was France looking after French interests, but they were, of course, no longer in the integrated military structure of NATO. De Gaulle's decision to withdraw France from NATO had as its objective to remove French military forces and the French General Staff from the integrated part of the Alliance, so they were clearly outside that, although there was growing cooperation between French units, for example, in Germany, headquartered in Strasbourg. There remained at least one French division, if I recall correctly, in the French occupying Zone of Germany, and at the time, France was beginning to deploy, building, and I can't remember exactly when France deployed its first tactical nuclear weapons, but it did so at about that time or shortly thereafter, and there was a great deal of discussion, of course, with German authorities as to whether those units could be actually stationed with French units inside the Federal Republic or whether the weapons had to remain in Strasbourg. There was a great deal of discussion about that. France was pursuing its independent force de frappe, their nuclear power, their strategic weapons, tactical weapons. They were building of course French nuclear-powered submarines, and they were always very careful to understand what Alliance military strategy was all about, so they could at least be aware of the boundaries of activity while setting up their own strategic planning. I recall from the political side that not infrequently the French permanent representative was a kind of a pain in the neck for the other members of the Alliance because frequently in making the point that France had its own foreign policy and that it was a full-fledged member of the Alliance but it also had a view, one had the impression from time to time that they were simply firing for effect, to make the point that France was a large power and it wasn't going to just rubber-stamp political decisions in the North Atlantic Council with which they were uncomfortable or for which they felt that they had not sufficiently prepared the ground with French public opinion. So frequently they engendered some difficult and in some respects unnecessary debate in the council.

Q: Could you explain, again, at the time... You talk about political decisions and the French being involved, but to the outsider NATO is... You've got so many divisions, and the whole idea of NATO is if the Soviets attack, NATO will counterattack. What are political decisions, and what sort of things are they dealing with at this particular time, beyond just, you know, to use the Third Division there or somewhere else?

HOLMES: Well, of course, there's a great deal of training. There was whole process of pledging units at various levels of immediacy in terms of recall and assignment by member states, and that happened every year. I think it was called the Defense Planning Questionnaire. It was put out every year, and every year every country pledged certain units and certain capabilities to the common weal of the Alliance. There was a certain amount of group therapy that accompanied this activity because each country's contribution to the military strength of the Alliance was then reviewed by everybody else. Certain countries had perennial shortfalls. France was not subjected to that process. I think the politics of that military process occupied a lot of time of the North Atlantic Council. It undergirded not only what would be available in terms of military response should any member country ever be attacked or threatened, which would then in turn bring into play Article 5, which is what I call the D'Artagnan principle, "one for all and all for one." So that was a significant political-military activity, a policy activity that went on every year, and it also, depending on the kinds of units and capabilities that were made available, either enhanced or diminished the purpose and the utility of the many military exercises - bilateral, trilateral, and larger formations - that took place throughout the year. That was just part of the whole training and preparedness cycle, which, by the way, was probably never as good as it was when General Alexander Haig became the supreme allied commander. He really pulled that whole training system together in a dramatic and purposeful way that had never really been done before. I'm getting ahead of myself because he didn't... I'm trying to remember exactly when he was... No, he must have been SACEUR in the late '70s.

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: Yes, so I'm not too much ahead of myself here.

Q: It's an interesting comment, because so often Haig is portrayed as sort of a political general and all this.

HOLMES: That's correct, and I think he was one of the most imaginative military leaders of the Alliance that we have had in the mid-life of the Alliance. He invented something called the Autumn Forge Crested and Cap series of exercises, which brought units of the United States armed forces that were stationed in the United States that had been pledged to come to the support of NATO in time of crises, and they, on an annual basis, would fly over and participate in very large air-land-sea combined exercises of the Alliance. Haig ensured that all these sometimes disparate collection of unilateral, bilateral, trilateral exercises that various Alliance members were conducting - that all these were pulled together under the umbrella of an overall training concept for the Alliance, and that they reinforced each other and were conceptually designed to seek the same kind of improved Alliance defense capability. It sounds easy, but it wasn't. It sounds very obvious. I mean, one would ask, why wasn't this done before? Well, it wasn't. It just hadn't been done before, and Haig spent a lot of time making the rounds of NATO capitals talking to defense ministers, foreign ministers, prime ministers, presidents, chiefs of general staffs - he saw everybody in the Alliance to push this concept and to pull the defense establishments - with political backing of course - of member countries into a much more cohesive fighting force than it had ever been before. I think he did an absolutely superb job in that respect, and he became so well known and had such easy entrï¿½e in the chancelleries of Europe that later, when he became Secretary of State, it's not surprising that his most effective performance in many respects as Secretary of State was with the European allies, because they all knew him and trusted him. And so it just made it easy for him, in effect.

Q: We've talked about the French role. Again from your perspective, how did Germany fit into this thing at this time? How cooperative were they? How important were they?

HOLMES: Well, Germany was certainly very cooperative. At that time, in the sort of mid- to late '70s, Germany was a fully participating member of the Alliance by that time, and felt that it had a tremendous stake. Of course it had it's own continuing problems with East Germany, but you recall that in fact they exercised some considerable leadership in the strategic arms arena, when Helmut Schmidt, who was the one who originally proposed the deployment of the intermediate nuclear force, which led to a rather extraordinary deployment in five NATO countries of nuclear-armed Cruise missiles and Pershings. The Pershings were, of course, only in Germany, which got the Soviets' attention in a big way. Particularly, what really got their attention were the Pershings, Pershing IIs I think they were - the second generation that had a particularly greatly improved guidance system that would have produced pinpoint accuracy. The Soviets knew a lot about that weapons system, and it got their attention. We would never have been able, in my view, to have negotiated in such a successful manner the Intermediate Nuclear Force Arms Control Treaty had it not been for this very robust deployment of weaponry, the most important being in Germany. That demonstrated Alliance cohesion and will power. The way we deployed those weapons and trained with them and set up our special ammunition sites right there where the weapons were, and depending on what was going on in Europe at the time, some of these weapons would always be armed and on alert. So this was a very robust force; it was handled intelligently and with purpose, and there is no way that the Soviets could have considered this a bluff because we didn't talk about it; we actually deployed the force. We spent a lot of money building those weapons and deploying them and training with them and keeping them ready, but it had the desired effect in terms of leading into the INF Treaty negotiations later on. The German Government with us took a major leadership role in this.

Speaking of Germany's role in the Alliance in the mid- to late '70s, there were, of course, prohibitions on the use of German forces outside of Germany, historical and constitutional prohibitions and inhibitions which we are just now seeing in the late '90s with the participation for the first time of German units actually in combat against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Q: How about the Nordic countries, Norway and Denmark? Denmark, of course, is sort of small, but were they considered stout allies, or were they-

HOLMES: The Norwegians were always considered stout allies. The Danes were considered wobbly allies. In both cases, they were reflections of their internal politics; in fact, there was even a rather unfair joke that circulated in NATO one year when the Danish commitment in the Defense Planning Questionnaire exercise that I described was so paltry that people said that they were spending all of their money on putting phone booths on every street corner so citizens could easily run to the telephone and surrender if Denmark were invaded by the Warsaw Pact. But given their performance later on in peacekeeping in Bosnia and elsewhere, I think that was unfair. But the Norwegians were another very small country but were considered strong, reliable allies, and an important ally because other than the Turks, Norway was the only Alliance country that actually shared a border with the Soviet Union up at Kirkenes, and there was a great deal of strategic monitoring taking place in the northern waters, up opposite Murmansk. Murmansk was the biggest strategic nuclear base for the Soviet Navy, and it was out of Murmansk that the large boomers - their submarines carrying intercontinental ballistic missiles - and all their attack submarines, and the great majority of them were based there, and they flowed out of Murmansk out into the North Atlantic to patrol throughout the Cold War. Of course, that's exactly where Norway was very exposed, and they had periodic difficulties where the Soviets were constantly challenging them on fishing rights and also coal rights on Spitsbergen, because in order to maintain their claim to Spitsbergen, the Norwegians would pay citizens very handsome allowance to actually live there. It was claimed by several countries, and of course that was always a bone of contention between the Soviet Union and Norway. That was something we were brought into.

I'll make a reflection here on what I would call the famous "Nordic balance." There are basically five Nordic countries - Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Denmark - and never has there been a stranger collection of bedfellows in terms of defense matters. Iceland had no military forces. I mean the Icelandic defense force was the US/NATO base at Keflavik, a very important base for us because not only did we have fighter bombers there but most important we had P-3 aircraft-

Q: This is the Neptune.

HOLMES: Yes, the Neptune was the British variant, I believe.

Q: Yes, maybe.

HOLMES: The P-3's were the US variant, and with these, basically, we kept track of the Soviet submarine fleet. We and our allies flew missions our of Keflavik all the way down to the Azores, and I'm talking about Norwegian, US, British, Dutch, Belgian, Canadian aircraft. Everybody participated in this mission.

Anyway, going back to the Nordic balance, you have this curious situation of Iceland. Then you have two other countries that have forces that are members of the Alliance, Norway and Denmark, both of which had pledged never to allow foreign forces on their soil or nuclear weapons on their soil. Then you had Sweden, of course, which given the size of Sweden had a robust defense establishment. They built their own fighter-bombers, the famous artillery pieces that were constructed in Swedish factories, and they had a very strong defense force, and they were neutral. Then finally there was Finland, which always felt somewhat at the mercy of the Soviet Union as a result of the Finnish-Russian War and the treaty and the articles of that treaty which allowed the Soviet Union to intervene in Finnish affairs and Finnish territory if anything should happen that would threaten the Soviet Union. It was a very uncomfortable... It wasn't an alliance; it was an arrangement that came out of the Finnish-Russian War. Part of that bargain was that the Soviet Union agreed to purchase every year a certain number of Finland's exports, so there was kind of an uncomfortable kind of export protection for Finland, but always this sense that if they did anything clumsy or if any of the allies did anything in their waters, that this would stimulate Soviet intervention. The Finns talked about this in the inner Nordic councils, when the five countries would get together to discuss their problems. And there was an understanding that the other members would help Finland. I can't remember now what the incident was, but there was an incident where the Soviet Union actually invoked that article of the Finnish-Russian treaty, and it was something that an Alliance member had done. I should have looked this up, but they were threatening. They were definitely threatening. In a very quiet but unmistakable way, the Norwegians, and I believe perhaps also the Danes, let it be known that if the Soviets intervened in Finnish affairs, they would have to revisit their pledge not to allow allied forces and maybe even accompanied by nuclear units on their territory. They let this be known, and the Soviets got the message and they backed off. I wish I could remember the details of the incident that occurred. It was a very interesting display of this loose collectivity of Scandinavian countries that had a way of protecting each other by using the strategic assets of the two of the three NATO members that actually had their own forces. There was one exception in the Norwegian case. They did not allow US forces or NATO forces to be stationed on their territory; however, they did conclude an agreement to allow a full US Marine Corps brigade set of equipment to be pre-positioned in Norway, so that in the event of an emergency our forces could be flown over very quickly and fall in on their equipment. That sort of took their pledge of no foreign forces stationed on their soil to the limit.

Q: Didn't the Marines come once a year?

HOLMES: Oh, yes. They had periodic exercises, and the British would frequently participate in those Nordic exercises, and sometimes the Germans and others. The Germans tended to exercise more in the Baltic approaches exercises with the Danes and also the Norwegians. That was sort of their sector.

Q: How did we look upon Sweden at this time, '75 to '77? Was there consultation? Did we see them as a powerful add-on in case of real trouble, or-

HOLMES: Yes, we did, and we stayed in close touch with the Swedes. In fact, one of my duties when I came back from Italy in 1979 to be the principle deputy assistant secretary in the European Bureau, was to make an annual trip to the Scandinavian countries. I never went to our NATO allies without also visiting Sweden. I'd visit them all. It was an annual visit, and we exchanged information. We were very open with them. We kept a very close relationship, and we treated them as if they could be a strategic ally, and they appreciated it. In other words, we shared a great deal of information, and we licensed advanced weaponry to be purchased by their aircraft manufacturers and placed on their fighter bomber aircraft, for example, and various guidance systems and that sort of thing. They, of course, were technologically very advanced. L. M. Ericsson is a world-class company. Once in a while we would have some discussions with them when they wanted to sell an aircraft that had US technology on it to a country, and of course, given our law and our understanding, we would have a discussion with them as to whether or not we would permit the inclusion of the equipment that we had a string on on their aircraft if we didn't approve of the client.

Q: Yes. Now, how about Belgium and the Netherlands at that time?

HOLMES: Well, of course, the INF deployments - I'm trying to remember now... There was nothing special going on, except of course there were the periodic difficulties, as far as Belgium was concerned, in the Congo. That always involves some very full diplomatic bilateral activity, and we were both conscious-

Q: We're talking about the Katanga business.

HOLMES: Yes, that's right. But when we deployed the INF forces, the Netherlands was one of the countries where we actually had Cruise missiles. We had them in Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Italy - that's four - and I we must have had them in Belgium as well. I'm almost certain we did.

Q: You're talking about this deployment. Did this take place in the '75-77 period?

HOLMES: No, it was a little bit later.

Q: It was later; it was towards '79-

HOLMES: I mention it because the idea had already been launched by Helmut Schmidt when he was chancellor, and it took a while - discussions within the Alliance to sort of prepare the way. But the actual deployments occurred later. I remember very clearly because later when I went to Rome as deputy chief of mission in 1977 - and I was there from '77 to '79 - one of the projects that I worked on a lot - and I was chargï¿½ quite a bit of the time when this was going on, was working with the Italian Government to prepare a strategy that they could use with their political parties and within Italy to allow the deployment of the cruise missiles, which was a major undertaking, politically and strategically, for them. I remember having lengthy discussions with the prime minister and the defense minister in that time frame, and it was in this sort of '78-79 time frame when that was taking place.

Q: What about Great Britain in this '75-77 period? Any problems with the British?

HOLMES: Well, the British would periodically have their fishing wars with their fellow ally the Icelanders, which we would invariably get drawn into. The British played an important strategic role, of course. They were very intent on maintaining the state of the art of their nuclear force, and we allowed them to purchase our most advanced sea-launched ballistic missiles, up to and including the Trident II D missile. The British were very much part of our shared nuclear responsibilities, and they had several ballistic missile submarines that were on patrol with us, and we had undoubtedly the closest strategic relationship with them that we had with any country. It was very important from the British point of view, at a time when they could barely afford it, when they were reducing their conventional forces at what we thought was an alarming rate, they did it in order to be able to continue to afford to purchase and continue to participate in the very expensive nuclear club. The British were very realistic. They knew that as an increasingly small medium-sized power the only way the United States would take them seriously and bring them into global strategic questions was if they had the marbles to play in the big game. They said as much, and they said it to each other. It was just understood that if they stopped doing that they would be very rapidly reduced to a smaller European power and that, yes, we would continue to have a special relationship, but we wouldn't consult them or take them as seriously as when they were full-fledged members of the so-called nuclear club.

Q: When you were with RPM, were we going through our crisis with Portugal, where sort of the young leftist military-

HOLMES: Are you talking about the Revolution of the Carnations?

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: Yes. The Revolution of the Carnations took place on the 25th of April 1974, so that was-

Q: -about 11 months before you came into RPM.

HOLMES: Yes, that's right. That was a very interesting... that was a peculiarly Portuguese issue, but it reflected in some respects the experience of the dissolution of empire that other European powers had gone through at different stages - the British, the French, the Italians, the Spanish, the Belgians - all of whom came out of World War II with holdings in Africa, colonies, territories, trust territories, what have you. The Portuguese of course were a charter member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, but had been neutral in World War II, if not somewhat sympathetic to the Axis cause. They tried desperately to hang onto their empire in Africa, which included Angola and Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and the Cape Verde Islands. But the main action was on the continent of Africa, and there were, as everyplace else in Africa, independence movements taking place among the African inhabitants of those countries, but the Portuguese revolution was curious because it kind of ignited itself, in a way, because they fought it for 13 or 14 years, spent a great deal of money, and they kept sending young officers on their second or sometimes third tours back to fight this hopeless colonial war. It was eventually the young Portuguese officers, who were fed up with going to fight this hopeless African war and who became increasingly sympathetic to the cause of some of the movements, particularly in Angola and Mozambique, and it was that group of young officers that came back to Portugal on rotation and were disaffected who basically stimulated the revolution against Salazar and his successor's rï¿½gime. It was a curious evolution that was not replicated that I am aware of in any of the other colonial experiences in Africa.

Q: For a time - I guess a couple of years - the rï¿½gime was quite leftist, and the Communists were coming back in-

HOLMES: It was.

Q: -and they were part of NATO. Were you involved in that?

HOLMES: Well, I observed it, but as director of RPM I was not a principal player. In other words, the most important Portuguese contributions to NATO from our standpoint was the strategic location of the Azores and the base that we had there, primarily the P-3's and the sub watch - that was what really mattered strategically from our standpoint. The Portuguese force contribution to NATO was never very significant. In the Atlantic command, there was a subordinate command in metropolitan Portugal, actually in Lisbon, of the Atlantic command, which is not part of SACEUR but SACLANT responsibility. But we were certainly aware of it. Kissinger was very much into it, and Frank Carlucci, beginning in about 1975. In either late '74 or early '75 he went there and played a major role, really a major role - in fact, Frank Carlucci to this day is known as somewhat of a folk hero among the Portuguese.

Q: I've interviewed Frank, and others have talked about it. I think it's one of the great stories of the Foreign Service, of going there without the support of the Secretary of State - in fact, Kissinger was very dubious about this-

HOLMES: Well, Frank probably recounted for you his famous conversation with Kissinger, when they threw the notetakers out of the room and literally went to the mat, and Frank told Kissinger to stop his Spenglerian pronouncements of doom about what was happening in southern Europe, because he was talking not only about Portugal but also about the growing Euro-Communism phenomenon. Kissinger, without paying much attention to it, it troubled him. So Carlucci asked him to stop. He said, "You're not helping. You're making matters worse." Kissinger said, "Well, do you want me to shut up?" and Franck said, "Yes, I'll handle it. Please stay out of it." I mean, it was a rather gutsy performance, and of course Frank, at that point, had been working in the White House. He was very close to Ford, so he had a kind of independent base of strength.

Q: Yes, he had been deputy head of Health, Education, and Welfare, so he had had a sub-cabinet post.

HOLMES: That's right, he had his own lines into the White House. As a matter of fact, when he came back on consultation from Lisbon at that particular time, he had made an appointment in the White House, I think to see the President. Then he got an appointment with Kissinger. Obviously, the staff had told Kissinger that he had seen the President. So at the end of his difficult discussion with Kissinger, in which he made his point and got his way, as he was going out the door, he said that he needed to get back to Lisbon and he was going to just cancel his appointments in the White House because he had to get back.

But Frank played a major role, and I heard a lot about it later when I went to Portugal as ambassador. Basically, his role was to cajole the democratic party leaders in Portugal to come together - socialists and social democrats and the more conservative elements - to basically put together a functioning government, to reform the country, and to not allow the very Stalinist Portuguese Communist Party to divide the opposition and basically take over. It was kind of touch-and-go for a while, and he got some funds out of Washington, basically to help the Portuguese rebuild their military forces, after many years of neglect of their Alliance contributions because of this colonial war, to rebuild a force that could take its place alongside other NATO forces. This was very important because it meant that these units that were coming back out of Africa would have a mission. They could be put to work and focus on Europe rather than being available for political activism within Portugal. It was a very smart move on his part, and working with the democratic leaders to make them understand how important it was for these rather loose elements of former military to be given a real mission that would be directed towards their treaty responsibilities in the North Atlantic Alliance.

Q: Well, then, moving along - Italy. You mentioned how Italy was a good ally the whole time. Were there any problems with Italy? Were we concerned about the 25 or 30 percent Communist Party?

HOLMES: Well, we were obviously always concerned about the Communist Party and the size of the Communist vote, and the sort of fringe vote that wasn't Communist but was sympathetic frequently to their viewpoint marked out the boundaries of what Italy was prepared to do in certain circumstances. But I thought they did a rather remarkable job, the Italians did, given the hostility of the Communist Party to the very important NATO and US military stake in Italy and our presence there. We were in, I think, 50 to 55 different locations, some of them very small, around Italy, and of course a major NATO headquarters of Allied Forces South in Naples. But the hospitality to American men-of-war with nuclear weapons, ships that were nuclear powered and that also had nuclear weapons - we really never had any major difficulties with the Italians over the "neither confirm nor deny" policy with respect to ships that would call at Italian ports. Despite the major efforts of the Communist Party to play on the lack of information and fears of many Italians that it would be dangerous to have our nuclear-powered vessels in Italian waters and that they would contaminate their fishing beds and their tourist industry and that it would be bad for the health of the... I mean all of those kinds of arguments were, in the final analysis, of no avail. The Italian Government continued, within their own parliament, to defend our access to their ports. We had access, I can remember, at one point to as many as six ports in Italy, with nuclear-powered vessels.

Q: What about the "Katzenjammer Kids" in NATO, Greece and Turkey? We're talking about the time you were doing RPM.

HOLMES: Yes... I don't have any particular recollection other than the fact that they were... Well, we had, of course, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus.

Q: That was July 14th or so of 1974.

HOLMES: Was that when it was, 1974?

Q: Yes, that took place when you-

HOLMES: Was it '74?

Q: Yes, it was, because I had just left there. We were dealing with the arms embargo on Turkey the whole time you were-

HOLMES: Well, I was still dealing with that later when I came on board in the Bureau of European Affairs as the senior deputy in 1979. That went on for a very long time. That was a major crisis, not only in Greek-Turkish relations but also in our own relations with both countries and our own strategic stake in our intelligence listening posts in Turkey, because when the Turks went into Cyprus and established the little Turkish republic there in the northern part of the island, the Greek lobby and others in the United States moved very quickly to cut off aid to Turkey and had a lot of the cooperation ground to a standstill, and at one point the Turks, in retaliation, closed down some of our bases. You remember. That worried us a lot, particularly those bases in Turkey that were monitoring Soviet military activities.

Q: Particularly missile launches.

HOLMES: And missile launches in particular. What was very curious, I always thought later, was the extent to which the other ethnic lobbies within our Congress supported that, even though, clearly, it was not in the strategic interest of Israel and its supporters in the Congress to not be able to count on that kind of early warning in the event of another round of fighting between Israel and its Arab neighbors because of the Soviet relationship particularly with Syria. There was always a concern about what the Soviets might do, and so from a strategic point of view I always thought it was essential that the Israelis would count on our being able to have that whole monitoring network up and running at all times. Yet that connection was never really made by AIPAC and the Israeli lobby with their supporters in Congress, who continued steadfastly to support this embargo. It wasn't until about 1979 or early 1980 when Matt Nimitz, I believe, the counselor for the Department of State, was assigned the responsibility to negotiate an end to this problem, the lifting of the embargo. So it really wasn't solved until about 1980, and it went on for about six years. This was a major problem. And certainly, it continued to poison the Greek-Turkish relationship, and obviously that had an effect on the Alliance, and it meant that a lot of the trilateral and quadrilateral naval and air exercises and activity in the Mediterranean were hamstrung by this quarrel.

Q: Looking at the other side of the hill, what was the feeling about the Soviet Union at that time as a threat to NATO? How did we see the threat?

HOLMES: Well, we were very concerned, always were, about the Soviet nuclear threat. One of the reasons, going back to the very important INF deployments, this was a major move on our part, and addressed directly the Soviet threat. In other words, we thought it was essential to build up our theater nuclear weapons in order to be able to negotiate the Soviet Union down, in terms of their strategic threat. We were very concerned about that, and there had been a lag in our strategic arms control negotiations in the mid-'70s, between the time of the first ABM and SALT I treaties that had been negotiated basically by Kissinger and what happened later. There was a period when the Soviets were building, they were fielding more and more improved weapons, larger weapons with more... I'm talking about strategic intercontinental ballistic missiles with more multiple reentry vehicles, including of course the SS-18, the one that got our attention. We were very concerned, and the Alliance was concerned. There were some very private discussions in the Alliance at the time, within NATO, to ensure that SACEUR would always have available some 400 reentry vehicles from US strategic submarines that would be available to the Alliance, to SACEUR, if we ever really would have to go to war with the Soviet Union. This was in addition, of course, to our strategic weapons and to our tactical nuclear weapons. Most Alliance air forces had nuclear bombs - gravity bombs - available, certainly the Greeks, the Turks, Belgians, Dutch, Germans, Canadians, US, Italians. There were strategic ammunition sites in all of those countries. We worried about the ones obviously in Greece and Turkey just because of the very bad relationship between those two countries. So in addition to the air force capabilities of tactical nuclear weapons, we also had our strategic weapons and then the all-important sea-launch ballistic missile reentry vehicles that were available to SACEUR.

When we played nuclear exercises in the Alliance, some Alliance members were very nervous about that, particularly the Germans - understandably.

Q: As you played these things, did you see... Was it a matter of mutual destruction, or was there a way one could actually fight a war without committing suicide with nuclear weapons?

HOLMES: That was always the question, and these scenarios that were played out would inevitably lead to a point where you had to fish or cut bait. It was a question of were we going to have a nuclear demonstration or were we going to try to confine nuclear weapons to one sector, and was it possible to do so? I think most people realized that if we went that route it wouldn't be possible, that it would unleash a horrific global exchange. So in the Alliance some of the most difficult moments came when, in approving exercises that involved a nuclear scenario and then actually playing it out... and I can remember on at least one occasion when the game was aborted simply because certain members of the Alliance, primarily the Germans, didn't want to go to the next step in the decision-making that would lead to the end of the game. Senior members played these games - perhaps not full-time, but at certain points. A game typically would last four or five days, and you would have cadres of young diplomats and military of all members of the Alliance playing the game in their capitals, and as I say, I do remember one occasion where we actually had to abort the game before the final steps because the Germans simply didn't want to take it that far.

Q: You mentioned nuclear. What about the conventional side? Was this seen as going to be almost not an issue because the things would turn nuclear pretty quickly?

HOLMES: No. We in the United States, at least, and other allies to some degree, were intent on developing the most modern, robust conventional forces possible because we didn't want to do exactly what you're suggesting - just consider it an inevitability that we would get very quickly to a nuclear war. We were intent on maintaining two US Corps for a long time at full strength, and the French had their forces, and the Germans, and we worked very hard at persuading our allies to keep their NATO pledges up and to exercise and to use new weapons like the uranium-depleted rounds and new tactics, so there would not be an easy or inevitable reliance on nuclear weapons. That said, we always maintained...

Q: You were saying you'd never go down a road-

HOLMES: Yes, we were very careful with the Soviets to never entertain the notion of a no first nuclear weapons pledge with them, and this was sort of an Alliance strategic canon. We were absolutely determined, and we made it clear publicly, that we reserved the right to use nuclear weapons at any point in the escalation of conflict that seemed in the Alliance's interest to do so. So the Soviets could not make an easy calculation, that we were not going to go up some kind of strategic ladder rung by rung. We did that because we knew that despite our best efforts at arming and training the North Atlantic Alliance forces the Soviets, in a strictly classic, conventional war, could overwhelm certainly certain sectors of he Alliance, coming either through the north German plain or through the Fulda Gap. It would have been extremely difficult. I don't think anybody kidded themselves into thinking that if the Soviets had decided to wage an all-out conventional war we would have had to use nuclear weapons at a certain point to stop that. We were very careful always to maintain that strategic principle: that we reserved the right to introduce, always in a defensive... I mean we would never, obviously... we are a defensive alliance - we will not initiate war with the Soviet Union, but once started, we reserve the right to use nuclear weapons at any point of conflict.

Q: What was the feeling that you were getting from your office and the Pentagon route about the American Army at this particular juncture? We had just been forced out of Vietnam almost just when you took over. The Army had been suffering from drug problems, racial problems and general lack of support at home and all.

HOLMES: You will perhaps remember, Stu, because we were in the Senior Seminar together and we did visit a basic training establishment in the Army. We went to Fort Knox and spent a day with soldiers. We also went to visit the Marine Corps. I think it was at Camp Lejeune.

Q: I think so, yes.

HOLMES: Yes, I don't think it was Quantico.

Q: We were down there seeing the Navy, too.

HOLMES: We also visited - I think it was in Charleston perhaps, or Norfolk.

Q: I think it was Charleston.

HOLMES: Yes, it was Charleston, I believe. But in terms of troops going through basic training and the attitudes of troops - this was 1974-1975 - we were out of Vietnam, the armed forces were hard at work at that point developing a health strategy. Basically they were busy developing their zero-tolerance policy with respect to drug use, because it had had a devastating effect on our forces in Vietnam, and some very dedicated officers were determined to turn that around as rapidly as possible - people such as General Barry McCaffrey stayed in the Army and were determined to reform it from within, and they did a remarkable job. But we were still feeling our way. We were repairing the damage. There was a little bit of the psychosis of defeat that had resulted from our departure from Vietnam, and this plus the drugs had had, I think, a very devastating effect not only on the morale but also on the self-confidence and, indeed, the capability of the armed forces. We saw that. At least I remember being struck by the sort of flaccid approach to training at Fort Knox, for example. We spent that day with the troops, we ate with them in the mess hall, and we talked with them; and I was shocked by how... It was almost like an expensive boarding school. The armed forces were so worried that somehow the parents or the Congress or somebody would react badly if they trained them too hard. The training, the physical conditioning, was pathetic. They were really feeling their way at that time, walking on eggshells to keep the troops happy, to make their barracks life comfortable, to ensure that they had access to schooling at night - which was fine; that obviously was a major draw to bring people into the armed forces. But even in the Marine Corps, which had always been a volunteer force, it seemed to me when we visited the troops there, that they too were suffering to a lesser degree but somewhat the same attitude, the same approach. So I think that the armed forces were just sort of bottoming out of their post-Vietnam crisis and that from that point on they would build back their self-respect, their training, their capability in a major way, so that by the time that Ronald Reagan was elected President in 1980, they had come a long way in a relatively short time in dealing with the drug problem and reinstalling a sense of discipline and purpose in the armed forces. Reagan did a lot to restore their sense of pride and the appreciation for the armed forces within the United States.

Q: In '77, you got an assignment to where?

HOLMES: In 1977, I was asked by Richard Gardner, who was a professor at Columbia University and very close to Brzezinski and Vance and to President Carter, with whom actually Gardner had worked in the Trilateral Commission, and who was practically the first ambassador appointed by the Carter Administration, to Italy - and Gardner was a long-time friend of mine - to come with him as his deputy chief of mission. So I went to Italy in the summer of 1977.

Q: Richard Gardner was ambassador there until '81, when he left, and then later he went to Spain.

HOLMES: Yes, in this administration, the Clinton Administration.

Q: He's a major player in the diplomatic field. Could you tell me how he approached the job and how he used you and how we worked with the Italians during this time?

HOLMES: Dick Gardner's concept was a very interesting one, and I have to say that he and his wife really played it as a partnership. His wife, Danielle Gardner, was of Italian origin. Her parents had been forced to flee Italy by the racial laws. They were Italian Jews.

Q: From Venice, I think.

HOLMES: Her mother was from Venice, and her father was from Rome. They actually left from Genoa and escaped and came to the United States. But the Gardner family did an enormous job, and they had a strategic concept basically of outreach, of reaching to every segment of Italian society. It was sort of the ideal that most ambassadors would like to do but generally do not. By that I mean that chiefs of mission in most countries tend to get so involved in the day-to-day, week-to-week diplomatic flow of issues that they tend to put aside what I would say intellectual, academic, cultural outreach. The Gardners had decided that they wanted to do that and pursued it during their entire time in Italy. I had served there, of course, before and in other countries; I had never seen a chief of mission carry out that kind of a strategy to the extent that the Gardners did. In the way that they entertained, in their visits around the country, they of course met with political leaders and labor leaders and business leaders but also writers and artists and Italian cinematographic producers, and it was a very exciting time. Gardner himself was a brilliant international lawyer and an international monetary expert, probably the leading academic figure on international organization affairs, and so he was very keen on getting out to all the provinces of Italy and making substantive speeches. He was very careful not to just make Columbus Day speeches. He would pick his audience carefully, and he would address Carter's nuclear policies or talk about the environment or strategic issues or commercial issues. He had, I thought, a very interesting approach and a game plan for not only reaching out to every segment of Italian society but also to carry Carter Administration policies to the people of Italy.

Basically my role - we had a sort of an understanding that we used to laugh and talk about: Mr. Outside and Mr. Inside. We had a very large diplomatic and military establishment in Italy, so Dick Gardner wanted to be free to pursue these activities, and he basically left the running of the mission to me. We had seven or eight constituent posts at the time - I think maybe eight - and I think it was 55 military installations, going from a very large establishment at NATO headquarters in Naples to a small communication relay point on a mountainside, where there maybe were three people.

So that was really my job, to run the establishment, the consulates, and maintain that kind of close embassy contact and oversight with the military commands. Most of the commands, of course, were under the Joint Chiefs of Staff Integrated Military Command Structure, but they were serving in Italy, and it was very important to have close policy contact and oversight so that they would carry out their duties within the context of Carter foreign policy in Italy.

Q: One of the things that impressed me about Ambassador Gardner was that he had both the credentials and the intellectual capabilities to engage with both the academic and the students, which most of our ambassadors... I mean, very difficult time, and these tended to be rather radical and to the left. It was just part of the Italian scheme of things. Did you notice this?

Q: Yes, and he worked very hard at his Italian. Obviously, his wife was bilingual, but he learned to speak good Italian and had a very good understanding. There were times where sensitive subjects were discussed where he would use an interpreter just to be sure that he was accurate, but over a period of four years he got to the point where he was really doing most of his business in Italian without the help of an interpreter. Yes, he did have that knack of engaging people in policy discussion - academics, of course. He did talk with students, graduate students and young professors, but he also used his staff to do some of that. I remember in particular he recruited a remarkable man named Daniel Serwer, who was a scientist, had a Ph.D. in the history of science from Princeton and was at Brookhaven Laboratories at the time. Dick Gardner had known him at some point in some UN work that he had been doing on the environment. So he recruited Serwer to take an appointment as his science attachï¿½. Serwer knew French, but he didn't know Italian, but he was a gifted linguist and learned Italian so quickly and so well that he would go down into the "lions' den," which was the nuclear physics faculty at the University of Rome, which was extremely radical and extremely critical of United States policy, and he would stand up there and explain and defend Carter policy to a disbelieving and initially hostile audience, and at the end - although he perhaps didn't win many converts - they would crowd around and ask him for help to get scholarships in American universities. So Gardner was very good at using his best people in the embassy to help, particularly with younger officers, to get them to go out and talk with students.

Q: Something we talked about the last time you were in Italy, but I'd like to bring up again. Here you were looking at the inside, and it's a theme I always like to bring up with people who served in Italy, and that is the involvement we get with the political process in Rome, which at least during the 40-odd postwar years, until things really broke loose after the time we're dealing with, was that there really wasn't much of a change. The Communists and their supporters got about 30 percent of the vote; the Christian Democrats were in. There was a constant change in government, switching ministries and all this, and we had a rather large political section that was reporting on all the sort of political minuet that went on in here, where really, it seems that one man and a young boy could almost report on what was happening really in Italian politics.

HOLMES: Well, you're absolutely right. When I went back as deputy chief of mission ten years later, very little had changed, and this sizable political section was even more of an anachronism by then than it had been ten years before. In a way, Dick Gardner and I perpetuated that anachronism because both of us got very interested in the political parties and their leaders and their writings and their newspapers, and we'd read all that stuff and then ask questions. Our political officers would then have to go and research it, if they didn't have the answer, and so we kind of perpetuated that, in a way, because it was interesting.

Q: It traps one.

HOLMES: It does trap one, and we were both political scientists - I mean Dick Gardner was and I was - and we were fascinated by this. Now there was one strategic game, and that was to keep the Communists out of the government. That was the overriding issue that Gardner had, at least, from Vance and Brzezinski from Washington: for God's sake, don't let this "historic compromise" happen. We can't have the Italian Communists and Italian Catholics coming together in one government. What would that do to our strategic stake in Italy and in the Mediterranean? So this was a major issue throughout the time that Dick and I were together in Italy, making sure that this did not happen.

Q: Was there anyone within the embassy or outside saying, "Look at this..." Because the French model was to appear later on, what Mitterrand did to the Communists, which he told you before, how he would do this. Was anybody in the embassy saying, "Let's not get too hung up on this historic compromise because the Communists will be swallowed up?" Or was this either practical or sort of an article of faith that one couldn't question the infallibility of this?

HOLMES: Well, there was one officer in the Political Section who was very smart and who basically took a different view.

Q: Who was that?

HOLMES: I think his name was Fred Spotts. Anyway, he was very effective. His view was not so much that there would be some Italian variant of the French model, which by the way hadn't happened by that time, but more that this was inevitable, that Euro-Communism, which was Communism with a kinder face, Communism with a more centrist, mixed-economy, mixed-capitalist-socialist system was inevitable. This was happening in Spain; this was going to happen in Italy. There were people that espoused that point of view, that this was an inevitable evolution and that we shouldn't try to stop it but that we should try to guide it. That was the point of view here. But this one individual - and I always encouraged him to speak out and to write up analyses of his point of view and to defend it. I thought it was very good for people's thinking. But he was definitely sort of a committee of one, because it certainly didn't shake the implacable opposition, not only of our embassy but basically the Administration. After all, Brzezinski was the National Security Council advisor and had a very strong view on this. If you'll recall, in the Carter Administration we had basically three secretaries of state. We had Vance, and we had Brzezinski, and we had Andy Young in New York. It was a troika approach to foreign policy in the United States.

Q: Did you find that you were up against an Italian establishment within the Foreign Service, both at the Desk of the European Bureau and in the consulates and all and at the embassy, of people who had served in Italy again and again and again?

HOLMES: Yes.

Q: In a way there's always the problem of arteriosclerosis or something like this.

HOLMES: Yes, there was a certain amount of that. I have to agree with that. There were a number of individuals who had served several times in Italy, and of course to the extent that they were serving in the consulates in the provinces, their background and rather conservative outlook, going back to the end of World War II, was reinforced frequently by the provincial leaders they met. Now the one exception to that would have been, of course, our consulate in Florence, where there was a very strong Communist establishment, strong Communist Party, and a lot of questioning, even among the elite of Tuscany of this implacable opposition to Communism. Bologna was one of the Communist strongholds in Italy, and Pisa, and that whole area.

Q: The Red Belt.

HOLMES: Yes, it was really the Red Belt, and people used that term. But I would say that when Bob Gordon was our consul general in Florence, Bob paid attention to this, and he reported on it, to the extent - and he met these people and would talk with them and report on their conversations. He made an effort to explain United States policy, and Bob had a certain sophistication. He was a political scientist by training, had done his graduate work at Berkeley, and although Bob had been in Italy (he was in Italy the second time, as I was, and we had the same sort of ten year separation - he was my boss as the political military counselor when I was in Italy the first time, and then he ends up as consul general in Florence when I'm the DCM in Rome), Bob did not fall under that easy conservative, no-new-thinking approach of some of the other consular officials. Bob had a very probing, inquiring attitude about it, and enjoyed bringing the thoughts and issues that he'd encountered in the Red Belt to the attention of the embassy in Rome. It was very good, and it was appreciated by Dick Gardner and certainly by me - I mean, we were old friends. But he was rather the exception.

Q: How did we view from your perspective, I think, the head of the Communist Party, Berlinguer?

HOLMES: Enrico Berlinguer, yes.

Q: How did we view him at that time?

HOLMES: Well, he was a political satrap. He was a very important figure in Italy. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, he was related, a cousin, I believe, of Francesco Cossiga. I think Berlinguer was - I may be mistaken, but I believe he was - Sardinian.

Q: He was a Sardinian. I'm quite sure.

HOLMES: I think he was a cousin of Francesco Cossiga, who at the time when I was there this time, was minister of interior and later became prime minister and eventually president of Italy. Berlinguer was a figure, and a strong foe. In fact, he was considered as such. He was the head of the Italian Communist Party, and we wanted to keep them in their box, did not want them to come into power. If Dick Gardner or I met him, we were polite. We would chat with him, if we met him at a function, but we didn't seek to develop a relationship with him. Dick Gardner wanted to have more contact with the Communist leaders, and it was difficult, given his very public figure and given the policy of the US Government, to do so. But every once in a while, at a small dinner party, there would be a Communist figure, and he'd make a point of talking to them, listening, trying to sound them out on issues.

Q: How helpful did you find the CIA, as far as... I'm always interested in the connection. Sometimes one has the feeling that the CIA sort of reported to Washington and so whatever you got ended up through a filter and so it wasn't really very useful at the time.

HOLMES: No, actually, we had a very good - an exceptional - chief of station, who was an old friend of mine. I had served with him earlier, in France, as a matter of fact, where he'd been the deputy chief of station. A very scholarly individual who didn't collect spy stories and gun books like some I have known, but when I went into his office, the books that he read - and I could see that he was reading - were history, biography. This man was an exceptional linguist. He spoke excellent Italian, French, Russian, Ukrainian - really a remarkable linguist and a very intelligent guy, and we had a good relationship, particularly when I was chargï¿½, which was a lot of the time. I was chargï¿½ d'affaires about one third of the time that I was there. The station chief and I worked very closely together, and I had the advantage of knowing, even in its raw, undigested form, what was going on. Those contacts, the intelligence information gathered by the Agency in Italy, everything that had to do with Italian politics - of course, that had to be shared with the ambassador anyway, but because of my special relationship with him, and we were both old Italian hands, in effect, I was able to know what was going on early. He had some very good people on his staff. He had two people in particular whom I remember, one of whom was European-born and the other was not, but both were old Italians hands, absolutely bilingual in Italian and knew the country inside-out, had been there many times before, were very, very skillful in getting around and gathering information and doing special missions. Unfortunately, because they were specialists, not generalists, when Admiral Stansfield Turner carried out his massive shrinking of the Agency, the pink slip campaign, which was a minor atomic explosion within the career overseas operations people of the Agency, the most knowledgeable and skilled people were the ones who got the pink slips, because they were specialists. If you had to cut - at least that seemed to be the attitude in the Agency - they wanted to save their generalists, and they cut their specialists, which I though was absolutely insane. It was a very bad move. They lost their two best people, and I knew them both very well and I knew their quality, during that downsizing (I hate that word, but...). No, we had an excellent relationship, and really this particular station chief, the work of his people contributed very directly to the mission objectives of the embassy and of the administration. In fact, I set up a special committee that I chaired that had the station chief and the FBI representative - which was very unusual because normally they just operated on their own in those days - and the defense representatives in our own Political Section. For certain issues I would bring in other officers. We met at least once very two weeks, sometimes on a weekly basis, basically to share information but also to establish targets, sort of tactical objectives, things that we knew we had to learn about in order to be able to contribute to our overall strategic objectives in the country. This became particularly important because the Red Brigades were on the rampage and were becoming more than a nuisance, were becoming a major threat to the viability-

Q: Moro was killed.

HOLMES: Oh, Moro - I was in the middle of that. I don't know if we've discussed this before, but I was chargï¿½. By the way, during this whole period, the Red Brigades were moving more and more vigorously in their campaign to bring down the Italian Government. At first they would "knee-cap." They would shoot people in the knees. Then they began to kill people. The Italian Government had a very hard time coping with this because, as their campaign of terror expanded, Italian companies and parastatal organization would hire security officers, and what they did was, they could pay carabinieri [Italian: police], if they would take early retirement, very good salaries, and so a lot of people were responding to that, and the Italian carabinieri, the paramilitary force that was in every village of every province in Italy and allowed the Ministry of Interior an intelligence network second to none - they were denuded very quickly, because, one, they were drawing out very good carabinieri officers and NCOs to be security officers but also then the carabinieri drew more from the provinces to form their rapid-response teams, their strike teams, which they had not had before and which they suddenly saw a need for. So the carabinieri were diminishing in strength and in its ability to gather intelligence, and at about that time the two intelligence services, the SISDE and the SISME, which were the intelligence services of the Ministry of Interior and of the Ministry of Defense, were in the throes of a huge reorganization. So all this was going on at the very time that the Red Brigades was growing in strength.

We in the embassy had taken pains to instruct all of our people to vary their routes and the times of going to work and coming home. We had a fluent Italian American regional security officer (RSO) who set up a sort of a command center in his office with a map of Rome with all of the schools on it where our children were going to school, because one never knew from day to day where there might be another Red Brigade attack on a carabinieri post or a police station or what have you. So he set this up, and he had all the schools located on this, and then an employee in his office monitored the police network all day long so as to be able to track the part of the city where there were problems. Sometimes we would be in touch with the schools and suggest that they leave early or that they delay the departure. So we had a rather elaborate scheme for basically protecting the American children in these various schools, because there were several schools around town where they were.

So already, we were well into this, and one day when I was chargï¿½ d'affaires and I was heading out of Rome - I was going to make a speech someplace - I was just on the outskirts of the city when I had a phone call from the motor pool saying that the minister of the Interior wanted to see me immediately. So I turned around, and I went to see Francesco Cossiga, who said, "We have had this distressing news that Aldo Moro has been taken hostage by the Red Brigades." Aldo Moro was the father figure of the Christian Democratic movement in Italy. He'd been prime minister several times. He was not prime minister at the time, but he was the head of the party and a revered senior statesman - and had violated all the basic norms of protection against terrorists by religiously following the same routine every day, so he was an easy target. Cossiga said to me, "Holmes, we are on our knees. We don't know what we're doing. We have no concept of crisis management. Our security services are being reorganized. The carabinieri are ineffective. We need help. Please ask your government to help us."

So I immediately called the Department and got them to send out an expert, whose name will come to me in a moment - Steve Pieczenik. Steve Pieczenik had been hired by Larry Eagleburger in an earlier period and was a psychiatrist, political scientist, extremely bright, who had done a lot of research, reading and writing, about the phenomenon of terrorism and the phenomenon of negotiating with terrorists. He knew a lot about it. So he came out very quickly. He was there the next morning, and we immediately went into a huddle with the station chief in his more secure location, and we talked for several hours about the situation, briefed him, and then after that we grabbed a bite of lunch and went immediately over to see Francesco Cossiga, the minister of interior. Steve and I basically talked with him. He laid out a game plan for the kind of crisis management team that we advised them to put together to deal with this situation, and then we lived through the 55 days when Italy searched for Aldo Moro, and the Italian Government came very close to negotiating with the Red Brigades on an equal basis, they were so desperate to get Aldo Moro back. But they resisted. In the final analysis, they didn't do that. They continued to treat the Red Brigades the way they should have been treated, not acceding to their various demands. Then one day, they found him murdered in the trunk of a car that was parked equidistant between the headquarters of the Communist Party and the headquarters of the Christian Democratic Party - which was a point they were making.

Q: How were we responding to the Red Brigades? Were we seeing them as under the control of anyone, or how did we see them?

HOLMES: No, we saw the Red Brigades for what they were. The Red Brigades basically was a home-grown terrorist movement mostly populated by radical left-wing students, children of the middle class, whose point was that they had a sort of ideologically pure sense of what Communism was about, what government should be, and they saw both the Communist Party of Italy and, or course, the Christian Democrats as violating this. To them the worst possible outcome was that there would be a historic compromise. I mean that's the one thing we agreed with them about. They wanted the Italian Republic by a real socialist rï¿½gime, and that was their goal.

Now they did get some help. They had some training. They had training in Czechoslovakia. The had some contact with the Red Army Faction in Germany. Through this training center in Czechoslovakia, there was certainly a Soviet Communist attempt to influence the Red Brigades, but mostly they financed their own operations through kidnappings. That's how they built up their war chest, and they had periodic meetings. They had a cellular structure of their organization, which prevented for a long time any penetration. They published political tracts, and you would find them occasionally strategically dumped in trash cans, and then people would be told where they were. Mostly they were after political leaders in Italy, but after a while they began to target and talk about NATO and the United States as enemies, and that got our attention and we sort of redoubled our security efforts. We were very careful, Dick Gardner and I, when going on trips. Gardner always had a security detail. I did not, except when I traveled outside of Rome. That was partly because the Italian authorities knew that I was absolutely religious in varying my way. Sometimes I would walk to work, walk through the park, I would go different ways, sometimes I would ride and vary my times by 30 or 40 minutes a day and never the same path two days running. It worked. You just get into that sort of mode and habit. You learn to be street-smart after a while. But of course eventually, as you remember, that was after I left Italy, they did capture an American general officer, General Dozier, and he was eventually released, largely because of just solid police work - obviously we gave as much help as we could - tracing down leads and by a process of elimination and being alert to unusual patterns, finally they narrowed the place down to a certain part of - was it Milan? - this was after I left - a large Italian city in the north. They had a stakeout in this one neighborhood, and in talking, I guess, to the shopkeepers, they learned that a woman would come every day, who ostensibly lived alone, but she would buy a lot of food every day, and so that's how...

Eventually they knew that Dozier was in this apartment, and the had a SWAT team that moved in very quickly and rescued him.

But I'd like to make a point here. I think there were really three critical moments in Italy's struggle with their home-grown terrorism. The first was that they resisted the temptation to do just about anything, even to the extent of negotiating with the Red Brigades for the release of Aldo Moro. They resisted that, and that would have had a terrible effect, I think, on the viability of the Italian Republic. The second thing was actually, after having lost confidence in their own ability to do good police work and rebuilding of their intelligence services, the fact that they rescued General Dozier. That was a tremendous boost to their regained self-confidence. The third thing, of course, was winning the World Cup in soccer.

Q: Well, during your time, the major party was the CDU, the Christian Democratic Union.

HOLMES: No, no. That's the German.

Q: The Christian-

HOLMES: Christian Democrats.

Q: Christian Democrats, CD.

HOLMES: Christian Democracy.

Q: Were we concerned about the allegations of corruption and the longevity of the same leadership and all rotating through this party at that time, about its viability?

HOLMES: Yes, we were. The longer that state went on, the more concerned we were, and it was absolutely true that there was a small political class of Christian Democratic leaders - and even the leadership of the other parties, Republicans and the Socialists and the Social Democrats - that tended to be small cliques of politicians who were constantly elected and reelected and reshuffled. Andreotti was kind of the quintessence of the Italian political operative of that time. He had been in every Italian government since De Gaspari, where he started as a young man as an undersecretary. He had served in practically every ministry of the Italian Government, and it had been long whispered - it wasn't an open rumor, but it had been whispered - that he was corrupt, that he had payoffs and kickbacks and contacts with the mafia, but nobody was ever able to document it. There were the Lockheed scandals, where there were some kickbacks for various Italian politicians, and there was a code word that appeared called "antelope cobbler." It was sort of an article of faith never said in writing but whispered around town that "antelope cobbler" was Andreotti. Today, he's still awaiting sentencing as we speak.

But Andreotti was a fascinating figure, and I remember going one time when I was chargï¿½. I had been instructed to go and see him. It may have had to do with the deployment of the Cruise missiles, but I can't remember exactly what the issue was. But I was struck. I went into this ornate 16th-century palace where the prime minister of Italy has his offices, in this huge room with wonderful tapestries and post-renaissance paintings, and there was this beautiful desk where he sat. He invited me to sit in an armchair in front of the desk. The first thing that struck me was that next to this beautiful ancient desk was a small telephone switchboard of the kind that you would see in a provincial American hotel in the '30s. It had about a dozen jacks and plugs. I saw this curious thing and couldn't quite understand what was going on, until the first phone call came through, while we were having this long discussion, just the two of us. (There were no notetaker in the room, just the two of us). A phone call came through, and he handled it himself. He pulled a jack out and plugged it in and answered. It was clear to me that he had several direct lines. He took this phone call, and he said, "Yes, yes... I think so... Just a minute please." Then instead of going to sort of a formal agenda on his desk, he took out of his breast pocket this moth-eaten little calendar and flipped through it and found a date that was suitable for his respondent and him to have dinner together, and then they made the date, and he wrote it in his own hand in this little thing, and then that was the end of the conversation. Although he didn't make a second date, he had a second phone call while we were talking. There again, he operated his own switchboard.

Now, I concluded from that two things. One of the strengths of Andreotti's political career was that whatever ministry he served in he quickly identified the most clever civil servants among the senior cadres of the professional civil servants of that ministry, made friends with them, got them into his sort of ambience, his circle of influence - and then, always kept contact with them when he moved to other ministries. So he had a network that was second to none, which was one of his strengths as a political leader in Italy. The other thing that I concluded from this was that he also knew how to protect himself. It was by handling his own conversations, his own phone calls, keeping his own diary - no one was going to be able to track his activities. Very clever man.

Q: Were we putting any special lookout for corruption in the CD, the Christian Democrats, or anything like that?

HOLMES: No. We tracked it, we reported on it, because after all we had that very large political section, and so we did report on it, but we had no particular... We were concerned during the Lockheed scandals because, after all, that was an American company, but we never got involved in that, but we paid attention and we reported it.

Q: Well, maybe this is a good time to stop, I think. Is there anything else we should cover, do you think, in Italy?

HOLMES: Well, the only other thing goes back to the strategic commitment of the Italian Government to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which is not recognized by a lot of people. I actually again was chargï¿½ when the instruction came in to go and talk to the government about the deployment of Cruise missiles on Italian soil, and to my very agreeable surprise, rather than resist the idea, what the government then wanted from us, from Dick Gardner and me, was basically to help them design a campaign that would win over the opposition political parties - the Socialist Party, in particular - and the press. In other words, they wanted our cooperation in doing that, and we gave it to them. We went to see leaders of the Socialist Party to make the strategic argument as to why this was important and what we hoped it would lead to down the road. So I just think it was a particularly revealing vignette about this sort of automatic reaction of an Italian leader of whatever Christians Democratic-dominated government it might be, to work with the United States in their interest but also in Alliance interests. It worked. Very quickly, within a matter of a couple of months, they were able to get that through the parliament. Sure there was opposition - the Communist Party opposed it, sure - but by very astutely following a game plan and talking to all political parties, labor unions, key journalists and publishers, the Italian Government was able to get the assent of the majority of the body politic to this very major deployment.

Q: All right, well the next time we'll pick this up in 1979. You left Italy and you went where.

HOLMES: I went back to Washington. I had hoped that I would be ambassador to Morocco, because I had been nominated to the White House by Secretary Vance, but I was the career candidate, and there was a political candidate who was actually selected. So instead of then going to Morocco, I was asked to come back and be the senior deputy in the European Bureau.

Q: All right, we'll pick it up at that point. Great.

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Today is May 18, 1999. Allen, in the first place, you were the senior deputy assistant secretary in the European Bureau from when to when?

HOLMES: Actually from '79 to '82, because I was the continuity deputy that was asked by the incoming Republican Administration. After Reagan won the election, Larry Eagleburger replaced George Vest as Assistant Secretary for European Affairs and asked me to stay on as principal deputy, so I was there pretty much three years.

Q: Why don't you talk about coming back in '79. '79 was a major year of crisis for the Carter Administration and our foreign policy and all that, particularly towards then. I'm talking about the embassy takeover, the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets. Things weren't going well. You'd been away. Could you talk about your impression of the Bureau at that time and how it developed, and then we'll talk about some of the issues.

HOLMES: Well, certainly the takeover of the American embassy in Teheran in November of 1979 - I think it was November the 4th - was... No one at the time realized that this would usher in a period of semi-paralysis in US diplomacy for 444 days and that it would lead to a horrible, failed rescue attempt about six months later, when the commando group that had been put together in pretty sloppy fashion... led by a famous commando but it had been put together with insufficient resources, insufficient training, insufficient equipment, a poorly conceived and managed exercise which ended in disaster in the desert with quite a few losses - planes burned and people destroyed. This also led to the resignation of Secretary Vance, who in the very private councils of the government had been strongly opposed to a rescue attempt. During a trip out of Washington, when the issue came up one more time (in fact, there's some evidence that National Security Advisor Brzezinski precipitated the move), the decision was made to go ahead, and Vance was extremely displeased and it caused him to resign his job. Senator Muskie came in and took his place for the remaining year-minus of the Carter Administration. During that time, the deputy secretary, Warren Christopher, had been conducting negotiations through the Algerians for the release of our hostages. So it was a very confusing and rather unsatisfactory period in the context of foreign relations, the one exception being, of course, the heroic, extraordinary, almost single-handed performance by the President in effecting the Camp David Accords, which was an amazing commitment of Presidential prestige and power and ended in a very strong, important result for the future of the Peace Process in the Middle East. But at the same time we were, according to the Republican critics and some critics on the democratic side as well, "giving away" the Panama Canal; the SALT negotiations with the Soviets were going forward, building block in the arms control edifice that would be completed largely in the Reagan Administration. So it was a difficult time. It was a messy time. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan. There was a crisis in Poland involving, of course, Solidarity. There also was the playing out of the crisis over Cyprus. The Turks had some time before invaded Cyprus and had established a separate Cypriot Turkish republic.

Q: Yes, in '74.

HOLMES: But the crisis was very much still in effect as far as US interests were concerned because the Congress still had cut off aid to our NATO ally, to Turkey, and the Turks had closed down some of our intelligence stations along their northern border, which had an effect, or course, on our ability to track Soviet missile tests and potentially, in a war involving Israel and its Arab opponents, it could have had an effect on our responsibility for the protection of Israel. So here again, this was a messy period, but was finally solved by a very long negotiation led by the counselor of the State Department, Matt Nimitz.

Q: You'd been in the European Bureau before, hadn't you?

HOLMES: Yes, in fact I'd spent most of my career in the European Bureau and had previously been the director of NATO affairs.

Q: When you came back, I assume, what, the fall of '79?

HOLMES: The fall of '79. It was, I believe, September.

Q: You had by this time a nose for these things - how was the bureau working towards the end of the Carter Administration? How did you feel it was operating?

HOLMES: Well, it was operating in a strange way. The bureau was somewhat dismembered in that, as I recall, Soviet affairs were handled, as I recall, directly out of Secretary Vance's office. Then, as I said, when the final negotiation on the Turkish crisis went into high gear, that was also a Seventh-Floor negotiation conducted by the counselor. I had the feeling, as the senior deputy, that a lot of the work we were doing was basically caretaker work. The principal initiatives of the Carter Administration, other than the arms control negotiations with the Soviets, were other than European issues. Human rights, of course, was a major initiative of the Carter Administration and the setting up of a bureau for human rights and congressional legislation and Andy Young's work on African affairs from his perch at the United Nations, to be working on the South African situation. Middle East negotiations. At some point there was a crisis in our relationship with China. But basically, if you look at the range of foreign policy issues, not a great deal was happening in Europe.

Q: When you say "Europe," what are we talking about? The Soviet Union is excluded now. What about Poland?

HOLMES: Well, Poland - certainly there was a crisis in Poland, and central, or eastern, Europe was still very much a part of the portfolio, and that was handled mostly by the deputy assistant secretary for Russian and East European affairs. That included, obviously, also NATO Europe and southern Europe and Canada and Scandinavia.

Q: During this time - we're still talking about the Carter years - what was your feeling about how NATO was shaping up at that time? Was it in better shape than it had been, or maybe not as much?

HOLMES: Well, the very strong initiative, which was initiated by an idea that Helmut Schmidt had and which I discussed in the earlier session we had when I was DCM in Rome had to do with the emplacement of the Pershing IIs and the Cruise missiles, basically the intermediate nuclear weapons, in five European locations, which very much got the attention of the Soviets - particularly the Pershings - and led eventually to a very serious negotiation that ended in the INF treaty. So that was a major initiative, which was not fully realized in terms of the arms control part of it until the Reagan Administration.

Q: As the principal DAS, what was your bailiwick?

HOLMES: Well, I initially handled NATO and northern Europe - I seemed to go to Scandinavia on periodic visits - and Greece-Turkey affairs. That was a cauldron that was always bubbling. It always would, just given the nature of the relationship, but particularly seismic activity as a result of the Cyprus situation.

Q: Was the Greek-Turkish thing-

HOLMES: Well, the Greek-Turkish thing obviously had an impact on NATO solidarity and a deleterious effect on it, particularly training in the Mediterranean, the southern flank of NATO. But I think, in terms of NATO ï¿½lan, that that was offset by the INF negotiations, which the allies were very committed to. Initially, of course, to the deployment and the training, setting up that whole system and the training that accompanied it, had a strong leadership effect on the alliance, and that was an important chapter. Q: In dealing with this, the introduction of intermediate missiles in order to counter the Soviets - this is sort of a NATO thing. What about the French? I mean, I can't see the French just sitting back and saying, "Well, that's all your problem," and not getting involved.

HOLMES: The French were not involved in that effort. Of course, they were no longer members of the integrated military structure of NATO at that point, and they were very busy building their own force de frappe, their own suite of nuclear weapons from tactical to strategic weapons.

Q: They weren't sort of a problem. They were really out of this.

HOLMES: Well, the French at the time could always be counted on to give their own view, which frequently was at variance with the rest of the Alliance. People were used to that. I don't remember them playing a particularly obstructionist role in terms of carrying out the INF strategy.

Q: Why was the Soviet Union moved up to the Secretary's suite, because when you talk about you had a crisis in Poland, but the crisis in Poland also impacted very heavily on what the Soviet Union was going to do?

HOLMES: I'm not really clear on that, because that basically had happened or had already been decided by the time I returned to Washington in September, '79. It may have had to do with the fact that Secretary Vance, with long experience in arms control, was involved in the SALT II negotiations and this was considered by him - certainly by many - to be the most important enterprise we had going with the Soviets, and therefore he wanted the portfolio under his immediate supervision.

Q: What was the NATO reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December of 1979? I mean, this was an offensive move basically.

HOLMES: Well, I think the NATO reaction was a strongly adverse reaction to this move. It was seen at the time for what it was, which was a classic Soviet-arranged coup. Their invasion had been preceded by careful infiltration of Soviet agents, the identification and training and of puppet leaders that they could control, the installation of their own Afghan. That, of course, then eventually led to the invasion. We, of course, sought a vote of condemnation in the UN Security Council, took various measures against the Soviets, of course to no avail. They were embarked on this course and would be involved in Afghanistan for some time to come after that. I think everybody in the Alliance - there was no disagreement as to what was happening here and to what strong position of opposition the Alliance should take in the matter. But it had no particular effect.

About that time - I can't remember the exact date - our ambassador, Spike Dubs, was assassinated.

Q: This was, I think, before.

HOLMES: Yes, it was before, but it was in the-

Q: It was in that period.

HOLMES: It was in that period. Of course, that had a strong emotional reaction within the ranks of the Foreign Service, because Spike Dubs was an extremely popular and admired senior Foreign Service officer.

Q: Did you find strong support from our European allies about trying to get us to do something in Iran and get our people out and all that? Were there any problems there?

HOLMES: I don't even remember much of an effort except, of course, we did get intelligence on the fate of our hostages. The Canadians were very active.

Q: Yes, the Canadians, of course, got some of our people out.

HOLMES: They did get some of our people out. That was an amazing mission, and they played a strong role there in helping us. Other allies as well provided us with information as to what was going on in the Iranian Government and in the capital, particularly with respect to our hostages.

Q: When the Reagan Administration came in in January of '81, how did that play? I know in Latin America they had very pronounced ideas quite different from the Carter Administration. Was there that same attitude towards Europe that you got on the part of their people?

HOLMES: I'm not sure I understand you question.

Q: In other words, did the Reagan people who came into the Department of State have a divergent policy towards particularly western Europe or even eastern Europe than had been under the Carter Administration? Was that apparent?

HOLMES: Oh, definitely. First of all, at the beginning of the Reagan Administration General Al Haig was appointed as the Secretary of State, and he had, of course, great experience in Europe, and Larry Eagleburger was brought in as the assistant secretary for European affairs, and there was a desire in the aftermath of the 444 days of the hostage crisis to reestablish vigorous US diplomatic leadership in the alliance and in the world in general. The attitude of the incoming Administration was that the Carter Administration had let our military power decline, wither, although in fact, at the tail end of the Carter Administration, there was a deliberate attempt to start the rebuilding process at least of our military strength. But the Reagan Administration came in with a sense of mission that this was badly needed, that we had to build up our military force, reestablish strong US leadership worldwide and particularly in the Atlantic Alliance, and stand up to the Soviet Union. The first year or two of the Reagan Administration, the Defense Department's budget increased a tremendous amount, and under the leadership of Secretary Weinberger there was a tremendous rebuilding process that took place of the armed forces. So there was a much more, I would say, muscular approach to foreign policy than what we had seen previously. One of the first things that Haig wanted to do, Haig and the President, was to, of course, reestablish relations with our principal allies. I don't know if I covered this in an earlier period or not, but the first visit to Europe was made by the Vice President, by George Bush, on behalf of the President and the new Administration. It was about March, as I recall, of 1981. I think I did cover this in an earlier session.

Q: We can always edit, so don't worry.

HOLMES: Larry Eagleburger was very involved in a number of projects with the Secretary, and he asked me to represent the Department on the visit to Europe with the Vice President. We went to two places, basically. It was a very short visit. We went first to Paris to meet with Franï¿½ois Mitterrand, and we arrived for lunch with Mitterrand the day that the first cabinet meeting, which included Communists for the first time in the French Government, had just taken place, so there was a great deal of discussion at that time about Mitterrand's plans. As you can imagine, great skepticism and concern on the part of the Reagan Administration over what Mitterrand's move meant in terms of Western interests and Alliance solidarity - since, after all, France was still a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, although absent from the military structure. So there was a great deal of discussion there, with Mitterrand explaining his policy of "suffocating" the Communists by embracing them in the government. By the end of this long discussion, Bush beginning to see that this was at least a deliberate policy on the part of the French Government and that it just might work. I had advised the Vice President to explain to Mitterrand that it would be necessary, in his short press encounter, to say something "disobliging" about the inclusion of French Communists in the government with an eye to the Italian situation, which was developing, always on the verge of the famous historic compromise between the Italian Communists and the Christian Democrats.

Anyway, that was done, and then we flew to London immediately thereafter and had dinner at 10 Downing Street with Mrs. Thatcher, and that was an extremely interesting evening, with Mrs. Thatcher basically "covering the waterfront" of global problems. This was her first serious attempt to establish this special relationship with the incoming Administration, and it was a very easy conversation with very easy confluence of views on the various problems that we faced around the world. I remember one amusing incident at the end of the dinner. Mrs. Thatcher took us to the cabinet room. 10 Downing Street is basically about three townhouses interconnected. We went into the cabinet room, and the foreign secretary at the time was Lord Peter Carrington, whom I had known some from my NATO days, when he had been secretary general of NATO. We went into the cabinet room, where Lord Carrington said this is the room where the United States had gained its independence. There was a pause, and then I piped up and said that I was surprised. I had thought that that happened at Yorktown. That caused a moment of silence, and then a lot of laughter.

Q: Well, you didn't go to Germany, then. Who was chancellor of Germany at the time? Was it Schmidt still?

HOLMES: I can't remember.Q: The reason I ask is that Carter-

HOLMES: I think it was Schmidt.

Q: Carter and Helmut Schmidt did not... Carter, in Schmidt's eyes, had let him down badly over the neutron bomb and all this, and I was wondering whether you were looking towards trying, in your capacity and the bureau's capacity, to repair relations with Germany and with the chancellor.

HOLMES: Yes, that was certainly something that the incoming Republican Administration worked at. There had been a feeling of letdown. I do recall, during the tail-end of the Carter Administration, from my perch in Washington in the European Bureau, the extraordinary effort - I thought extraordinary commitment of time on the part of a chief executive, of a President - to his correspondence. He must have realized, he did realize that he had a difficult relationship there, and we would send over a draft letter - and this happened several times - and Carter was famous for getting up very early in the morning and working before the rest of the White House staff was awake, and during the night, this draft letter had come over, and he would sit and work on it, rework it and send it back to the Department, to our bureau. It was quite extraordinary to see how much time the President spent shaping, frequently more stylistically than substantively, his correspondence with major leaders, particularly - I just remembered that his correspondence with Schmidt was somewhat tortured.

Q: When the Reagan Administration came in, you had a Secretary of State who had been the supreme commander of NATO, so he knew it backwards and forwards. Did you feel that maybe now was the time to do something about shoring up some of the places and taking initiatives, particularly with Western Europe, that hadn't happened under the Carter Administration, who had priorities outside of Europe?

HOLMES: Well, certainly, I would say that from the time that Al Haig was Secretary of State, the most successful part of his stewardship of American foreign policy was with the threat to Europe, because he built on the rather extraordinary set of relationships that he had cultivated in Europe, and that was of great benefit to the Reagan Administration, and that was one of the reasons for his selection, which surprised a lot of people, as Secretary of State. Don't forget, Reagan had a very strong view - in fact, I would say, almost a major force line in his foreign policy was to basically overpower the Soviet Union in terms of our own strategic planning. You will remember the speeches he made referring to it as the "Evil Empire," and his major concern was to rebuild American military strength and then, basically, George Shultz later convinced him to use that strength as the basis for a very vigorous set of arms control negotiations, which then happened. But he was largely concerned with first matching Soviet military strength, rebuilding our own military strength, and then reestablishing a dominant American diplomatic position vis-ï¿½-vis the Soviet Union in the world. That meant, as a necessary platform for that effort, that NATO should be rebuilt and that the US position within the Alliance should be unassailable. That, I think, was one of the major reasons for appointing Al Haig, this extremely successful supreme allied commander, as the Secretary. He worked on that, he used that, very successfully in rebuilding the entire set of relationships with the allies.

Q: During the time you were in the European Bureau, did you see the development of the very close relationship - I mean they were really soulmates - between Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher?

HOLMES: Yes, we did see that. There was really almost a symbiotic relationship in terms of views. Both were strong conservatives with a similar view of the marketplace as well, of course, as standing up to the Soviet Union and ensuring that the West's positions on- (end of tape)

Q: I was saying that in one of my interviews with Bill Bodde in the National Security Council he said that they always got nervous and tried to do everything they could to keep Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher from being alone in a room. This was also with Brian Mulroney, the prime minister of Canada, because Reagan warmed to these two people so much that they were afraid he would make commitments that they wished he hadn't.

What about with Germany? Was Ronald Reagan able to establish a rapport with Helmut Schmidt. I would think that this would have been more dubious.

HOLMES: Yes, I think it was a difficult relationship. Schmidt, of course, knew a lot of Americans, and he was a very accomplished financial economist. Really, after Haig's departures and George Shultz's arrival, the US-German relationship improved. Shultz had been Secretary of the Treasury.

Q: A labor professor.

HOLMES: But he and Schmidt had seen a lot of each other over the years in meetings, in the annual Bank and Fund meetings, basically two finance ministers talking together, and so that made very big difference when Shultz came in. I remember that he always made a very personal effort to build that relationship with Schmidt, having him to his house for an informal barbecue or breakfast - not the official kind of entertainment that a Secretary of State would normally do. So that made a big difference.

Q: Did you get involved in the gas line controversy, or did that come up during your watch? This was when Ronald Reagan wanted to stop a gas line from the Soviet Union into Western Europe.

HOLMES: Yes, I remember the incident. I personally didn't get involved in that.Q: It may have come up later.

HOLMES: Yes, it comes back to me, but there-

Q: Yes. It may have been a little later. In European affairs during the Reagan Administration, while they were sort of getting to know each other, were there any issues that came up that you got involved with particularly?

HOLMES: Well, of course, this was the beginning part. Reagan was in office for eight years, and I was in Washington for the initial period with Larry Eagleburger. Larry subsequently was promoted to undersecretary for political affairs, left the bureau in my hands for probably three-quarters of the year, and at the same time, he and Walt Stoessel proposed me as ambassador to Portugal. So towards the end of that period I was in transition, and about the time that I went off to Portugal as ambassador in early September 1982, Shultz had just recently come on board as Secretary and had replaced Haig.

Q: So there was quite a bit of turmoil there.

HOLMES: There was a certain amount of turmoil at that time. I think probably the departure of Haig was largely the result of his acquiescence in if not encouragement of the Israeli entry into Lebanon and in Beirut. I guess it was during that period that Haig was replaced by Shultz.

Q: Were you getting any signs of the White House staff being at odds with Haig? Haig had been a White House operator, but one has the feeling that the people around Reagan really didn't care for Haig.

HOLMES: Yes, that was certainly true when... It had been noticeable for a while, but then, of course, it all came into focus when the assassination attempt against Reagan [took place] and Haig rushed to the White House, announced on television that everyone should relax, that he was in charge. That convinced a lot of his detractors they had reason for-

Q: Well, you went to Portugal from, what, '82 to-

HOLMES: I was in Portugal from '82 to '85, and that was a wonderful assignment, to be a chief of mission in Europe. As a Europeanist and having served almost entirely my career in the European Bureau, this was a great assignment, because there was a lot going on, and it wasn't your sort of classic middle-sized European ambassadorship that would be left for career officers once the big posts were distributed to large party contributors. Portugal was a wonderful assignment because it was sort of the soft, underdeveloped belly of Europe, if I might paraphrase Churchill. When I got to Portugal I know it had a per capita GNP of $1800, which made it the poorest country in Europe other than Turkey. It was poorer than Greece, which was saying something. It had a deficit of over $3 billion on current account, and in our embassy there - it was an embassy of over 100 people - we had an AID mission and a MAG, a military advisory group, there. It was a fascinating time to be there, and there was an opportunity there to participate in economic development as well as the more classic diplomacy that one usually conducts in a NATO capital. About that time, our base rights agreement was running out of time, and we had to renegotiate our agreement that governed our presence in the Azores, so there was a lot of discussion in Washington about having a separate negotiator for that. But I argued that the base rights were so central to our relationship with Portugal that I felt that I wouldn't really be fully in charge of US-Portuguese relations if somebody else conducted negotiations. I'd had a lot of political-military experience, so I pretty much insisted that I should do it, and did, in fact, conduct the negotiations, which went on for some time. We even had one government - not as a result of the basic negotiations, but I lost a negotiating partner for a while, while the Portuguese Government reestablished itself. Basically, I was conducting three negotiations simultaneously. One was the political negotiation that governed our presence there. Then there was the military. The military base rights agreement that undergirded the political presence, if you will, hadn't been revised in something like 15 years. It was badly out of date, as was the labor agreement for the Portuguese workforce at our base in the Azores. So we basically had three concentric circles, negotiations going on. I had a very good team from the Pentagon that came and worked with me, and I had the good fortune to have as my counterpart a wonderful Portuguese diplomat, Calvet de Magalhaes - very experienced older diplomat who came out of retirement to do this negotiation. We had a sort of an understanding of what the shape of this negotiation should be. We never quite articulated it to each other, but each understood that our views were convergent. We often afterwards would regale ourselves with stories about whether he or I was more an object of suspicion of our respective military establishments. There was a lot of play behind the scenes in Portugal between the General Staff, who really were trying to get much more payoff for reestablishing our base rights than we were prepared to give. He was difficult. It was also difficult in the sense that in Washington in the Department there was an undersecretary for security assistance who basically wanted to dole out the funding that was available to conclude this negotiation on a month-by-month basis. I went back on consultation and went to see Larry Eagleburger, who was then undersecretary. I said that I could not conduct a negotiation without having all the cards in my hand. He said he would have to have an NSC meeting about it, but not to worry that it would turn out the right way, and it did. So I had a certain amount of money available for military assistance and economic assistance for Portugal. I came back and I tucked about $50 million in my back pocket as my strategic reserve. Then I went to Calvet de Magalhaes and told him that I had come back with a pretty good set of instructions and that in my next meeting with the foreign minister I would tell him what I had. But I wanted Calvet de Magalhaes to know that I had a reserve fund (which was not the reserve fund that I had pocketed but a second reserve fund that I wanted him to know about), so that at a certain point he could be the hero and deliver the Americans. It worked very well, except that when I invited Secretary Shultz to come to Portugal to do two things on the same visit - one, to inaugurate our new embassy and to sign the base rights agreement - we weren't quite finished, because the Portuguese General Staff was still holding out unrealistically for more than we were prepared to give them. So when Shultz arrived, the political agreement was completed, but the military base rights part of the agreement was not completed. I wanted - and Shultz agreed with me - to have it all tied into a package and done at the same time. So there was a gala dinner that night, and my wife, Marilyn, and I went up and had drinks with the Shultzes in their hotel suite and we talked about the toast that he would give at the dinner, because the military folks were still negotiating as we were there having a drink. He said, "Well, I'm not going to use all of this airy, good-fellowship, bonhomie kind of material because we haven't concluded the negotiations, and I think we could stay away from it, just as a kind of a signal to the Portuguese that we're not going celebrate something until it's done all the way." I had told him about my strategic reserve, and he used it in his meeting with the vice prime minister. He alluded to it. We went off to the dinner, and Shultz was prepared to talk about the age of exploration and the Portuguese Cabrillo who founded California, where he came from, and so forth. As we were sitting down to dinner, at the end of this large banquet hall I could see the US Navy captain who was my negotiator walked in the room and gave me a thumbs up. So I quickly told Shultz that the deal was done, that we had our agreement, and we could go forward with it. So that was it. It was a very interesting brinkmanship act, and it turned out very well. It was a very good agreement. Shultz inaugurated our new embassy, and I was very pleased. This had taken a while, because I got there in September of 82, and we didn't really finish it until well into the following year.

Q: It seems like base negotiations of the Azores are something that are sort of an ongoing thing.

HOLMES: The Azores base was very important to us during the Cold War because of the tracking of Soviet missile submarines, strategic submarines, throughout the Atlantic, and there was a whole network. We had the underwater arrays and then the P-3 aircraft that were dropping sonar buoys and flying out of Keflavik, Iceland, and all the way down to the Azores to track these Soviet subs as they came out of the Bering Sea and moved down through the North Atlantic within range of the United States. It was a very important mission to track them.

Q: Was it basically implicit on both sides that it would be hard negotiating but you basically - both the Portuguese and the United States - were going to end up with agreement?

HOLMES: Yes, that was certainly understood, but the Portuguese had a very curious maddening style of negotiating. Sessions were never angry. When they were not prepared to move further on a particular point, they would just go dead-weight on you. It was like moving bags of cement - always in a very quiet polite way, but they just wouldn't budge. So the danger was that an unsatisfactory, unresolved situation could go on for months if not for years because it was relatively easy just to roll our rights forward another six months or another year. So that was the problem. We wanted to get it done and just not have this kind of hanging over our heads. We also, for the first time, negotiated a presence on the mainland, which was basically part of an array of telescopes we had in five locations around the world. I remember the acronym: it was GEODES. It was an optical tracking station, basically. We had a couple in the United States; we had one in Korea. This was to be the fifth of these tracking stations, which basically tracked objects in space and allowed SPACECOM in Colorado to keep track of seven or eight different space objects, everything from space stations to space junk to meteorites, and they had them all plotted because of this array of telescopes around the world. So this was kind of a new venture.

I think our relationship was strengthened a lot with the Portuguese in that period, also because they were very helpful to us. Mario Soares, who was prime minister during most of the time I was there, was leader of the opposition when I arrived. He was the kind of father figure of modern Portugal. He had been in exile for many years during the Salazar years, was a leader of the Socialist Party, was one of the great figures in Europe and was our friend. He was very intent on helping us, since we wanted to reopen the door to southern Africa, to Mozambique and Angola, which had been pushed away from any kind of a relationship with the United States during the Kissinger years. Chet Crocker, who was assistant secretary for African affairs in the Department at that time, and Frank Wisner, his deputy, were very intent on using the Portuguese to open a door to those countries in southern Africa so that we could begin to negotiate a new relationship with both of those countries. We had talks about that, and Soares was very helpful in that regard, because of course, having been the person who came in after the Revolution of the Carnations in April of 1974 and basically quickly moved to dissolve the remnants of the Portuguese colonial empire, he had a very strong reputation in those countries. Under his government it was possible to get access to Mozambican and Angolan leaders who otherwise were not particularly hospitable to the US Government.

Q: How did you work this?

HOLMES: Frank Wisner made quite a few trips to Portugal, and we would go and talk to the foreign minister, and Frank would lay out, basically, US strategy, which culminated in a number of accords that Chet Crocker and Frank negotiated in southern Africa. But basically, at the beginning of this process, the conduit was through Lisbon, and then once the doors were opened and the relationships established, then we would keep the Portuguese informed, obviously, as to what was going on, but it was just in the initial period that the door to southern Africa was opened in Lisbon.

Q: What about Portugal as a NATO ally? HOLMES: Yes, that's an interesting question, because for the 13 some years of the Portuguese colonial war, which was one of these hopeless ventures, they wasted their scarce military and defense resources on this war, and by the end of the war they really had very little to contribute to NATO, in terms of the whole defense planning process. One of the things that Frank Carlucci had done as the ambassador that came in right after the revolution and helped pull the democratic leaders together to avoid a Communist takeover - because the last reaming Stalinist party in Europe was in Portugal. One of the things that Frank did with the security funds that he got out of Washington was to help recreate a sense that Portugal was part of NATO, that its forces should modernize and be committed to NATO, train with NATO forces. The idea was to give them a western European NATO mission and turn their backs on Africa, and it was also a way of absorbing a lot of young military who otherwise would have been tempted to participate in revolutionary coup-making activity if left to sort of slosh around in Portugal at the time. So we were well embarked on the program that Frank Carlucci had started of modernizing the Portuguese armed forces. I had a long negotiation - and I had some help from Frank, who was then deputy secretary of Defense and came to visit us in Portugal about two weeks after we arrived. I met more people thanks to him in three days than I would have in three months. But we got some very good deals through them. I think they were A-7s, if I recall. They were surplus A-7s which were refurbished in the United States and became the P-74s. We got a very good price for the Portuguese, and they had a very good... Lemos Ferreira - I remember him - he was the chief of staff of the Portuguese Air Force, American-trained pilot, part of that generation of people that had done their training in the United States and had a very strong feeling for the United States. He was very pleased to get these aircraft, and they had a very good facility, quite modern. This was an aircraft repair facility outside of Lisbon. They had been able to build a modern facility thanks to money that they received from the Germans for the joint use, had there been a war, of a base at a place called Beija. So, not only were they in a position to maintain these aircraft, but also to maintain other aircraft and to service other aircraft that were in the American inventory. We worked a deal for some aircraft that were stationed in Europe to receive depot maintenance at this Portuguese facility, which kind of added to the development of their fledgling aeronautical industry. There were some things like that that were done and then building up two brigades that in the even of a war would fight with Italian forces, and then in addition giving them a certain amount of equipment, navigation and armament, to modernize their very old destroyers so they could play some role in the Atlantic. Portugal is a Triangular country. There's the mainland, the Azores, and Madeira, and there's a NATO reserve air base on Madeira. So they had a national reason for having ships, and they of course had an ancient maritime tradition. It was very curious. When I first got to Portugal, to show you how high the Pyrenees were, 90 percent of Portuguese exports going to other parts of Western Europe went by sea, which is kind of emblematic of their reliance on the sea, and they always looked outward to the Atlantic. It was Mario Soares who started almost as one man to force the Portuguese to start thinking about joining the European Community. He eventually accomplished it shortly after I left there.

Q: Did Portugal get involved with the Mediterranean at all, the Sixth Fleet or anything like that? It was Atlantic Command?

HOLMES: It had an Atlantic vocation, always had been, and an African. Of course, going back to the time of Henry the Navigator and the first... My first assignment in Africa, Cameroon, derives from the Portuguese word for shrimp, cameri¿½es, because when the Portuguese navigators went there, they saw shrimp jumping in the Wouri River, and ergo the name.

Q: That long progress down the African coast [that] Vasco da Gama finally navigated around.

HOLMES: So they had this long maritime tradition; they had this Atlantic vocation; the Portuguese had always had an Atlantic sponsor, a special ally. For many years it had been the British - from 1385 and basically until the end of World War II - and then we became their sort of protector and sponsor. It was an astonishing... You know about the Treaty of Windsor, between Portugal and the United Kingdom. It's the oldest-

Q: Isn't that the oldest-

HOLMES: It's the oldest, long-running defense treaty in history, from 1385 to the present. There was a famous battle where the English sent longbowmen that turned the tide against the Spanish knights, and they had all kinds of sweetheart business deals over the years, and we were able to operate a base out of the Azores by the middle of World War II because Churchill leaned on Salazar, who was neutral, reminding him of the Treaty of Windsor. He kept insisting, and eventually we got in there and were able to use that very successfully against the German U-boat menace. Then we piggy-backed on that, and that's how we got the Azores at the end of the war. They still invoked the Treaty of Windsor, the British did, to stage tankers out of Madeira to refuel the Vulcan bombers on the way down to the Falklands to crater the runways. Once again, they invoked the Treaty of Windsor - quite astonishing.

Q: Did the states of Rhode Island and Massachusetts play much of a role in being the ambassador there?

HOLMES: They played some role, I would say. It was very clear that particularly in Barney Frank's constituency in and around Norton, Massachusetts, was heavily Portuguese-American and Azorean-American. The only Portuguese-American member of Congress is Tony Coelho, who is from California and a very minor Portuguese-American implantation in his district. But he came to visit me, and he took that very seriously. But I did use that at a certain point where, during our base negotiations the Department, again this undersecretary for security assistance tried to cut back the money that had been, I thought, fenced for the Portuguese negotiations. Knowing that I would get nowhere with this individual, I came back to Washington and made some visits on the Hill, and I went to see Barney Frank and told him about it. It was an amazing visit. I spent 45 minutes in Barney Frank's office. While I was there, he phoned about 10 members of Congress to get their support for retaining the promised moneys for Portuguese assistance, and then he said, "I have to go and vote. Come with me. We might catch a few more on the way." Sure enough, in the elevator, we caught two more members of Congress. This resulted in a letter from the Speaker to the Secretary of State - without reference to me - I was not mentioned, fortunately, because I was really being quite naughty. I had told the Department none of this. I just went straight to where the money was. This was a very strongly worded letter, and the Secretary turned to Larry Eagleburger apparently in a meeting and said, "Where is this pressure coming from?" Larry had an inkling. But it made the difference. The money that they had hived off of the fenced money for Portugal was restored. So in that instance, the Portuguese-American constituency helped.

Q: What about relations with Spain at that time? How were things working there?

HOLMES: The Portuguese and the Spanish had a curious relationship. It was a little easier later, when their Felipe Gonzï¿½lez became prime minister and Mario Soares was prime minister, but the Portuguese and the Spanish always had a quarrelsome, difficult relationship. They quarreled about fishing rights. The Portuguese, basically from a very early period, from the 12th or 13th century, had defined themselves against the Spanish. They really had a common language. Portuguese and Spanish are very close, but they worked very hard and successfully at establishing a very separate identity. Whereas the Spanish are much more Latin, much more outgoing, the Portuguese are more quiet, even dour. They're almost more Celtic than Latin, and the way they do things is different. I mean in Portuguese bullfighting, for example, they don't kill the bull. I mean, it's representative of their way of doing things. The Portuguese revolution - there were fewer than 10 people that were killed in the Portuguese revolution. It was quite extraordinary, to give up an entire empire and turn that country inside out, bringing on whole new... and a very hard-line Communist Party - they call it the Revolution of the Carnations. The soldiers went around the streets of Lisbon with carnations stuck in their barrels. The Portuguese temperament is entirely different from the Spanish.

Q: How did you find, when you were there, dealing with the Portuguese Government?

HOLMES: Dealing with the Portuguese Government was an interesting experience for me because I worked very, very hard at playing down the proconsular role. The American ambassador in Portugal was a figure and was somebody that... I had the most extraordinarily easy access to every member of the government. No door was closed to me. The prime minister, Mario Soares, was very kind to me in opposition when I first arrived there, and he would invite my wife and me over to their small apartment for Sunday lunch, so I knew him a fair amount by the time he came into office. But my relationship with him was such that every month or so he would invite me over for lunch to his office, the prime minister's office, and they'd put screens up in his large office and just the two of us would sit at a table and eat bacalhao stew, which he loved, and they put these curtains up so that they wouldn't see that he was violating his wife's diet. This is very rich food. But we had an extraordinarily good relationship.

I can remember, for example, when we went into Grenada. We had a night-action message that came into all NATO capitals to go in and get support. I got an immediate appointment with him at seven o'clock the next morning. I got his agreement, his support. I asked him if we could say so. He said, "Yes, you may." I went back, and he was the only NATO ally that immediately supported the United States. I guess the British did.

Q: Oh, the British were kind of unhappy about this.

HOLMES: They were unhappy about it, and afterwards, Soares regretted it a little bit because he had a little bit of a problem with his NATO allies that he had so easily acceded, but it was sort of a natural thing. Great access.

But I worked very hard at playing down this proconsular role, and it all came into focus in a major way towards the end of my time in Portugal, based on the suggestion of the AID chief, which was a very good idea. We could see that the aid to Portugal was being frittered away, and we were drawing down. It was becoming increasingly clear that having an AID mission there was no longer necessary and that Congress would not continue to support this. So we decided to propose the establishment of a foundation which would be capitalized with the ESF and some of the military security assistance funds, and it was capitalized $100 million. A private foundation of public interest, it was called. It was called that way so as to get around certain taxes that the Ministry of Finance wanted to impose. It was established as the Luso-American Foundation for the Cultural, Economic, and Educational Development of Portugal. The Portuguese Government loved the idea, but the most difficult thing was to persuade the Portuguese that the three-man directive committee, that there would be two Portuguese and one American; they wanted to have two Americans and one Portuguese. I said, no, there have to be two Portuguese so that you can outvote me. I think it's very important. This is your foundation, it's your destiny, and it's important that you can outvote the American ambassador. It was a struggle. Their instinct was to stay locked into this very special relationship with the United States. I said, "Look, you're going into the Common Market. You will always have a relationship with the United States and the United Kingdom and this Atlantic vocation, but you will be increasingly moving into the European framework." I just thought it was important that when push came to shove they could outvote the American member of the committee. That's the way it turned out.

Q: How did you find socialist ties? I'm thinking of European socialist ties, because they played a role when Frank Carlucci was working to try to turn things around in Portugal in the early days after the revolution. You had France under Mitterrand. I'm not sure whether Germany had a socialist government or not. You certainly had Sweden socialist.

HOLMES: Yes, Olaf Palme. There was a very close relationship. Soares had, from his years in exile - that is, when he wasn't in a Portuguese jail - enormous entrï¿½e with the world socialist movement. I mean, the Labor Party in Israel, Olaf Palme, as I said, later on Felipe Gonzï¿½lez in Spain, French Socialists - Soares was a major figure and had close relationships. By the way, he spoke excellent French, and that was his sort of big second language. I think they were helpful, but it's misleading in a way, because some socialist parties in Europe were much more to the left than was the case in Portugal. If you look at a classic political spectrum of parties, whereas yes, the Socialist Party of Portugal had the Communist Party to its left and there was a Social Democratic Party to its right, in fact, on issues from an ideological point of view, the Socialist Party of Portugal was much more like social democracy in your average European country, rather than a more doctrinaire socialist kind of party.

Q: They didn't hold hands and sing "The Red Flag Forever" and that sort of thing.

HOLMES: No, no. They were very clearly a social-democratic party, and the Social Democrats in Portugal were more centrist or center-right.

Q: What about the Communists? Did you have much dealing with them?

HOLMES: I had no dealing with the Communists. They didn't want to have any dealings with us. Cunhal, who was the long-time head of the Portuguese Communist Party, was a hard-line, ultra-loyal Stalinist who had spent a lot of time in the Soviet Union and I think at one point even had traveled on a Soviet passport. He thoroughly disapproved of what we were doing and didn't like us one bit. But he was almost an abstraction in the sense that, yes, he was Portuguese, but I'm told that even today the Communist Party of Portugal has not changed its name. It's still the Communist Party. It gets smaller and smaller; every time there's an election they go from 15 percent to 12 percent down to nine. Probably before long it will be down to seven percent. But he still talks about restoring the Soviet Union and the dominance of the Communist Party in Russia. So he's caught in a kind of a time-warp today and behaved a little bit that way during the time that I was there. But he was highly regarded by the Soviet Union, and they were always very careful to send important visitors, to invite him and other members to various meetings in Moscow. It was a little implantation.

Q: There was no attempt within the Communist Party there to turn into Euro-Communists - you know, put on Gucci suits and sit down with the big boys?

HOLMES: No, absolutely not. As a matter of fact, although there were maybe a few members who would have liked to do that, who were in contact with their brethren in Italy and in Spain, they would be quickly squashed by Cunhal, who was absolutely true-blue.

Q: That must have made it easy for you.

HOLMES: Well, it did in a way. As I say, we had no particular contact. Of course, they lost no opportunity in their newspaper to criticize us for just about everything that they could, but every once in a while I would be at a function and I would meet Cunhal, and I would be polite with him and shake his hand and chat with him. But he wasn't interested in prolonging conversations that we had. At that time I spoke fluent Portuguese, so it was not a question that there was a language barrier.

Q: What about the media? How did you find the media there?

HOLMES: Well, I never could understand how a country that was as poor as Portugal could have so many newspapers. It was amazing. They had 12 or 14 daily newspapers there. I can't remember the exact numbers, but it was disproportionate, certainly, to the readership, and it was just quite extraordinary. The paper of record, the sort of New York Times, if you will, was O Diario. That was their big paper, and very highly intelligent breed of journalists in Portugal, very intelligent, very well educated, very familiar with politics in the rest of Europe and to some degree with the United States. I would occasionally give an interview and talk about various issues with them. O Diario had a lot of fun with me. After the Shultz visit, after we closed the base agreement and opened our wonderful new embassy, the following day there was a long-scheduled meeting where I was the speaker at the Portuguese-American business council. I'm not summoning up the correct name, but it was basically a commercial Portuguese-American business association, and I was the speaker. It was more heavily attended than usual, I think because we had concluded this base negotiation and so forth. I gave my speech, and at the end, they asked if there could be a question and answer period, and I said sure. I looked around the room, and I couldn't see any press present. There didn't seem to be anybody present, so I felt a little bit more relaxed about answering the questions, and one guy got up and said, "Tell me what it was like negotiating with the Portuguese Government for this base agreement." So I looked around, didn't see anybody, and I made the gesture - I pulled my pockets inside out, literally, I just pulled them out. That brought the house down, but also there was a photographer that popped up underneath this platform and caught that picture with my pockets hanging out and everybody laughing - and I was laughing too. That picture plagued me for the rest of my time in Portugal. It was on the front page of O Diario the next day. It was the photograph of the week, the photograph of the month, and then the photograph of the year. I couldn't get away from it. But you know something? That picture did a lot for our relationship, because the feeling was, the American ambassador with this gesture was saying, you know, that the wily, smart Portuguese negotiators took the United States to the cleaners.

Q: Oh, yes. This never hurts.

HOLMES: Which really wasn't true. It was partially true, in a way; I mean they got more probably... But it really did a lot for the relationship. It sort of titillated their sense of their amour propre.

Q: We talked at great length about this when you were in France. What about power centers? Was there an intelligentsia, think tank, writers? How did you deal with them?

HOLMES: They did. There was a literary society, and there was a strategic studies center and a very active university community which peopled those organizations, they and the politicians - not only the University of Lisbon but probably the oldest university certainly in Portugal and one of the two or three oldest in Europe other than Bologna was in Coimbra. I went to all these places, and I was invited to give speeches, to be on panels, and I did that. I enjoyed that. That was very much, I thought, an important part of my job, sort of outreach to the academic community. We would talk about policy issues. But I did find that, yes, - other than the strategic studies institute (and again I can't remember the exact name of the organization) where I remember giving a long speech about arms control and our strategic relationship within NATO and our negotiations with the Soviet Union that was heavily attended and was kind of a global, big-picture kind of discussion - inevitably in interviews and in universities, the questioning tended to become very quickly local - maybe Iberian, but not as much discussion about Portugal entering the European Community as I would have thought. That was part of Mario Soares's problem, too. For a long time he was a committee of one in just driving this issue, because people just weren't interested.

The Portuguese were very curious about the way they conducted their lives. Most Portuguese were not ambitious people. Greed was not a factor. If somebody set up a small company to make a widget and it was successful and they got enough money to pay the mortgage off on the house and have a nice vacation and then come up with a profit at the end of the year, instead of plowing that money back into the company and maybe borrowing a little bit more and expanding their industry, they would just stay where they were because they were comfortable. Obviously there are Portuguese entrepreneurs, and I don't want to exaggerate this point, but they had a very kind of a comfortable neighborhood approach to life, very sweet people, very courteous.. It's the only place I've ever been where if you asked directions someplace they'll go five miles out of their way to show you how to get there, lead you. So Soares really had his work cut out for him. He had a long-range vision for Portugal, and eventually he got there. But I could see what he was up against when I would go around to these communities and talk to people. I would ask questions about moving their focus from the Atlantic to Europe, and I didn't get much of a response.

Q: Were there problems with Canada over fishing at that time?

HOLMES: No, I had a big fishing problem. The world price on cod is set in Portugal. I mean, it is the national dish. They love codfish. There must be close to a thousand different ways of preparing codfish. It's so popular that by the end of the 18th century, Portuguese waters were basically fished out. There weren't any cod left. One of the first exports of the United States as a young nation in the late 18th century to Portugal was codfish - from off of Cape Cod. They got most of their codfish from Iceland and from Norway. But increasingly expensive and in shorter and shorter supply. At a certain point, an enterprising Alaskan business brought in to Madeira a load of Pacific cod. Then I got a lot of pressure from Senator Stevens to sell this to the Portuguese and to establish a relationship between some of the principal fishery import companies and Alaska. I tried. I tried my damnedest. They didn't like it. It tasted the same - certainly to me it tasted the same - but it had a different shape. They were so traditional that they did not go for Pacific cod. I got into a lot of trouble. There were all sorts of threats about support for Portuguese aid if we didn't come through on this cod deal. Well, there never was a deal. This enterprising guy just took a chance and brought in this load of codfish and stashed in a warehouse where it was rapidly rotting, and there were not buyers. But it was, again, a very conservative country changing the diet on something as important as codfish. That was my major fisheries war that I had when I was there.

Q: We had the same problem with rice. People in countries are used to a certain kind of rice. We have a different kind of rice, and they don't respond.

HOLMES: Yes.

Q: How about your embassy? Who was your DCM?

HOLMES: I was blessed. When we got there, there was a DCM there, and I was extremely happy. It was Ed Rowell, who was a fabulous diplomat. His wife was one of the great Foreign Service spouses of all time. In fact, Rowell and I put her up for the Avis Bohlen award, and she won it. They were the most exemplary Foreign Service couple. They knew the place inside out. They had friends all over the place. They both spoke fluent Portuguese. They really made our job easy for us when we came in, and a guy who had tremendous judgment and later was ambassador in several places including going back to Portugal at one point.

Q: He's also the president of our organization which is in charge of doing these oral histories right now.

HOLMES: A great DCM. My second DCM was also terrific, Alan Flanigan, who later was head of our interest section in Havana, Cuba, and then went as ambassador to Nicaragua or El Salvador - I can't remember exactly which now. They were wonderful, and again, an outstanding DCM who had both European and Latin American experience.

Q: Speaking of Latin America, what about our Central American policy? Did that cause any problems for you? We're talking about Nicaragua, El Salvador.

HOLMES: Not major problems, but we got a pretty good roasting in the press. Although Mario Soares was always very polite, it was very clear where his sympathies lay. This was a troubling aspect of US policy for him, for his very natural and strong relationship, strong feelings of friendship and alliance with the United States. Clearly there were differences there, and particularly the people around him, some of his staff people whom we knew very well and liked. Jim Creagan, who was political counselor and who had made a lot of friends in Portugal, and he and I would sometimes sit down over dinner with some of the Socialist staff people and have some pretty strong arguments about our Latin American policy, which they largely disapproved of. But it wasn't a big problem just because that relationship between the United States and Portugal was so strong, this very special relationship, so it never tore at the innards of our relationship the way it did in other countries.

Q: Well, this might be a good place to stop, don't you think?

HOLMES: Okay.

Q: Allen, in '85, you left Portugal, and whither?

HOLMES: In '85, I left Portugal and I came back to Washington. George Shultz asked me to come back and be assistant secretary for political-military affairs - actually, director of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, and then when I got back the Senate insisted that it be made an assistant secretaryship. So I was in fact the first assistant secretary for political-military affairs.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up there. Great.***

Today is May 21, 1999. Allen, you came back when, and how long were you Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs?

HOLMES: I came back in June of 1985. I came back actually for two weeks overlap with my predecessor, who was an Air Force lieutenant general, Jack Chain. Secretary George Shultz had had two senior military officers as his director for political-military affairs. The first was a vice admiral, and then Jack Chain was the guy that I replaced. Shultz actually had been interested in continuing that kind of a relationship with the Defense Department. He felt very strongly - and I heard him speak to the issue a number of times - that the Secretary of State was a charter member of the National Security Council and that he had as much interest in and right to national security information as the Secretary of Defense. He felt very strongly about this, and so he felt very comfortable having a three-star flag officer as his director of political-military affairs because he felt, among other things, that it gave him very direct military and strategic advice, but also that it gave him a connection with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which was very important to him, as I will point out later in probably the most important era of arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union, largely conducted under his leadership.

He was not satisfied, though, after General Chain, with the kind of officers who were available. I had met him a couple of times, once in Washington before going to Portugal and then when he came to open the embassy and sign the base rights agreement with the Portuguese and then a third time when he accompanied President Reagan to Portugal on an official state visit. We had a long conversation about arms control in the car, and he seemed interested that I had some knowledge of the subject, based on my experience in Rome and earlier assignments, and during the visit of the President, he sent word back to Washington to check me out with the Joint Chiefs. By the time I met him at a meeting of chiefs of mission in Europe in London about three weeks later, he offered me the job, and I accepted with alacrity. He made it very clear that, first of all, I would be the first assistant secretary because Congress was insistent that this important position be subjected to congressional scrutiny and that whole process. But he also made it clear that he wanted me to choose as a senior deputy a flag officer so that he could continue that connection with the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Q: Why was it that the Pentagon wasn't coming up with people that Shultz thought were of the right caliber?

HOLMES: It was not entirely clear to me, but of course I was delighted. It was a field that I was extremely interested in. It was a very challenging job, with a lot of scope. I was, frankly, delighted to be invited to take that job. I came back in June for two weeks of overlap with Jack Chain. I then returned to Lisbon to make all my farewells and reported for duty about the first of July and quickly did a little bit of reorganizing - not a lot - in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. We went through my hearings, and that went astonishingly quickly. Then I went off on a trip later in July with Shultz to Southeast Asia, which was a tremendous introduction for me to a dimension of my new job and also to what it was like to work with George Shultz.

Q: I always like to get the beginning. You were in this job from June of '85 until-

HOLMES: Well, for four years, until 1989. I'm trying to get the date. It's interesting because I was in the job until about March, beyond the State of the Union Message of President Bush. I was in it until about March of '89. This was interesting because, in fact, one of the major arms control initiatives that Shultz launched happened after the election, and it was the Paris Conference on Chemical Warfare that took place, I think it was, towards the end of January of '89. He was still very much in business, even though there was a new government coming in.

Q: Let's talk about George Shultz first, particularly you went on this trip in Southeast Asia. Could you tell what you were picking up on how George Shultz operated and how you evaluated him then and how this developed over the next four years?

HOLMES: Well, first of all, I saw right away that George Shultz was a really an extraordinary leader in that he combined the best of executive leadership, the ability to handle simultaneously several major portfolios of foreign policy, to keep track of them, to take initiative when the circumstances indicated; and he also was a great leader. Despite some people's impression of him because of his public appearance as being the great Buddha, a man who seemed frequently to have sort of a passive expression, George Shultz had a lot of charisma, and he inspired people. He cared about his people, not just those who worked directly for him, but he was one of the few secretaries of state - in fact, probably, in my lifetime, the only secretary of state that I can remember - who cared deeply about the institution, about the Foreign Service, about the Civil Service in the institution, about the Foreign Service Institute. I mean his sense of leadership of the institution was broad, very broad. He had an unusual leadership style that defied the classic management spread of "supervise no more than five entities." He had 30 people reporting directly to him. I was one of them, as an assistant secretary. I had a minimum of five meetings with him a week. Four of them were in groups - a group of assistant secretaries, or a group of people concerned with national security affairs, different configurations - but I also had one private meeting with him every week, which was scheduled to last 15 minutes and could be expanded if necessary. That doesn't include the many emergency meetings, when we were in the middle of a negotiation or some crisis, that took place in his back office. This was really an amazing style, which was totally changed by his successor, by Jim Baker, who had the classic management-indicated pyramid of basically five. He created an additional undersecretary, and he had five under secretaries reporting to him. He didn't want to have assistant secretaries reporting directly to him. It was a very different management style.

Shultz, on this trip... I remember very clearly going to Bangkok with him, and we had several, I would call them, routine issues with the Thai Government, but the one issue that was not routine was the problem involving the Cambodian refugees that were in camps just inside the Thai border with Cambodia. Under Thai military escort, we went by both helicopter and vehicle to this camp, and it was a very moving experience. The first thing that we all noticed when we approached this one sort of large barracks-like hall, was a huge crimson banner, and it said, "Welcome, Mr. Shultz. Pleas help us turn Cambodian killing fields into planting fields." It was incredible. Shultz was very moved, and he immediately just got into the throng of Cambodians there. Only a handful spoke English. They had international NGOs who were basically helping them and obviously had helped construct the sign, but it was almost like a kind of... I don't want to overdo this. It was certainly not a prayer meeting but it was a very sort of a spiritual connection that he made with these people, and you could tell that he was really determined to help in any way he could. Also, he saw, of course, the strategic advantage. I mean, from the point of view of our Thai allies, it was important to get these people resettled in their own country, to end the Khmer Rouge rampages in Cambodia and to remove that pressure from the Thais. As long as the Cambodians were there, it was an invitation for all kinds of things - cross-border raids, imminent combat, smuggling, and that kind of thing. So that was a tremendous introduction.

I also watched him doing a ceremony thing. We went to Fiji on this trip, stopped off in Fiji. There I watched him go through a ceremony involving drinking some horrible potion where he managed to control himself and not gag, as he was required to drink this during the sort of sacred part of the ceremony. He did it with good will, bonhomie, and delighted the Fiji Islanders.

Q: He didn't have to eat "long pig."

HOLMES: No, we didn't. But anyway, that was sort of my introduction to working for George Shultz.

Q: How did you find - when we were talking about his management style, with all these people reporting to him and then crisis coming up - was he able to try to keep on top of the various issues?

HOLMES: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. First of all, Shultz was an extraordinarily well-prepared individual, probably better prepared for this job than anybody in my lifetime, with the possible exception, obviously, of Henry Kissinger. Shultz - after all, this is his fourth Cabinet position - he had been Secretary of Labor, Secretary of the Treasury, which had introduced him to many leaders around the world - that's where he became friends with Helmut Schmidt early on, his Japanese counterpart, years of Bank and Fund meetings - he had also been director of OMB.

Q: Office of Budget and Management.

HOLMES: Then, in addition to that, he had been president - I don't know if he was president, chairman, or CEO, but I think he was president and CEO - of Bechtel. Cap Weinberger, who has been serving as Secretary of Defense, was also in a management position, but subordinate to Shultz, which is interesting, as I will recount later.

Q: That's obviously a relationship.

HOLMES: They had known each other a long time. In addition, he had been a full professor of economics at MIT. Here was a guy with extraordinary experience and dimensions to his background, his academic preparation. He brought all of this to bear on the job of Secretary of State in a marvelous way.

Q: I keep hearing the name of Charlie Hill. What was his role?

HOLMES: Well, Charlie Hill was his senior special assistant in his immediate office for a very long time, and he and Nick Platt, whom Shultz recruited to be the executive secretary of the Department, the two of them together were undoubtedly his most intimate, trusted, inside advisors. Charlie was very much the inside-his-office advisor, and Nick had equal access and was consulted on a range of things but also, basically, ran the nerve center of the Department of State from his perch as executive secretary.

Q: How did you find these two men? Were they facilitators, blockers, or how... I mean, from your perspective?

HOLMES: Oh, no - facilitators. Shultz would never have allowed blockers. He wanted some system. It was a very big operation he was running. He didn't want to have a kind of a loose, open-door policy, come in and have endless discussions. But they were definitely facilitators, and they were both very astute men who had experience and ideas of their own but who were, of course, very loyal to Shultz and helped him do his job.

Q: When you arrived on board, not having a geographic bureau, you kind of know what you're up to, but the political-military one is a little more amorphous, and I was wondering how - I would imagine it would depend on the times, the Secretary of State, the person in there, and all that.

HOLMES: Very much so.

Q: How did you see your job, and how did George Shultz see your job in 1985 when you arrived on board?

HOLMES: I didn't have to stumble around too much and figure out what I had to do. First of all, I inherited an organization which had very specific responsibilities, which I assumed and carried on. Shultz gave me very clear guidance. It was interesting: separately, but in close proximity one to the other, he had a sort of a kickoff meeting with Roz Ridgway, who had just recently - about maybe just before I came on board - been named assistant secretary for European and Canadian affairs. He basically told Roz that he wanted her to concentrate - in addition to all of her other duties - on the US-Soviet relationship that he felt was going to undergird and dominate the Reagan Administration. So that was her assignment. In the meeting with me, he told me what he had said to Roz Ridgway and that I should work very closely with her, but what he wanted me to concentrate on was arms control. Now this was interesting because, first of all, the sort of coordination of arms control policy and negotiations was not done in the National Security Council, and it was not done in ACDA. It was done in the State Department, which was very unusual, and that was Shultz's desire - and he saw what was coming. Basically, given the extraordinary significance in terms of foreign policy and strategy and the world position of the United States and the relationship with the Soviet Union, Shultz wanted to control the arms control agenda, and so therefore he wanted somebody, a confirmed official in the State Department, to ride herd on the process. So he made it very clear to me. He wanted the chairmanship of the NSC system to reside in the State Department. I chaired - at the level of assistant secretary - every arms control negotiation and policy process except for one, and the one I didn't chair was the START, the Strategic Arms Negotiations, and that one I co-chaired, but as a kind of a second chair with the Defense Department. That was Richard Perle who was the assistant secretary of international security policy, a new job which had been created in the Reagan Administration, a part of the old ISA, International Strategic Affairs.

Q: You're talking about a Pentagon job.

HOLMES: Pentagon, yes. Obviously they had equal claim to run a negotiation on strategic arms. So that one was chaired, but all the others - INF, conventional arms, chemical weapons, nuclear testing, and something that was new that we were working on, the Missile Technology Control Rï¿½gime - all these were chaired by me out of the State Department. That caused some problems, particularly in ACDA. It took a lot of management to sort of keep them on board and not be obstructionist in the development of policy and the oversight of the negotiations. So typically, when Shultz went on the road and in our panoply of negotiations that were going on at various speeds and levels, but with an eye on the main game, which was INF initially and also Start - the Intermediate Nuclear Force negotiations - those were basically SS-20s, Cruise missiles, Pershings, and so forth - and then the strategic ones - that was the major concentration. Once in a while those negotiations would stall. They'd hit a wall or they'd reach a plateau of achievement and they couldn't quite figure out how to take it to the next level. When that happened, Shultz would gather up his most intimate advisors, the lead among whom was Paul Nitze, who taught Shultz a lot. He was really Shultz's tutor in arms control, deliberately. Shultz hired him for that. He was his senior, very wise advisor and was involved in everything that had to do with arms control. I worked a lot. I was basically helping Paul Nitze help Shultz and a couple of other key people in the Department.

From time to time, Shultz would gather this group together, and the NSC system, basically with all agencies represented, and we'd take off for Moscow, and we would have a series of meetings with the Soviets - Shultz working with his counterpart, Eduard Shevardnadze, who was foreign minister - to break logjams and to take the negotiations to the next level. When we went to Moscow, we would typically fly to Finland. We'd stop there. We'd rest overnight, kind of get over jet lag, and then the next day we'd have a strategy session. We'd go into the embassy and work out of the secured conference room and put the final tactical touches on the strategy that we wanted to follow in the discussions with the Soviets. Our ambassador, who most of the time, as I recall, was Jack Matlock, would fly over from Moscow and meet us, give us the latest state of mind and state of negotiations of the Soviet Government, and the next morning we'd fly off to Moscow. We would go immediately to the Foreign Ministry guest house, which was sort of an ornate, paneled, comfortable rich man's house that had been built in the early part of the 20th century and which was not sort of the official guest house of the Foreign Ministry, a very good place to have meetings. It was large. There was a very large dining room. We would start off with a plenary session with Shultz and Shevardnadze co-chairing, and then we would break up into working groups and work like hell for the rest of the day, most of that night, and the following day, and the following night; and then the third day we would report. We would come in - it was almost like a show-and-tell process in a grade school - two by two. I handled a variety of things. We always had our negotiators on INF and START come in from the field, and they would obviously continue their negotiations themselves. But I would pick up typically chemical warfare, nuclear testing, sometimes work a little bit on conventional arms control. I would always volunteer to do whatever needed to be tended to, and I would always make sure that the director of ACDA, who was with us, Ken Edelman...

Q: I wanted to just go back one second, and then we'll come back to this. ACDA is the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and it reports directly to Shultz, is that right?

HOLMES: That's correct.

Q: Here you are, an assistant secretary for political-military affairs, given arms control in your thing. Now, you know, the bureaucratic process is a wondrous thing to behold, and I would have thought... I mean these are people who have been doing this for a long time, and so if they dig in their heels, they've got contacts not only inside the State Department but also in the Pentagon and out in Congress and the media and every where else. Just the fact that you're interloping, I think, would send off all sorts of obstructions.

HOLMES: You've put your finger on a problem that was contained but that was potentially destructive. It could have had a major deleterious effect on the conduct of arms control policy negotiations, but it didn't. It didn't, first and foremost because of Shultz's absolutely superb leadership. He didn't allow it to happen. I mean Ken Edelman, the director of the Arms Controls and Disarmament Agency, was always invited to meetings. He was never excluded. He was always invited. When Shultz went on the road, on these periodic visits - sometimes we went to Geneva, but mostly to Moscow - Ken was always there at his right hand. His views were sought, and Ken would make his input and he made a contribution. Sometimes his views were 180 degrees off course from those of Shultz and Nitze, and at that point we all worked to persuade him where the policy should be going. He would eventually come on board, particularly if... You see, Shultz was always very clever about having the Chiefs with him, because obviously in something as-

Q: The "chiefs" being-

HOLMES: The Joint Chiefs of Staff - something as critical as strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. I mean, Shultz, as I said, considered himself a member of the National Security Council, but he never made a move in the way of an innovation, of a departure from policy, of what might be a very significant new round with out consulting the Chiefs. Typically before leaving on the trip to Helsinki and on to Moscow, Shultz would have an early breakfast meeting with the Chiefs before leaving. Now obviously a lot of discussion at a lower level had preceded that meeting, but typically Shultz and Nitze and the National Security Adviser-

Q: Who was at that time Clark, or was it-

HOLMES: Colin Powell had it for a good bit, but at one time Frank Carlucci had it.

Q: That was towards the end, when the Iran-Contra thing there.

HOLMES: But most of the time when I was there it was Colin Powell. Well, Colin Powell served in two capacities in my job. He was the military assistant to Secretary Weinberger. Then he went off to get his required assignment as a corps commander, a three-star billet - I think it was the Fifth Corps in Germany. He loved that job but didn't...

As I recall, Colin got his third star when he went to take the Fifth Corps in Germany, returned within a year, I'm pretty sure, at the insistence of Frank Carlucci, who had been asked to be national security advisor and who said that he would not take the job unless Colin Powell could be his deputy. So Colin was brought back kicking and screaming, because he loved the field job, which every military officer wants to have. So he emerged once again at the Wednesday breakfast.

I have to explain about that institution because it was very important. Every Wednesday during the Reagan Administration, basically the four years at least that I observed it as assistant secretary for political-military affairs, there was a policy breakfast which took place alternately at the State Department and the Defense Department. It was the two secretaries, the two deputies - the deputy secretary of defense and state - the number-three person, the undersecretary, in the State Department for political affairs, who was Mike Armacost most of the time, and the equivalent undersecretary on the defense side, who was Fred Iklï¿½, and the national security advisor, the deputy national security advisor. The two senior staff guys who set up the meeting and took the follow-on action, were me, as the political-military guy in the State Department and Colin Powell, who was a major general and at the time senior military advisor to the Secretary of Defense. Our job every week, several days in advance, would be to sort of pulse the bureaucracy, to identify the four, five, six, maybe sometimes as many as seven or eight major topics that needed attention and discussion for the breakfast meeting, staff them out so that our leaders would come to the breakfast prepared to address these subjects, and then do the follow-up afterwards on decisions that had been made. Now decisions that were not reached, where the issue was not sufficiently joint or there was just flat-out disagreement between Shultz and Weinberger - which happened from time to time - those issues would then be taken by the national security advisor to the President. He would frame the disagreement - and obviously give his own advice on it, which we never saw - to the President, and decisions were made. It was an excellent mechanism, very orderly, occasionally quite combative. It was the best kind of policy discussion because basically ideas clashed. Personalities intruded, yes, to some degree, but mostly these were serious professionals fighting for their particular position with their counterparts, and it worked extremely well. There were disagreements. There's no question about it. You read about it. The press made more of it, I think, than really existed, but there were disagreements between Shultz and Weinberger. Shultz had a psychological advantage on him because, in addition to being the senior Cabinet officer, he had always been one half step ahead of Weinberger in the hierarchy. That was true at Bechtel and at OMB - the same thing.

Q: When Weinberger was Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, wasn't Shultz Treasury or something which would have been one higher up in the pecking order?

HOLMES: Yes, I think so. I don't remember exactly.

Q: But it's of that ilk.

HOLMES: But Shultz was very smart. He was very cagey in the way he used this. He wasn't heavy at all about it. He was quite subtle. He didn't need to be. So that was an excellent mechanism.

By the way, I should comment here that over that four-year period when I saw Colin Powell first as the military assistant, then as the deputy national security advisor, and then as national security advisor in his own right, which happened after Frank Carlucci moved over to replace Weinberger as Secretary of Defense, Colin Powell was a remarkable senior official of our government. I mean, the guy had extraordinarily good common sense, good judgment. He was very schooled in all the issues. He did his homework. He never came to a meeting where he didn't know absolutely everything that needed to be known about the subject at hand and was helpful to both secretaries in moving an issue that was stalled, where there wasn't a sufficient focus or where the issue really wasn't joint. Sometimes he used kind of what I would call silly humor. I remember one particularly difficult discussion which ended in silence. It was one of those pregnant silences that is so embarrassing that you feel it's going on for minutes. In total it was probably less than a minute. It was a very long silence, and finally here we were having breakfast, and Colin Powell said, with his winning smile, "Okay, it's time for a milk and cookies break." Which was totally absurd, but it broke the ice. Everybody laughed, and somebody was waiting for that to happen, and we got back to business. The guy was a remarkable leader in that sense. I'll tell you, later on, when I saw him struggling with his possible candidacy for President, I have to tell you that I was very hopeful that he would run, because I think Colin Powell would make a great President. I saw him in action over a period of four years, a man of great class, judgment, humor, who had that ability to keep his eye on the strategic objective but was also a superb tactician. I also saw it when he came as the national security advisor on Shultz's trips to Moscow. He had a couple of very brainy Air Force missile experts who understood the complexities of arms control formulations very well, and he tutored at their feet and then mastered the subject. In our strategy sessions leading to the visits to Moscow, he would be absolutely terrific when Secretary Shultz would turn to him and ask him his advice. He was terrific, and he never pretended to speak for the Chiefs. That would not have been proper, as the national security advisor, but he understood very well where they were coming from. Of course, in the mean time, Shultz before the trip had had breakfast with the Chiefs and had told them exactly what he intended to do, and he would always end by saying - and he would get agreement... actually, Shultz at that point knew more on most of the subject matter than the Chiefs, with one exception, and that was Bob Heres, who was the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Admiral Bill Crowe, and he was an Air Force guy, and he had space command and really understood the whole ABM and the START dimension of what we were doing. But he would get their assent, and he would always promise them: he said, "If I go beyond this position, if there is an opportunity to move this process further down the road, beyond where you have agreed, I will put it on hold with the Soviets, and I will consult you before moving to the next level." He was absolutely faithful and disciplined about that, and as a result he had the trust and the confidence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff - terribly important.

Q: Did you have a feeling from your dealings with the Pentagon at that time that Kissinger, who was known for his secretive ways and all that, had left a legacy of unease that Shultz was overcoming?

HOLMES: No, not really. That never came up. But I should tell you one other thing that was very important to this process. Shultz had said to me, "I want you to have as your principal deputy a flag officer." I went to see Admiral Bill Crowe, who was the chairman, and I said, you know, that Shultz would like that, and I would like it too, and could I ask his help in identifying the right officer, who would be a two-star, basically, a major general or equivalent admiral. Crowe said that he had somebody in mind, that he would get me the very best, but only on condition that this individual be my principal deputy, not just one of the deputies. So that was easy. I assented right away because when he told me that he had in mind Bill Burns, who was an Army major general and who had been Paul Nitze's JCS representative on his team in the early years of negotiating the INF Treaty - the famous walk in the woods in Geneva? Bill Burns had been his advisor and was, himself, very familiar with the systems. He'd commanded the Army's - I'm not using the correct designation - nuclear brigade in Germany. And so he was extremely... really quite a brilliant officer and had had field experience and policy experience, so he was the perfect deputy. I must say, I was extremely lucky to have somebody of his quality. The fact that Bill Burns worked with me helped assuage any concerns that the joint staff might have about what we were up to. I mean, it was one thing for Shultz to satisfy the Chiefs; it was another thing to satisfy the concerns of the next level, the sort of flag level of the joint staff, and Bill Burns was enormously helpful. I made my own contribution using my diplomatic skills and my own leadership at my level in bringing in all the representatives of the arms control community, including ACDA, and making them feel part of the team and trying to replicate at my level what Shultz was doing, which was not to surprise them, but to take a little time to persuade them of the sense of a particular position or particular move and to bring them along. Sometimes I stalled at my level, and it was hard work. I occasionally would have differences not so much with Richard Perle - because he was usually on trips - but with his staff. Perle would send his representatives from the OSD to meetings and say, "Take a hard line and then double it in strength." I would come up with a reasonable formulation of a position, and I would get an absolute stonewall. I'd have to wait, frequently, until Perle returned from a visit. He was always hard to get to. I even collared him one time with a formulation in my pocket in the men's room of the British ambassador's house. I knew he was going to be at this dinner, and I caught him in there and showed him this paper, and he said, "Oh, that looks fine to me, very reasonable." I said, "Well, your staff thinks it's awful." He said, "Oh, well, I'll take care of that."

Q: That shows you. Now Roz Ridgway couldn't have done that.

HOLMES: Roz Ridgway could not have done that.

Q: Speaking of Roz Ridgway, did you find, particularly on this arms control thing, that the geographic bureaus played any role, or was this of such a nature that-

HOLMES: Oh, no. Roz played a huge role. In fact, Roz's role, in many ways, was more important than mine because, basically, she was concentrating on the U.S.-Soviet relationship and working very closely with Jack Matlock and using her staff, using the Office of Soviet Affairs, to staff her up for these meetings. Roz played an extremely important role. We worked very well together. We were old friends, and we just didn't have any problems. I would test formulations on her that were perhaps a little bit out of the ordinary to see how she thought the Soviets would react to this. Now the ace that the Soviets always had, or at least the wild card, I would say, in all of these, was a man named Marshal Akhromeyev. Marshal Akhromeyev was the equivalent of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Whenever he showed up for meetings when we went to Moscow, Shultz and I and Roz would look at each other and we'd say we can make progress at this meeting, because if Akhromeyev was there, we knew that Shevardnadze, just like Shultz, who would check with the JCS before the visit, with Akhromeyev's presence (and sometimes he would show up in Geneva at those meetings) would be bringing a point of view and he would be able on the spot, pretty much, to make decisions - whereas if he weren't there, Shevardnadze would have to defer until later. I mean he never put it that way, but in fact that was what was happening.

Q: Akhromeyev and Crowe became quite close afterwards.

HOLMES: They became close friends. Akhromeyev, of course, had a tragic end. He committed suicide.

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: Akhromeyev was an absolutely fascinating figure. I saw a lot of him, and a number of us, frequently, late at night, after sessions, when we'd finished, we'd have a beer together before retiring at three o'clock in the morning or so, and he talked a lot about his background. He was about five-eight, five-nine, probably weighed 110 pounds soaking wet - an extraordinary figure. He had fought the Battle of Stalingrad, and he told us one night that he went something like 230 days in the open, where he never slept in a warm bed, never was able to relax and take a shower and take a couple of weeks off. He said, "We lost so many people, that when my weight got down to 85 pounds, the medics pulled me out and sent me off to fatten me up." So he said, "I had about three weeks away, and then back into combat." In his graduating class from high school, only three survived, and he was one of the three. I mean, amazing. This guy was absolutely convinced of the importance of not only capping but beginning the process of negotiating the end to the nuclear standoff between the Soviets-

Q: Could you explain what "capping" means?

HOLMES: Capping means, basically, stopping the growth of strategic weapons. The history of arms control went through various phases, and in the early years, when Kissinger was at it with SALT I and the ABM, the idea there was to put a ceiling on the growth. In subsequent phases, we began to negotiate down. With Akhromeyev, we were, of course, in a very significant phase of negotiating down. He was philosophically, humanistically (I use that word carefully) convinced that this was the right thing to do. This was where his and Gorbachev's and Shevardnadze's views converged. These three men together were terribly affected by the Chernobyl accident, because it gave them graphic evidence of what they already knew theoretically, graphic evidence of what nuclear poisoning can do to people.

Q: Could you explain what the Chernobyl accident was?

HOLMES: Yes, well, the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in Kiev that exploded and basically they weren't able to contain the radiation, and a lot of people were exposed, a lot of people died as a result of that. It was a horrible... It was the greatest nightmare nuclear that's probably happened in our time, other than, of course, from the point of view of the Japanese, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But the Soviets lost a lot of people, and a lot of children. The effects of the radiation and the plume, the cloud, were felt for a very long time.

Q: And a huge area of the Ukraine was made unusable.

HOLMES: Well, not only a huge area of the Ukraine, but even going north. Do you know that the Scandinavians, they detected sufficient particles in the air that they were worried enough that they slaughtered something like 80,000 head of reindeer. I mean hunting was a big thing in Scandinavia, particularly north of the Arctic Circle among the Lapps, but they were so concerned that these herds had become infected by the movement of the nuclear plume into their area that they actually required the slaughtering of vast herds of reindeer. But it was the effect on the Soviet people, the Ukrainians and the people around Kiev. It had a wrenching, deep-seated, lasting effect on Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, and Akhromeyev. They were absolutely determined - obviously they wanted it to be equitable and strategically viable with the United States; they didn't entirely trust us any more than we trusted them, and they knew... This was a very rigorous process that we went through. But Akhromeyev was a key figure, and of course Gorbachev. He allowed it to happen. In other words, he would bring the Soviet General Staff along with him, and lest we forget who we were dealing with, one night he described to us in great detail, his admiration, his awe, of Stalin - which struck us as sort of inconsistent with his approach to strategic issues and to questions of life and safety of civilian populations - but then he would go on to explain. He said, "You have no idea what it was like being a Soviet citizen, a soldier, in World War II. He was our national savior. He was our leader. He pulled our country together. He helped us blunt the Nazi assault on our nation."

So he was a fascinating man. He came, towards the end, to the United States for a three-week official visit as Admiral Bill Crowe's guest. Crowe spent about a week with him, actually did some traveling with him, and when it was all over, I asked Bill if he would give a very special briefing, if he would mind if Roz Ridgway and three or four of us came over to his office and heard his account of _____, and he agreed to do it. He spent about an hour and a half with us describing, and it was quite fascinating listening to him describe Akhromeyev's reaction to the places that he saw, the equipment. He was less impressed by the equipment. For example they went on a very large aircraft carrier and watched flight operations, and he would say, "Oh, we have that too," or "We have that capability as well." When the Harrier took off and hovered opposite the bridge where they were standing and did a slow 360-degree turn, he said, "No, we don't have that." But basically he was impressed, but also he knew what the Soviet Union had. But this is what impressed him: it was the responsibility of non-commissioned officers and particularly the role of women in our armed forces. Bill told us this story. They went to an F-15 flight line, and they had all of it. They had the planes there on the runway or the parking aprons, and they had the crews lined up, the pilot and the crew chief, and he went up to one F-15 and the crew chief was a female sergeant, and she stood at attention and described her responsibilities, which was basically, she was responsible for the aircraft, everything to do with it, its weapons, its functioning, spare parts, safety, the whole thing. At the end of this, she paused, and she could tell that Akhromeyev didn't believe her, that she would have that much responsibility. So she said, "Marshal, if you don't believe me, ask the pilot." The pilot was standing behind her. He was a major. He leaned forward and said, "Marshal, my life is in her hands." Apparently, he was so overcome by this that in a moment of confusion he didn't know whether to salute her or to hug her, so he took her hand, in an old-world way, and kissed her hand.

Q: That's remarkable. Speaking of this, to sort of set the stage, what was your feeling and that of those around you about nuclear weapons, because to the uninitiated these, to my mind, seemed to be sort of unusable, and one can... I mean, the main thing you worry about is getting into, one, irresponsible hands or, two, going off by accident. Other than that you can't use them. It's sort of like talking about angels dancing on a pin.

HOLMES: Yes, well, you've touched on what used to be known as MAD, "mutual assured destruction." Of course, that was for many years a kind of shorthand for a guiding strategic principle that if you had a rough standoff in destructive power and the ability to shoot at each other, to have sufficient accurate guidance systems to bring the reentry vehicles down through the earth's atmosphere and attack targets in the United States and vice versa, in the Soviet Union, as long as you had a rough standoff in terms of capability, explosive capability, the element of surprise, and the accuracy and reliability, you had basically a standoff, you had a strategic equilibrium. The problem was that both sides were always developing new and better weapons. The Soviets spent much more time working on their intercontinental ballistic missiles and MIRVs (multiple independent reentry vehicles). They would get up to the point where they would have as many as eight weapons, reentry vehicles, each of which was calculated in terms of explosive power in megatons, coming off of one "bus," one weapon. One missile would have eight reentry vehicles with enough power, each one of those weapons, to destroy a major city in the United States. We put much more emphasis, in the United States, on our sea-based systems, and we had, of course, ICBM's. We had Peacekeeper and Minute Man, but these were, by Soviet standards, more technologically compact. We worked much harder on accuracy. But our big punch really was in our sea-launch systems. The Soviets couldn't match the Trident systems. By the time we got to the Trident II boat and the Trident II D missile, which could be fired submerged, below the surface, travel seven or eight thousand miles and hit a target in the Soviet Union with a CEP, a circular error probable, of maybe a couple of hundred feet. I mean a remarkable accuracy. The contrary, to be able to fire a missile 8,000 miles and then have at least one reentry vehicle land inside the doughnut of the Pentagon - that's the equivalent accuracy. We had it; the Soviets had it. They had it with their ICBM's, but they couldn't do it from a submerged position they way we could from what we called "boomers," the nuclear submarines that fired the sea-launched ballistic missiles. They couldn't do it from a submerged position. We also had much better silencing. Our ships could travel underneath the polar ice cap, stay submerged for weeks on end, and not be detected. We had a very, very extraordinary system. That system was the ultimate stealthy strategic system. The Soviets didn't have that. So they put much more into land-based.

Well, there was a rough strategic parity and a mutually assured destruction, but we all knew that we had to put an end to this. The more weapons you put out there, the more possibilities there are for accidents, for inattention, for miscalculations in strategic terms. The wrong people came into power in one country or the other - you know. I think there was a growing realization that this had to stop. We had to put an end to it.

Now the other complicating factor, of course, was the ABM treaty, and that had also been concluded, and this is where Ronald Reagan introduced probably, in terms of persuading the Soviets that it was time to change and to negotiate seriously in reducing weapons, introducing the SDI, the Strategic Defense Initiative, known as "Star Wars" popularly. That happened in 1983. It was announced by Cap Weinberger, and there was a special directorate set up in the Pentagon headed by a lieutenant general, Jim Abrahamson, to develop this weapons system. This is a directorate that reported directly to the Secretary of Defense. A great deal of money was put into this program, and Shultz would ask for and receive periodic briefings on its progress. It was very interesting to watch him. He was deeply skeptical of the technology that was being developed, whether this would work. What he was not skeptical of, and which we saw, was the extraordinary miniaturization that was taking place, in terms of communications and sensors, and actually, they would be brought over, shrouded in special bags, and we would go into this room and then Abrahamson and a couple of people from his staff would brief Secretary Shultz on the progress. That part was interesting. It was also interesting that Abrahamson was basically taking off the shelf equipment and then improving it. But whether or not we could develop a Star Wars system with space-borne platforms that could actually stop thousands of reentry vehicles from entering the United States - I mean you could tell that Shultz was very skeptical. He kept his skepticism to himself, because he understood very well the effect that this was having on Soviet leaders, and he could see that in the discussions. Every time he went Moscow or Geneva, the discussions we would have with Shevardnadze, with Akhromeyev, and also with Gorbachev - when he went to Moscow, he always went and saw Gorbachev - so Shultz understood very well that the Soviets - and we, of course, had a lot of intelligence that backed up this assessment - were feeling that they were being swamped, that this was a whole new dimension to arms control that would throw the mutual assured destruction formula into a cocked hat and that they couldn't compete with us, that they would bankrupt their country if they tried to produce either a counter to this or something equivalent. They had their own research going on. They had their secret cities throughout the Soviet Union just like Los Alamos and Sandia and Livermore - not quite the same, but equivalent - and they had probably ten or twelve of these, and they were doing advanced laser weapon research in places like Dushanbe, for example, and we knew about that. But they also knew that we were ahead of them, way ahead, and that it would break the bank. They just couldn't afford to compete. So that clearly had a major effect on Soviet leadership. It strengthened their determination to do something serious about the strategic standoff. That's a long, windy answer.

Q: No, no. That's exactly what I want. I'm trying to capture the spirit of the times and how we saw it. Another thing of how we saw it - when you came in in '85 and as you were getting into this, particularly in this arms discussion, could you describe how we saw and who were the Soviet leadership. You've implied this, but did we feel things were really changing in '85, and how were they?

HOLMES: Well, '85 was just sort of the tip of the iceberg. I can't remember now, but I think it was... My memory fails... I should have looked this up before. The first summit that Reagan had with Gorbachev was in Geneva. It was October or November, and I think it was '86 that that happened. I think it was in the fall of '86, but I'd have to check the record. But that was really the sort of kickoff. It was not an easy meeting. Basically, the two leaders agreed on a framework for negotiations and what would be on the table, and what would be discussed, and obviously INF was one of them, and certainly START was another. Chemical weapons were more remote in the formula. Reagan did very well with Gorbachev. It was their first meeting, and about five assistant secretaries from the State Department were there. The reason for that was that at the end of the session we fanned out - there were about five of us - around the world to brief governments on the results of this meeting because, first of all, there was always a race to make sure that our version of what happened got there hopefully before but not long after the Soviet version, because they did exactly the same thing and more often than not they put a different spin on it, particularly with respect to their own allies. I can remember one time, after going to one meeting, going to both East Germany and to Poland and getting there before the Soviets got there. I mean I went right from Moscow to these places. Anyway, on this particular trip from a summit, I flew to Kuala Lumpur, where there was a meeting taking place of seven or eight foreign ministers from Southeast Asia.

Q: ASEAN probably.

HOLMES: Yes. It was a kind of an ASEAN configuration. It was their own meeting; it was an Asian meeting. I didn't brief all the foreign ministers, but I briefed the host there, the Malaysian foreign minister, who in turn briefed the others. So I hit both indirectly and directly some of those countries, and then I flew to Canberra. I stopped in Sydney. I flew to Sydney and then flew to Canberra. I had a meeting with the prime minister there. He was very appreciative of receiving this briefing. I remember at the end coming out on the steps of the Government House there, his office, and being attacked by the Australian press. I thought the American press was vigorous and rude. I'd heard about the Australian press, but I was subjected, the reason being that we had decided - the New Zealanders were in the dog house, and we decided that we were not going to go and brief, give them special treatment as an ally.

Q: That's because they wouldn't accept nuclear ships.

HOLMES: Well, they wouldn't accept our policy statement of when a warship enters an ally's port you neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons. That was the issue, the presence of nuclear weapons on board the ship. I mean, all ships are known worldwide. There's a worldwide registry of what ships are nuclear powered. What people didn't know was whether we had actual nuclear weapons on board. Obviously, for strategic reasons, we didn't want our potential adversaries to know, so that was a kind of standard formula, and everybody accepted it until there was a change of government in New Zealand and they changed it. They said they would no longer accept it. So we began to argue and argue with the New Zealanders, and finally we sort of drummed them out of ANZUS. Shultz did that. I have to say, on my advice. I said we had to make an issue of this. Strategically it was just too damned important. Anyway, I remember being actually raked over the coals by the Australian press after this meeting on that subject, why aren't you going to New Zealand. I didn't want to say too much.

From there, I returned to the United States, so that was the kickoff meeting. I don't think there was another arms control summit until Gorbachev came to Washington to sign the INF treaty, which was in '87.

Q: Well, in this meeting in Geneva, you were there.

HOLMES: I did not sit in on the meetings. We were there. We would get debriefed by Nitze or by Shultz.

Q: Was there concern at the time about how our man, Ronald Reagan, would do?

HOLMES: Yes, there was. I remember Shultz telling us about how terrific he was, in terms of the way he handled his brief. Because, you know, we'd already... I can't remember if it was at that point or later that Reagan made his famous speech about the Evil Empire.

Q: I think it was earlier on.

HOLMES: But his views were well known. Gorbachev was a little skeptical about him too, what kind of a man was this, and what was he dealing with? Reagan had a lot of charm, and he disarmed Gorbachev with his charm in his approach and his bonhomie to a remarkable degree, but of course stuck to his script. It was a very productive first encounter. Each man got the feel of the other. Reagan handled himself very well. I mean, Shultz reported all this to us. Shultz was very loyal to Reagan, but I think the press gave him pretty a good report card.

Q: They did, but going into it-

HOLMES: There was a lot of skepticism.

Q: One always thought about the meeting of Kennedy with Khrushchev in '61 in Vienna, where Khrushchev really jumped all over Kennedy and Kennedy didn't respond too well.

HOLMES: That's right. He was surprised. I think he was a little bit blindsided by the behavior, yes.

Q: Which meant that we were calling up reserves. You know, it was not a productive meeting.

HOLMES: No, it was not. You're right. I think the press and the world, the cognoscenti, people who were interested in this kind of subject, were expecting something similar, and it was not at all that way. Reagan, of course, didn't have the foreign policy experience or knowledge or scholarship that Kennedy had, but he also had something different. He always had a couple of strategic ideas - not very well developed but very firmly believed - and he stuck to those. Also, Gorbachev was a very different kind of Soviet leader. First of all he was a teetotaler - very unusual among Soviet leaders not to consume vast quantities of vodka. I mean, it has an effect on your demeanor and your mentality and your metabolism.

Q: As we know now as Yeltsin is president.

HOLMES: Exactly. But Gorbachev was a teetotaler, first of all. Secondly, he was a very kind of rational individual.

Q: An engineer.

HOLMES: Yes. He was on his best behavior. He had a temper also. I remember one visit to Moscow - I'm diverting here - where Soviet propaganda had spread the word that the United States was conducting a biological terrorism campaign in Africa by exporting to Africa AIDS. I mean, that was the latest enormity being put out by the Soviet propaganda machine. Shultz brought it up with Gorbachev. I wasn't there, but I heard about it right afterwards. Roz Ridgway was there, and Colin Powell was there and Paul Nitze was there. That was it. Shultz took Gorbachev to task for this and how outrageous this was. Gorbachev, because there were all these Americans watching him, you know, replied in an angry way. He was very upset because Shultz was harsh. He threw back, he said, "Well, you do terrible things in your country, in contrast with the Soviet Union, where we respect human rights - look at the way you treat your blacks and your women," he said - whereupon there was a pause, and Roz Ridgway and Colin Powell looked at each other and burst out laughing. That broke the ice. That was the end of it. They settled down. But it was kind of uncharacteristic for Gorbachev to behave that way. That's because Shultz needled him, deliberately.

Q: When did you start personally getting involved in these arms control? Was it in '85?

HOLMES: Oh, yes, right at the beginning. Absolutely from the beginning.

Q: Was there the feeling that with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze that you- (end of tape)

HOLMES: I would say the short answer to that is no. It was only afterwards, as time went on, as we began to achieve results, that we realized that we were dealing with a different mentality, a different Soviet team. I'm speaking for myself here, and I think for most of us, with the possible exception of Shultz himself. We were all a bunch of Cold War warriors. We had a certain mentality about the Soviets. We didn't trust them. We didn't like them. We thought they were trying to steal our eggs, you know. The series of arms control negotiations that we had with the Soviets in those days were hard fought. These were tough. Frequently we'd have one step forward and two steps back. The Soviets were tough, too. They were fighting hard in these negotiations. I took myself to task for not being a very good listener. It's very important in diplomacy to learn how to be a good listener, to listen carefully, because you might just pick up something that, if you don't listen carefully, you miss.

I had that experience. I told you that in these sessions in Moscow, when we would go through Helsinki, and I probably went on four or five of them - probably four, one in Geneva, a couple in Geneva, I can't remember exactly - but I would typically square off with a Soviet counterpart on chemical warfare, and we weren't making much progress, and we would argue and come up with formulations because we knew that the following day we would have to go and report to Shultz and Shevardnadze on how we had done, so we were working very hard. At a certain point - it was probably our second meeting, maybe the third meeting - my Soviet counterpart said that he was quite prepared for us to have a surprise inspection formulation in our chemical warfare treaty or convention, whatever would emerge from this negotiation, because of course you will remember that it was only later, in the Bush Administration, that we went full-tilt on chemical warfare treaty, which took basically four years to negotiate. I didn't believe the guy. I thought he was putting me on, because he said "a surprise inspection provision," where we would just notify them and we could come, within six hours, and inspect. I challenged him on this, and he said, "Well, I don't understand your point of view. You introduced this at the last meeting, and now we're accepting it, and you're not accepting it. You're rejecting it - your own proposal." We went round and round, and you know, I just didn't believe the guy. He said certain things which I interpreted as basically a stall or a sort of a deceiving term. I saw all the worst aspects of this. I had my blinders on. So finally, we didn't succeed in putting together the language that he was advocating. When we went to report to Shultz and Shevardnadze, Shevardnadze was sort of to Shultz with, "What's going on here? What's wrong with your negotiator? My man is trying to move this thing forward, and you're being very obstructionist. What's the problem here?" Shultz was equally skeptical, and he said, "Do you mean, Eduard," he said, "do you mean to tell me that if we challenged you and thought that here in the Kremlin, right inside your government offices, that we had detected a chemical weapons laboratory and we demanded to inspect it, that you would allow that?" He said, "Absolutely." Shultz looked at me, you know, in disbelief, and I looked at him in disbelief. That was sort of the end of it. We didn't make much progress on the chemical front at that meeting.

Now when I returned to Washington, I made my notes and I debriefed and so forth. I think this was in the late spring. That summer, the Soviet Foreign Ministry had a three-day conference, which was Soviet only. It was diplomats and military and their own think tank people and some of their own newsmen, and it was about arms control. They had a lot of discussion; a lot of papers were presented; and they wrote it all up in a nice little booklet, translated it, and sent it all over the place. I got my copy and I took it home that weekend and read it. The part I read very carefully was the part on chemical warfare. To my utter astonishment, Shevardnadze, at this meeting, was blasting other Soviets and the lingering "barbarism" - he used the word barbarism - of certain Soviet leaders and thinkers and strategists to continue to develop chemical weapons - and what a blight this had produced and what damage this was doing to the reputation of the peace-loving Soviet people, that we in the Soviet Union would develop these horrible nerve gas weapons.

Well, I read that. I finished reading it, and I said, Holmes, you missed something. This guy really believes this. He was sincere. He is fighting his own bureaucracy, his own Cold War warriors in the Kremlin, and he wants to move this process forward. The next session, which was a few months after that, it was a very different session. We moved the ball forward. I told my Soviet counterpart, I said, "Frankly, I didn't believe you when you said it the last time we were in Moscow." This was a very significant turning point, and I began to realize - this goes back to your first question to me - we are dealing here with a new mentality, a new generation of Soviet leaders.

Q: Did you find with the delegations that you were dealing with from the Soviet Union sort of the new men and the would men?

HOLMES: Yes.

Q: We're talking about the old Soviet man and we're also talking, then we'll talk about the American side too, but let's talk about the Soviet side first.

HOLMES: Yes, this was very interesting. We had both. What we were observing under Shevardnadze's leadership was a rather brutal transition from an older generation to a new generation. In fact, I'll go so far as to say there was a generation of Soviet diplomats that was decapitated. Early retirement. One or two managed to sort of stay in the loop, but basically what Shevardnadze did was to reach down to the sort of under-40 - in fact, early 30s - generation of Soviet diplomats, who were much better educated, who had had a lot of exposure to the West, many of whom spoke excellent English - a lot of which they had learned from watching American movies, which sometimes produced some hilarity - but basically, a very different breed, people that were more flexible. Of course, they had Shevardnadze's agenda, but they also just looked at life in a different way. This was a new generation, and it helped. When we finally figured that out and understood it and started listening and working with these guys, it made a difference, in terms of moving the process forward. In the mean time, they were also struggling with the full array of Perestroika and Glasnost that Gorbachev had introduced into their own society and taking some first tentative steps towards establishing a free market economy, moving away from a command economy. I can remember at one lunch that we had at this guest house, talking with one of the old-style Soviet diplomats who still had his job, who had studied economics and was very interested in what Gorbachev was trying to do and wanted it to move faster, but told me, he said, "Can you imagine how difficult it is in our country to move from a command economy towards the kind of free-market-flow system that you have? Take the question of the factory that has the contract to make boots for the Russian Army. They have quotas, and the quotas bear no relationship whatsoever to need. That's a factory with x-number of people working eight hours a day. They are required to produce y-amount of boots. If they produce more, they do better than that, they get a bonus. The result is we have warehouses filled with boots that no one will ever use, and we don't know how to turn that off and change it." He said, "That's just one example of our entire supply system for the Soviet armed forces. Now," he said, "some of it is extremely sophisticated, as you know. What we've done in space and some of our very advanced weapons, but it is completely a command economy. All the best people in our schools go either to strategic work or to space work - our best engineers, our best scientists, our best design engineers, industrial designers, all those people that in your country are going into the private sector - they're all going to our flagship industries, which are space and defense. How do we change that?" He said, "This is exceedingly difficult." It was interesting that several times during visits to Moscow, over meals and also in calls in their offices, particularly Gorbachev... Gorbachev got to the point where, knowing that Shultz was an economist, he would ask him searching questions and then listen and take notes. Shultz was frequently giving him little tutorials on how the free-market economy worked. It was quite fascinating, because of course they had this sort of hostile attitude towards Wall Street and the stock market and how it was run by a handful of people and exploiting the American worker - you know, all the propaganda that had been developed in the '30s and through World War II and in the post-world war period. They had to overcome that whole legacy of attitude and thinking. Gorbachev was reaching out trying to understand, knowing that our system worked. He wanted to know a lot more about it.

Q: While you were doing this, particularly at the beginning, when you'd go to Moscow and all, I mean this had not been your particular beat-

HOLMES: No.

Q: -I mean you'd been western Europe.

HOLMES: I'd never been to Moscow before I went there the first time with Shultz, and I was very frustrated because we worked so hard up into the wee hours of the morning, then we had to go back to the embassy and write up our notes and prepare for the next day's session, that I never got to see anything - except one night in desperation, about the third time I was there, I remember going at four o'clock in the morning - I said I'm going to see something this time. It was in the winter. It was cold as hell, a blanket of snow. I went to Red Square to see the changing of the guard in front of Lenin's Tomb. It was every hour, and I went to see the four-o'clock performance.

Q: Well, with the delegation and all, were there at that time, any sort of intimations that the Soviet Union might come apart? Because we're talking about, what is it, well, by '92, it was gone.

HOLMES: No. I mean, occasionally Jack Matlock, our ambassador in Moscow, who would come over to brief us on the situation, would explain that the twin engines of change, Glasnost and Perestroika, that Gorbachev was putting in, were stirring up a lot of resentment, and there were sectors of the Soviet bureaucracy that felt threatened. Yes, he would talk about that, but the kind of major upheaval that was to come, we didn't see it, we didn't hear much about it, we were not aware of it, no.

Q: Could you explain Glasnost and Perestroika?

HOLMES: Well, Glasnost was "opening," to "open up," as I recall, and Perestroika was "restructuring." Basically those were the two main things. Shultz would take on these trips, he would take our assistant secretary for human rights, and he would go off and talk to people. Gorbachev wanted that. He and Shevardnadze were willing for us to begin to introduce notions of human rights, to explain to them our system of habeas corpus, due process, how our courts worked. Gorbachev was very interested in learning how our legal system worked, and so Dick Schifter had some fascinating meetings with Soviet lawyers and jurists, and that was all part of the "Opening," the Glasnost aspect, to sort of bring in new ideas, clean out some of the old Soviet cobwebs in the corners of their bureaucracy. I mean, they weren't buying a lot of it, but the fact is that Gorbachev wanted these contacts to take place. It was a very important adjunct to the main game, which was the arms control negotiations.

Q: We talked about the changing Soviet man. What about within our bureaucracy that you were dealing with? Was there an openness, or were we dealing with a mindset, too? You've already talked about your experience about inspections and all this. I would have thought that by this time we'd had so many of these meetings that people would go in and they'd almost be writing their communiquï¿½ before they got there. I mean the idea that nothing's really changed.

HOLMES: No. That really wasn't so, because by the time we began to have these meetings in Moscow, we were already embarked and making serious progress. You recall the famous Iceland meeting, when Gorbachev... That was another summit, an impromptu kind of summit, when Reagan and Gorbachev nearly wiped away some weapons systems. Nobody really believed it.

Q: It scared the hell out of people.

HOLMES: It scared the hell out of people, and Paul Nitze played a major role there. Paul knew that we had to develop more of a base line of understanding in detail before we made those kind of sweeping decisions - and didn't believe it. But things were changing. No, we weren't really writing our communiquï¿½s before we got there, because it was already a dynamic process, particularly in the INF area. I mean that was quite remarkable tour de force, and that was the first big breakthrough, when Gorbachev came to Washington and sat in the East Room of the White House and signed that treaty. It was just a huge achievement. The following year, when I went to Moscow as part of the delegation for the June, '88, summit, it was almost an anticlimax. It was much more relaxed, and I actually had time to do a little sightseeing, which was wonderful.

Q: With this, you were particularly working on chemical warfare and what else?

HOLMES: Back in Washington, in my coordinating role as the chairman of all the arms control negotiations, I was doing all of it, but the sort of special visits to Moscow, which were not scheduled events - I mean, we scheduled them when there was a need, when Shultz, with a lot of advice from Paul Nitze and particularly the negotiators in the field, when Shultz understood that we had reached a plateau and it needed high-level attention to kind of jump start the next level of effort, to move it forward... These were tough negotiations, very difficult issues. When I went on these trips, in my role as the kind of coordinator of the interagency mechanism, I would just volunteer to pick up those portfolios where we didn't have the active negotiations underway, such as in INF and in START, so typically there you had, I can remember, Mike Glitman was doing the INF negotiation at that point, and he would conduct that one, because from his point of view it was another session at a higher level of his ongoing negotiation in Geneva; and on the START front it was - I'm having a hard time with names today.

Q: We can always fill it in later.

HOLMES: Well, anyway, the START negotiator would also come, obviously, and he would conduct that. So I would just pick up on the other arms control subjects that were not in an advanced stage. I typically worked on chemical weapons and on nuclear testing, which was very rudimentary at that point. I would always invite Ken Edelman, if he was available, as the head of ACDA, if he was not sitting in the INF negotiation or the START negotiation, if he had time, I would invite him always to come and join. This was all part of the strategy of keeping ACDA engaged and a fully participating member in this team effort.

Q: In nuclear testing, for example - I can't remember; I was talking to somebody, and they were saying, "You've got to remember that for somebody who's been in nuclear testing all their lives, there isn't a hell of a lot else to do." In other words, if this is a job, this would be true in the Soviet Union as well as in the United States.

HOLMES: Exactly, and I had a DOE counterpart who came on these trips.

Q: You're talking about a highly skilled person from whom you're trying to take away the only chance to use that skill. Could you talk about that a bit - the dealings with the nuclear testing establishment?

HOLMES: Well, you've said it very well. As a matter of fact, one of the things I had to do was to cultivate my assistant secretary counterpart in the Department of Energy, who came out of the National Laboratories and who very much was a stakeholder in that whole process and who didn't like the idea at all that some day we would, perhaps, be doing away with nuclear testing. Actually, the military didn't like it either, and we were nowhere near that point in our discussion with the Soviets, as compared with what has happened in the Clinton Administration on nuclear testing. We were basically just kind of cleaning up the boundaries and narrowing the field and understanding each other. We were not moving towards any kind of a negotiating goal at that juncture - kind of keeping track of each other.

Q: What about, while you were doing this, the role of Richard Perle? Could you talk a little bit about him, because he shows up again and again in things?

HOLMES: Richard is a brilliant political scientist who became very well known in the early part of the Reagan Administration, while I was in Portugal. During that period, and when Al Haig was Secretary of State, Richard Burt, at that time, was the director of political-military affairs, and people would talk about the "war of the two Richards" because Richard Perle had a new job in the Pentagon. Up until the Reagan Administration, there was one foreign policy bureau or office in the Pentagon, and it was International Security Affairs. Basically, the assistant secretary had the world. It was the state department of the Pentagon, but it was too much for one man, and as we moved into the new era of active arms control, particularly with the Soviet Union, as well as more attention being paid to strategic exports, the export of strategic materials, COCOM, that whole array of things, it became too much for one policy official to handle in the Pentagon, so they created something called assistant secretary for international security policy, and that was primarily to handle all the arms control subjects, the strategic exports - basically the Defense Department's side of munitions control, if you will - and NATO affairs. It took that out of ISA, so basically ISA ended up with the rest of the world, and Richard Perle had this new job. Richard was a brilliant guy, extremely articulate, very conservative, hard-line, very much a Weinberger man, and very skeptical - I mean a very cold Cold War warrior - very skeptical of what the Soviets were up to, deeply skeptical of what the State Department was trying to do. He and Burt tangled a lot. I mean there was a lot of discussion about that in the press. By the time I got to PM, Richard Perle was still there, but the mood and the relationship had changed somewhat. I always had a perfectly decent relationship with him. Occasionally, I may have mentioned earlier in this meeting, we would have our differences, and it was very difficult, particularly when he wasn't around and we were at a critical juncture in developing policy so that the negotiators could move to the next phase, and if Richard was out of town - and he traveled a lot in that role - it was hard to get decisions out of ISP so that we could move forward. But when Richard was there and engaged and you had a chance to really argue through the issues, he made a tremendous contribution. Inevitably, the policy position in the context of the Reagan Administration, was sounder and would stand the test of conservative Congressional scrutiny, press scrutiny. I always liked it when Richard Perle had had a hand in fashioning the position. It was a better piece of policy.

Q: What about Casper Weinberger? He had sort of the outside reputation of being somebody who would buy anything the Pentagon said. He would represent the military and then would never budge. Did you get that feeling?

HOLMES: Well, Cap Weinberger was certainly very conservative, and he really believed in the strategic defense initiative, SDI - really believed in it - and Reagan believed in it. I never knew whether Abrahamson really did or not. I told you that Shultz was skeptical but never revealed his skepticism. But because the President and the man that launched it, Cap Weinberger, believed in it, the Soviets believed it, and we spent a lot of money.

Q: Oh, God, yes.

HOLMES: We spent a lot of money on it, and still today, as you know, you can see in Congressional discussions, there is still a sector of the Republican Party that keeps wanting to revive SDI in a major way, not content with just moving forward with theater nuclear missile defense, which is what we've been doing. Now just recently, the Secretary of Defense and the President initiated a $6 billion program to explore some of the weapons systems in SDI strategic systems. But Weinberger was very intelligent, very conservative. He tended to get stuck like a broken record, I would notice in meetings, in those Wednesday breakfast meetings, on a position, and he would talk endlessly. I mean, he would just start talking, and you'd hear this long disquisition pour out, and it was always the same formulation in the same order, and it got very boring. It added to his reputation as being stubborn, which he was, and not very reflective, which is not true. Weinberger was a highly intelligent individual and analytical, but when he was defending a position, even though he might have been thinking about other formulations, you got the same treatment every time. That contributed to this reputation, I think, because it was reflected in his demeanor and his way of explaining policy issues when he got on television or talk shows.

Q: I think this might be a good point to stop here, but I'd like to put down some of the questions that I'd like to do. One, we have talked at considerable length about arms control, but we haven't brought it up to how it culminated as far as you were concerned in '89, and so we'll talk about where you saw it going and all at the very end, and your impression of the Bush Administration on this particular point. But then, turning to some other things, about our attitude towards the Chinese (and we're talking about mainland Chinese) and arms, Taiwan, any reflections that you might have had on the whole problem of Central America-

HOLMES: The Middle East, Iran-Iraq War.

Q: -and then the Iran-Iraq War.

HOLMES: The use of gas weapons.

Q: Gas weapons.

HOLMES: I should touch on my relationship with Israel, because I co-chaired the joint political-military group for four years with the Israelis, which was a very important-

Q: Very definitely. I'd like to go into that in some depth.

HOLMES: That occupied quite a bit of my time, less than Latin America, frankly.

Q: If there are any other areas that we'll talk about.

HOLMES: Okay.

Q: Great.

HOLMES: Good.

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Q: Today is June 7, 1999. Allen, you were mentioning something that was sort of a footnote to what you've already talked about on arms control on dealing with the nuclear-

HOLMES: The INF Treaty.

Q: -INF. Could you talk about that first?

HOLMES: There was one aspect of my work as assistant secretary for political-military affairs working for George Shultz in the Reagan Administration that went beyond coordinating the various arms control groups within the National Security Council system, and that was the NATO subcommittee of the five countries, including ourselves, that had deployed INF systems on their territory - that is to say, Pershing missiles, in Germany and ground-launched Cruise missiles in the other countries.

Q: What countries were these?

HOLMES: Well, there was Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Did I mention Germany.

Q: You did mention Germany.

HOLMES: No, excuse me, start again. Germany, which was primarily the Pershing II missiles; Italy, ground-launched Cruise missiles; England; and the Netherlands.

Q: And Belgium.

HOLMES: No, England and the Netherlands. I need to check that, because there were five countries. I guess Belgium was included as well - also ground-launched Cruise missiles - and I can't remember the names of the bases. For example, in the Netherlands there was one base, and there were a couple of places in the United Kingdom. The five nations and ourselves, we met periodically at NATO headquarters to sort of basically iron out problems that came up to keep our group together, to stay very solid and committed to the program, and there were occasionally political problems. I remember at one point the head of the Italian Socialist Party, Bettino Craxi, who had been at one point prime minister, got very nervous during the deployment period, when we were actually deploying these systems, and wanted to suspend deployment. Another time the Belgians had a problem with one of their coalition governments, so we got in the habit of meeting periodically to help each other manage the political fallout in various capitals so that we could keep the program together. Now towards the end of this very tough negotiation on the INF treaty with the Soviets, we were just a few weeks away from signing the treaty in Washington. That as in 1988, when several of our allies in our meeting said that they were having real difficulties in figuring out how they would explain to their respective parliaments that on demand, in accordance with this treaty, Soviet inspectors could come onto their national territory to verify whether or not the US INF missiles were, in fact, being withdrawn on schedule. Some of these countries, particularly the UK, were very concerned about this. They didn't want to go through an elaborate enabling legislative process in their respective parliaments, but they wanted to have an agreement, an ancillary agreement among us, the INF treaty countries, that would satisfy their parliamentary procedures, since they weren't full parties to the treaties in the way that we and the Soviets were. The INF Treaty concerned Soviet and United States systems, but since our systems were on allied territories, they were indirectly also parties to the treaty, although not signatories. So it was complicated. So we spent three or four weeks hammering out an agreement - an inter-government agreement - just amongst ourselves, that would satisfy those parliamentary queries that they knew were coming. That took a lot of work, but we succeeded, and we got it all signed, the foreign ministers all signed, and it was all ready to go on the eve of the signature of the treaty in the White House between Gorbachev and Reagan.

Q: You mentioned George Shultz came up to you on this.

HOLMES: On the eve of this, when he was asked to sign this as well, I had not bothered him with the details. I just saw this as part of my job of sort of putting together some of the remote pieces of the tapestry of this very important treaty, and he just came up to me and said that he'd heard from a couple of his fellow foreign ministers that this had been a very good effort and he just wanted to give me a little pat on the back for having put something like that together and also for not having to bother him with it.

Q: When one thinks of political problems, one always thinks of the British and, what is it, the ladies of Gretna Green, or wherever it was.

HOLMES: Oh, yes. It was Greenham Common, but it was near one of the GLCMBs, the ground-launched Cruise missile bases, in England, and they would come and demonstrate periodically. They frequently would camp there for weeks on end, during the good weather, of course.

Q: How did your British colleagues deal with this, just sort of roll their eyes and accept this, or did they feel it was really important, I mean, of concern?

HOLMES: It never became a major problem, because after all the United Kingdom was very accustomed, going all the way back to World War II, to having US forces and US Air Forces - after all, the Eighth Air Force was installed in the UK halfway through World War II, and we had a presence there always at RAF bases for many years afterwards. So it wasn't unusual, and you had a sort of a Green-type of protest movement that was very much alive and made noise, and then the British Government would have meetings and explain and put out press releases and talk to the press and sort of kept it in bounds. It never became a major problem.

Q: Well, then, with this arms control - signed in '89, was it, or you had left by '89?

HOLMES: Well, the INF Treaty was signed in 1987, and then the following spring - I guess it was June of 1988 - we all went to Moscow. I may be mistaken here. The INF Treaty signature may have been in December of 1987. It was in Washington, in the White House, and then that was the treaty ceremony where Reagan and Gorbachev sort of joshed each other a bit with Reagan quoting the Russian phrase which means, basically, "verify and then trust." And Gorbachev laughing and saying, "You always say that to me."

The following spring, in June of '88, there was a return visit by President Reagan to Moscow, and some other activities in the arms control arena were undertaken. There were some things that were signed there that were of less significance. The INF Treaty was a major moment in our series of arms control reductions, and of course the START came later, as did the Chemical Warfare Treaty, which happened in the Bush Administration.

Q: You left this job when?

HOLMES: I left this job in approximately March or April of 1989. Basically what happened - and this was sort of interesting - was that even after the election of George Bush in November of 1988 (the Reagan Administration, of course, was still in office), Shultz readily agreed to a French proposal to hold a conference in the first 10 days - I can't remember the exact dates, but it was approximately during the first 10 days - of January in Paris, to which about 150 countries in the world were invited. This was a global conference, and it was basically an attempt to stuff the chemical warfare genie back in the bottle. We had a convention signed in 1925 as a result of the use of gas in World War I, to basically ban chemical weapons forever; and other than the Italian use of gas against the Ethiopians in what must have been about 1937 or '38 in that campaign, the 1925 convention banning the use of chemical weapons was observed throughout World War II, and it wasn't until the Iranians were fighting the Iraqis in the early '80s and pushing Iraqi troops back into Iraq, out of the Shatt al-Arab, that the Iraqis got so desperate that they got to the point where they actually uncorked the bottle and used nerve gas against the Iranians and against their own people, against Iraqi Kurds, who, of course, weren't exactly sympathetic to the Iraqi cause. The famous Halabja incident occurred, where there was a massive attack on this one town, and it killed a lot of Iraqi Kurds, a lot of the population, and there were horrible photographs. I remember there were hearings about that afterwards, and I testified. The Congress was basically trying to place responsibility as to how this could possibly have happened, and what were the consequences, and what were we going to do about chemical warfare, and so forth.

So the French had this concept of pulling together the world community and trying at least to freeze the use of chemical weapons, if not to patch up the 1925 convention, pending a more permanent treaty, the negotiation of which was underway and took a very long time. We agreed to do that, and Shultz agreed to go to the conference, and our delegation, when George Shultz wasn't there, was led by William Burns, who had been my senior deputy in PM and who had been asked by the Administration in the last eight months or so of the Reagan Administration to retire from the Army and become head of ACDA, to replace Ken Edelman, which he did. He led the team, and I ended up, with that, as his deputy, which was a lot of fun. We were very close.

We had some tough negotiations. We came out with a very good communiquï¿½, which basically pledged the participants to contain the use of chemical weapons. We had, I remember, an all-nighter with a group of about 20 countries that were the so-called friends of the chairman, and I was the lead negotiator in that. We went all night, and it was exceedingly difficult because the Iranians, the Iraqis, the Libyans, and a few other countries who were very suspicious of the- (end of tape)

This collection of the Middle Eastern countries that were implacable enemies of Israel wanted to hold us up basically on the question of chemical weapons to bring in a pledge on the part of the Israelis, who were also at the conference, to forswear the use of nuclear weapons before they would sign up to language in this communiquï¿½. So we went on all night, and basically with the assistance of Mike Matheson, who was the senior legal advisor from the State Department, he and I just adopted a tactic of hard line. We just placed ourselves way over at the right and adopted the Soviet posture of nyet [Russian: no]. The Soviet delegation was completely in our court, but told us very frankly they wouldn't lift a finger to help us, but that they would go along with us. So they just sat on their hands during this long night's struggle. Eventually the French, as the hosts, came along with us, and we got closer and closer, and finally about four o'clock in the morning, we got the language that we needed for the communiquï¿½. The next morning when this was reported back to heads of delegation, to ministers, the French chief delegate got into a lot of trouble with his minister, who, as the host, felt that they were too much on our side of the argument and not acting as a neutral host. But we managed to get over that as well, and naturally the conference turned out quite well and was a pretty good platform, as it turned out (this is what Shultz wanted, this communiquï¿½ and this sort of pretty firm pledge on the part of the world community to do something serious about containing the use of chemical weapons), good platform for the four-year struggle that was about to begin under the Bush Administration to conclude a workable, verifiable chemical arms treaty.

Q: When you say "chemical," this includes what we in the old days used to call gas.

HOLMES: Yes, gas - mustard gas, but more importantly, the very lethal series of nerve gases like Tabun and Sarin, VX, and those kinds of horrible weapons from which a good dose would produce death within minutes because your entire muscular and nervous system would be paralyzed.

Q: What was your reading at that time about the progress of developing these weapons or the availability of these weapons around the world? Who were our problems?

HOLMES: Well, our biggest problem was, of course, with Iran and Iraq, because they had basically broken the pledge, and they had-

Q: Had Iran done it, too?

HOLMES: Oh, yes. The Iraqis were the biggest offenders, but the Iranians had also. They had actually exchanged barrages of chemical weapons. As I say, the Iraqis much more than the Iranians, but the two of them together, against each other, had done this. The Libyans had not, but they had developed an enormous chemical weapons complex, which we knew all about. That was before they actually went underground at Tarhuna, which happened later. The Libyans had a big complex, and of course the Soviets had the biggest stockpile - bigger than ours, which was considerable - of chemical weapons in the world. The various other countries had them. There were probably 20-25 countries, because the Arab countries, we always used to refer to it as the poor man's weapon of mass destruction. Obviously, to produce usable nuclear weapons required an enormous infrastructure and an investment that most of these countries - with exceptions we found out later of Iraq - couldn't afford.

By that time the Israelis had for psychological reasons, allowed it to be known without ever admitting it, that they had a stockpile of nuclear weapons, and so the Arabs were trying to work a pledge from them on the non-use of nuclear weapons into the equation; and of course we didn't go along with that.

Q: Now did the Israelis go along with limiting chemical weapons.

HOLMES: Yes, they did. They were delighted that we were able to protect their unannounced nuclear weapons program.

Q: How about India and Pakistan?

HOLMES: They were there, and there was... I can't even remember if they were in the committee of... As I say, there were about 150 countries that attended the conference, which went on for about four days. I can't remember if the Indians and the Pakistanis were part of the committee of 20 that hammered out the communiquï¿½ that night. If one was there, the other certainly was, but obviously...

Q: How about China?

HOLMES: China went along with this as well, and of course they maintained a fiction, which was that they had never had chemical weapons, that they had been the victim of the use of chemical weapons in experimentation by the Japanese. At least that's what the Chinese told me when we had our first ever political-military discussions with the Chinese in November of 1988, which was a very interesting trip that one of my deputies in the Political Military Bureau, Vladimir Lehovich, and I went to, went to Beijing and had two days of talks, not knowing beforehand what the agenda would be because the Chinese wouldn't tell us. But we were willing to go on that basis, and we had a rather thorough, although I would call it Pol-Mil 101... But it was a beginning. These were official talks on political-military subjects, and we did talk about weapons of mass destruction and chemical warfare, and actually not too long after that, Tiananmen Square happened, and of course that put a freeze on our relationship for some years after that. But that was sort of an interesting early beginning, and I do recall from those discussions the Chinese being at pains to say that they had been the victims of Japanese use of chemical weapons and also experimentation.

Q: There's a notorious unit of the Japanese Army that was supposed to have been working in Manchuria with chemical weapons, and it's still very foggy. I mean it's brought up from time to time. The Japanese haven't acknowledged it. It's one of those-

HOLMES: They mentioned Manchuria to us. They didn't talk about this particular unit, but they said that there had been incidents in Manchuria by the Japanese against their people. Now they also denied that they had chemical weapons production facility and capacity, which was not true. I mean, they had a small one, but it was very much alive.

Q: This brings up a question. You say "Pol-Mil 101," which for the person who might be reading this in the 25th century, 101 is the designation for an introductory course in a university. But was there a development of a pol-mil collegial group, essentially civilians and military throughout sort of the diplomatic community who were knowledgeable?

HOLMES: Oh, absolutely.

Q: Were you watching the development of this?

HOLMES: Yes, I was, and that was very interesting, that development, that evolution of cadres of diplomats and military officers who were specializing in and had chosen, for various reasons, to concentrate on the political-military aspects of diplomacy. That process was well underway by the time I got to the Political-Military Bureau in 1985. It had been growing, basically, since World War II. Generally speaking in the Foreign Service, the political-military specialty was a sub-specialization in the political cone. But similar skills were displayed by our fellow diplomats in the United Kingdom, in France, in the Federal Republic, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy.

Q: Israel.

HOLMES: Israel I'm not so sure, but certainly among our allies this was very, very clear, certainly among all of our NATO allies, because they tended to rotate in and out of assignments, just as we did, in their NATO delegations, plus the international staff, both the civilian and the military international staff of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. By the same token, in our own military, there was a pol-mil specialty. You had the foreign area specialists, who generally, in the military, peopled the DIA and were attachï¿½s who specialized in regions of the world and languages. They used to call themselves "pol-mil weenies;" they loved this kind of work. I mean they loved having assignments to the State Department, mostly to the Political-Military Bureau, but indeed there were officers in all the geographic bureaus and in the international staff of NATO and in our delegation. So there was basically also a career pattern in the armed services that was also pol-mil. So by the mid-'80s, and particularly with the growth in arms control negotiations, these were fairly robust cadres of officers, and some of them became extremely specialized in arms control, both in the civilians and the military. Now the most skillful... There was literally a handful of brilliant military officers who tended to come out of the missile community, who were frequently physicists, who were familiar with the basic vocabulary and the formulas - you know, throw weight and reentry vehicles and the yields of various kinds of weapons. It was just second-nature to them. These kinds of officers were invaluable to our teams that were negotiating with the Soviets, and also we had a few civilians, people like Jim Timbie, who was a nuclear physicist and who had been at the right hand of Paul Nitze and George Shultz and then later worked with Jim Baker on these very complex arms control discussions.

I should mention one other footnote here, and that is the Missile Technology Control Rï¿½gime. This was something that was negotiated approximately between 1985 and 1988. It took about four years. It was not a treaty; it was not an inter-government agreement; it was a "political understanding." It was the joint undertaking of like-minded countries. It grew out of the Group of Seven, the seven major industrial countries that would meet periodically - the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, and Japan. It was born out of that group approximately in 1985, and there was an office in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs that was negotiating this at the level of office director. It went on for the longest time. It took four years, or three-plus years. Extremely difficult because to get countries to agree to control their strategic technology, to control not only missiles but also the most sensitive components of missiles and the precursors of the physics warheads, the physics packages of nuclear warheads that we placed on these missiles. This was finally concluded, and I used to keep Secretary Shultz abreast of this. During my 15-minute meeting that I would have with him every week, I would occasionally tell him how we were coming on this, and he would listen but not ask too many questions. I recall at a certain point, when we were very close to signing this at the level of foreign ministers, and when the larger, the more important arms control negotiations such as INF and START were going badly with the Soviets and the Reagan Administration needed a shot in the arm, I remember Shultz saying to me, "By the way, how's that what-do-you-call-it, MTCR outfit coming along?" and I said, "Well, as a matter of fact, we're very close; we'll probably be finished in a few weeks and be ready for signature." He said, "Oh, that's great. This will be an achievement that we can point to while some of our other negotiations are on a plateau and not moving right."

Of course, this grew later, in subsequent administrations, into a much bigger program and turned out to be one of the most important later on and although not a treaty, became one of the most important mechanisms among countries to control the export of sensitive technology that could be used to manufacture missiles and nuclear weapons.

Q: Back to the cadre, about pol-mil. Did the Soviets seem to have the equivalent? In other words, were you all kind of seeing old friends or old adversaries or what have you?

HOLMES: My answer to that is yes and no. I would say that among the older generation, my generation and older, of Soviet diplomats, it wasn't so much that they were pol-mil people, but there were more a handful of arms control specialists. But I think I mentioned it in an earlier interview that when Eduard Shevardnadze became foreign minister and took over basically when Gorbachev came in and took up what Gromyko had done for many years, he basically cleaned house. He decapitated a generation of Soviet diplomats in the pol-mil/arms control specialty area and brought in a whole new cadre of young officers in their 30s and their 40s, many of whom we did know. They had made it their business to get to know Americans, to learn English, to learn American jokes, and had a much easier relationship with Americans. There wasn't this sort of hostile posturing on the part of Cold Warriors that we'd been accustomed to. In that group there was certainly what you could identify as a new generation of pol-mil arms control specialists.

Q: Sort of jumping around, but back to China. Let's talk a bit about this trip. How did it come about, and how was it put on, and what were you up to?

HOLMES: Well, basically it came about as a way of... This, again, is a little side-show that I was interested in developing. I was interested in getting into a conversation with the Chinese foreign minister in Beijing about political-military subjects in general and arms control in particular. It was kind of an experiment. After one of the sessions that we had had in Moscow with the Soviets, I asked - of course, I asked Secretary Shultz's permission to do this - in addition to the debriefings that we always gave to the Eastern Europeans and obviously to our NATO allies first and foremost, I suggested that, since there were talks (it was during the annual General Assembly discussions in New York), why don't I offer to debrief the Chinese and see what this yields? He agreed that that was a good idea. I gave them a very tailored briefing, and you could tell they were extremely interested, to finally be sort of - even on the margins - to be brought into this arms control game. I didn't make it conditional or anything; I just suggested at the end of this, "You know, we could continue this and have more regular sessions from time to time if, in response to this, you might invite us to Beijing for talks." It took a very long time for them to clear that with their elaborate bureaucracy in Beijing, but finally in about 60 days, the reply came in, and they said they would be pleased to see us, but they wouldn't tell us what the agenda would be. We would learn that when we got there. Vlad Lehovich and I packed our bags, and we had some discussions that we had to do anyway about that time with the Australians, and so that made a kind of a packaged trip possible. We went off to Beijing. It was very interesting.

Q: What happened?

HOLMES: Well, they were interested in some very basic things - the workings of the National Security Council, the systems. I gave them - again, to use the phrase 101 - I gave them "NSC 101"; I went back to the 1947 act and described the setting up of the National Security Council system right after World War II, the membership, the staff, how we operated, the range of political-military and arms control subjects, as well as diplomatic subjects, that were treated in that forum. We had nothing to hide. I laid it out for them. They were fascinated. It was very clear to me that what the Foreign Ministry had in mind was to sort of insert themselves, infiltrate, if you will, the military apparatus of the People's Liberation Army. I mean, they were frozen out. They didn't have pol-mil discussions, because the Chinese military didn't want their civilian diplomats mucking around in their terrain, and so they were clearly using this, using our model, as a way of persuading the Central Committee and the Chinese military that it was time for them to put together a modern government apparatus that covered the range of subjects. They used our model as a way of trying to persuade the Chinese military to adopt a different system, but they also were suggesting that as a result of this there might be more military sales and opportunities to augment the Chinese military's budget - which, in fact, turned out to be true later.

That was their primary interest, but in the process, we learned a lot about them. It was a beginning of conversations, and had we not had the interruption in our relationship of Tiananmen Square, I think we would have evolved into having regular discussions, probably once a year and later, if it turned out to valuable for both sides, more frequently.

Q: Did you go into the interchange of military and State within the Pentagon and State Department and all that?

HOLMES: Oh, yes, we explained all of that, and they were absolutely fascinated. They had no idea. They really were, I think, very surprised by the extent of cooperation and coordination among career Foreign Service officers and career military officers. They had no idea that this was going on, and they obviously liked the idea very much.

Q: War Colleges and all that?

HOLMES: We explained all of that, the War College system.

Q: And the fact that we exchange with War Colleges, the State Department.

HOLMES: So I explained all that, and we also explained how we negotiated with the Soviets, and the kinds of teams that we put together and the way George Shultz, as the leader of our arms control effort in the Reagan Administration, was always careful to bring the entire NSC system - OSD, JCS, NSC, Department of Energy - the whole gang would always accompany him on these trips, and how the presence and the blessing of the JCS was so important to our delegation, and we had discovered that the counterpart system in the Soviet Union was also very important. It was very important for Shevardnadze to have Marshal Akhromeyev at his side when they were about to make serious steps in our arms control negotiations. That part fascinated the Chinese as well. I think they probably knew a little bit more about the inner workings of the Soviet system than ours, but I explained it all to them and tried to draw them out, suggesting to them that we needed to be concerned about the development of weapons of mass destruction across the board.

Q: I would have thought that, because of recent history, Henry Kissinger, who didn't play this game at all, would have come up. Did Henry Kissinger come up as a subject, or did you bring him up and say he was atypical?

HOLMES: No, not really. But we weren't dealing at a very senior level. I mean let's be clear. I think maybe the most senior person I talked to was an assistant minister of foreign affairs, and there must have been probably four or five of them in their foreign affairs ministry. So we never got any higher than sort of my equivalent in their structure.

Q: How about during this period dealing with political-military, did Taiwan come up?

HOLMES: Taiwan would come up periodically, usually during the annual visit by a delegation of Taiwanese who would come to Washington every year, sometimes twice a year. You know, under the Taiwan relations act, we didn't have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. That was part of the complex of agreements that came out of Nixon's visit to China and the Shanghai communiquï¿½ and so forth. We constructed this elaborate fiction that we had a sort of corporate business relationship, and so the heads of our delegations in Taiwan were career diplomats, like Harry Thayer, for example, who would actually go through the motions of getting out of the Foreign Service - although the clock kept ticking on their benefits and so forth - but we were very careful not to call these people "ambassadors," not to call our mission there a "diplomatic mission," which it wasn't. We were, by procedure, forbidden from sending senior officials to Taiwan. So as I recall it, we didn't even go to visit Taiwan at the level of deputy assistant secretary. I think the senior level that we were allowed to visit Taiwan was at the sort of office director level. Of course the Taiwanese didn't like that, and they would come at whatever level they chose, and they would come to Washington, and basically they would be visiting the State Department and the Defense Department and the NSC in search of better military equipment, and coming out of the Shanghai Communiquï¿½ was an agreement to basically freeze the quantity and the sophistication of military hardware at the level that then existed. But with the passage of time and the degradation of that equipment, they would come every year and argue that we should allow a new model of the F-16 or whatever the aircraft or the artillery piece or the counter battery artillery control system might be. This was always a big argument, and we did inch up. We did allow, after the passage of two or three years, a slightly more sophisticated version or a new model of this piece of equipment or that. And when that happened, of course they made no secret of it, and then we would always get complaints from the Foreign Ministry in Beijing that we were violating or that we were getting close to violating - we'd better be careful - the Shanghai agreements. So this was a constant flow of argument back and forth between us and Taiwan.

Q: Were you there during the - well, no, you wouldn't have been. The elections with sending more F-16s to Taiwan came during the Bush-Clinton thing, and you were out then.

HOLMES: I was out of that then.

Q: What about the Iran-Iraq War. You've mentioned the chemical warfare, but were there any other elements during the time you were doing this?

HOLMES: Not much. There was not very much of significance, but what did - and I should mention this - was my responsibility as the co-chairman of the Joint Political-Military Group with Israel. This was a very interesting enterprise. We met at least twice a year with the Israelis, and we had kind of an odd arrangement. The assistant secretary for political-military affairs teamed with the director general of the Ministry of Defense in Israel. They were the co-chairs. We would meet every six months at a minimum in Washington and then the following meeting would be in Tel Aviv. This as put together basically to have a structured political-military dialogue and to set up, monitor, and control the pacing of military exercises. We had to be careful, because of our relationships with Arab countries in the immediate proximity, and we were always very careful that our military always dealt with the IDF, the Israeli Defense Force, through the European command, whereas all the surrounding Arab countries dealt with the Department of Defense through the central command, to keep them separate.

We had various agreements. We had stockpiling agreements. The Israelis were always, of course, interested in getting more, and again it was a question of quantity and sophistication, and they wanted them basically as sort of a strategic reserve for their armed forces, in case there should be another war. We wanted them there as a dual purpose stockpile, so that we could also draw on them, and we had various logistical and budgetary and congressional reasons for setting it up that way. That always took a lot of discussion. We also had increasingly more sophisticated and ambitious exercises. Sometimes out of this came the ability to use Israeli territory for unilateral exercises, and particularly for firing ranges. That was very important for us, and the European command liked that because with the increasing prosperity in Germany, for example, and less and less farmland becoming available for maneuvers and particularly for firing ranges, our people had to really be creative in finding good places to train, for night-flying, for firing ranges, and that sort of thing. So we were very pleased to be able to have Israeli desert facilities to train in. We also had bilateral exercises, and we would start with "passexes," passing exercises, basically when an American contingent of ships, a couple of destroyers and a cruiser and a submarine or two would be maneuvering part of the fleet in the Mediterranean in the eastern Mediterranean, this was an opportunity maybe to have a passing exercise. While they were more or less abreast of Israeli territory, the Israelis would have a little exercise. Frequently they would send out one or two of their little diesel submarines, and they would play cat and mouse games with our destroyers. Once in a while they eluded our people, and of course that was cause for great national pride. And then we had some small landings together, a battalion of Marines off of the Sixth Fleet would land, and they would maneuver with the Israeli Navy and their equivalent forces, and we monitored that and we grew that process under the sort of careful supervision of the co-chairs. And of course I had people from the Defense Department on our team, the NSC.

One of the things that I introduced into that, and that was a very interesting forum, one of the things I wanted to do was to get - again since we were very much into weapons of mass destruction, I knew I wouldn't get anyplace on nuclear weapons, so I never even tried, but on the question of chemical weapons, we tried... It took us a couple of years, almost a year and a half, two years, to get the Israelis to agree to discuss chemical weapons. We finally got their attention when Dick Clark, who was then deputy assistant secretary of INR and who was a great briefer and a highly intelligent officer, came with us on one trip, and we gave a briefing to then Defense Minister Rabin, which really got his attention, because they were struggling with the fact that their own intelligence had not been able to keep track of the Syrian development of binary chemical weapons. Binary weapons are those where the elements of the weapon are kept separate in basically non-lethal, inert, harmless stages, and they only would come together to form a lethal weapon in the warhead as it was moving in flight towards its target. The Syrians had been able to get a lot of these weapons from the Soviets, and they had stockpiled them in places that the Israelis hadn't discovered, and they were getting very, very worried about this capability. Why? because the entire Israeli strategy for survival depended on their ability to, one, put their air force aloft very quickly at the beginning of a war or maybe even preempt by a few hours to get immediate control of the airspace, which would then allow them to mobilize their ground forces in the 24 to 48 hours that followed. With them not having exact information on where and in what quantity the Syrians had binary chemical weapons strapped on short-range missiles (300-400 mile range) this could have absolutely destroyed their capability, because even though they might have had air superiority during the mobilization stage, barrages of these chemical weapons could have terrorized their population and made mobilization extremely difficult. They were very concerned.

I remember this particular briefing. Dick Clark gave a superb briefing on chemical weapons capabilities. Rabin was very interested, was very engaged in this discussion, and he allowed us then to get into discussions of the control of chemical and, eventually, biological weapons with the Israelis. We kind of broke the ice with them on this, and we were able to make that then - particularly chemical weapons - a regular feature of our embryonic arms control discussions with the Israelis.

Q: At your level did politics intrude, because everything with Israel ends up by being domestically political? Did you find that intruded there at all?

HOLMES: Not really. I'll tell you, we were dealing with Israeli professionals, professional military and diplomats, but basically we were dealing with the Israeli Defense Force and with their Foreign Ministry. Mendi Meron was my first counterpart. Then afterwards my next counterpart on the Israeli side waDavid Ivry - the former commander of the Israeli Air Force who had led the Israeli raid on Osirak, the nuclear facility that the French had built for the Iraqis, which was a very daring raid several years before. These people were professionals, and I met them in later years, and it was very different from operating in a political arena. The only time I was ever aware of the politics of the Israeli-US relationship was during Israeli visits to Washington, when at the inevitable Israeli ambassador's dinner there would be AIPAC members there, at the dinner, and members of Congress who had big Jewish constituencies. Then in discussion at those dinners it was very clear that there was a political aspect.

Q: Well, on the pol-mil side, was there any discomfort about the amount of equipment that was going to Israel, particularly from our military people?

HOLMES: Well, there certainly was in terms of the budget. Now for some years, our military assistance budget had been growing, and one of the things that we did during the time that I was there, between 1985 and 1989, is we capped the military assistance budget, which was at that point, I think, $1.8 billion and still is pretty much at that level, although it's beginning to change now. But the entire US Government budget for Israel was about three billion, as I recall - about $1.8 billion military assistance and about $1.2 billion in economic support funds.

We never directly felt the political pressure. We only felt it indirectly. But there was a struggle there in maintaining that cap. We basically flatlined the budget from year to year and stayed at $1.8 billion. Now the Israelis are very resourceful, and they were undeterred by this, although they didn't like it. But they would do things like at a certain point - and I can't remember what year it happened - they made a separate arrangement with the Congress, and this is where the politics played. They made a separate arrangement where, unlike other countries in the world that we provided assistance to quarter by quarter, they made an arrangement to receive the entire year's donation at the beginning of the fiscal year, so that they could then bank it and earn interest on it. So that was a compensation. They also had allowed a certain amount of counterpart sales. In other words, yes, there was a "buy American" provision, but in the process of concluding various agreements with American exporters and manufacturers, then they had to buy a certain percentage of the sale, they would have to purchase some Israeli exports. There was a certain amount of that offshore procurement. They were able through various mechanisms to make the most of the situation while struggling to break that cap, which at least in the four years that I was there they were not able to do.

We did occasionally have problems on the provision of technology. Any time we sold or loaned, gave or what have you, equipment to the Israeli Defense Force, we had a string, and it was always part of the agreement, on the re-export of this American technology. In other words, they understood that we were giving them top of the line technology and that they had to control it and that we would be watching and we would not permit the resale unless they asked us. Very old equipment or equipment that might be obsolescent, we might after review allow them to sell to third countries. They pretty much abided by that. But we began to have a problem in the relationship when at a certain point they would take some critical component of a defense system and remove it and then develop it and then place it in something constructed by Israeli defense industries and then sell it - as to the Chinese. We had problems with their sales. They were developing a huge relationship with China at that time. They were selling them a lot of equipment, and in return for that, they got political diplomatic support from the Chinese in a lot of places. Of course, they were very pleased to have relations with them, and they eschewed the relationship with Taiwan. But we had some difficult discussions with the Israelis at that time when there were these sort of indirect sales of US-controlled equipment, which they argued was no longer US equipment.

Q: By the way, did the Pollard case develop during this? I can't remember when it was, but he was an American who spied for Israel, and it's still a controversial case because he gave a hell of a lot of information, which apparently even got into the Soviet Union, or at least there are allegations. Did that develop when you were there?

HOLMES: No, it didn't.

Q: Were we at all concerned about Israel and it's relations with the Soviet Union? Because they were playing another game with the Soviets, and that was to try to get more Jews out of the Soviet Union, and some of the cards they would play might be military. Was that of concern to us at that time?

HOLMES: No, actually, I don't recall it as something that came up, and of course we were very supportive, as national policy, which was a bipartisan policy, basically, supportive of the release of Soviet Jews by the Soviet Union, allowing them to come to the United States or go to Israel. Remember the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

Q: But my question was - one of the things that the Israelis had was quite sophisticated military equipment.

HOLMES: That didn't come up. The Israelis developed some very sophisticated equipment for use in their theater, their tank - Merkava?-

Q: Merkava, I think it was.

HOLMES: Yes - was their tank, which was very sophisticated, and they had special laminated body armor, which was similar to what we had and what the Soviets had, and so that wasn't an issue. They had the armament they needed. The Soviets were a world-class military force. They put the lion's share of their budget into their defense program and their space program, and the finest and the brightest young Soviet engineers and scientists and industrial designers went to those two programs, so other than an occasional little piece of equipment here and there, it was not major drawing card for the Soviets. It was basically mostly a US struggle - and we really acted on behalf of Israel in arguing that the Soviets should allow, for human rights reasons, Soviet Jews who wanted to emigrate and go to Israel or come to the United States to allow it to happen, and we worked very hard at that. They're still coming, today. I mean, I was reading the other day, quite extraordinary, there's a new influx of Russian Jews going into Israel, today, and they're now, apparently, the biggest single ethnic group in Israel. They outnumber the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim.

Q: Well, in '89, you're time had come to an end there, and what happened?

HOLMES: Well, in '89, I was asked by the incoming Baker group, the Bush Administration, by the undersecretary for management, who was in charge of personnel, who came to me and said that they wanted to send me as ambassador to Brazil. I had, of course the Portuguese language background, and I would have been very interested to do so, but my wife's medical situation did not permit another foreign assignment, so I declined that opportunity. Congress had passed new legislation setting up an ambassador-at-large for burdensharing. This was an initiative calculated to put a senior person into that job who would report to the Secretary of State and who would basically work very hard with our allies to increase their share in the costs involved in stationing American forces in their countries and in their regions. There was a feeling in the Congress that the allies were getting a free ride - this was a global view - and that we were paying far too much for their defense. So they created this position, and then leaned on the new Administration to fill it. Larry Eagleburger, who was then deputy secretary of state, asked me to drop by and asked me take on this job. He thought it was a very important job, that he and Baker wanted me to do it, that they would give me whatever resources I wanted. He said money is no object - up to a certain point. I could create a staff, I could hire 12, 15, 20 people, whatever I needed to set this office up and make it work. So I agreed to take the job. It seemed like the kind of job that I would enjoy doing. I had the NATO background; I'd had a lot of experience working with the Defense Department by that point; and I liked, you know, the idea of creating something new. But I told Larry that I didn't want to create a staff. If I created a competing bureaucracy, I wouldn't get the cooperation, either of the parts of the State Department that I would have to deal with, but more importantly the Defense Department and the commands in Japan and Korea and Europe. They would see this as somehow threatening. So I said I would limit my office to my secretary and one military officer, who was working in the Pol-Mil Bureau and who wanted to come join me. He was one of those pol-mil "weenies" I told you about. He had a Ph. D. in political science and loved that kind of work and volunteered to come, so that's the way I set it up - my secretary and one officer. My decision turned out to be the right one, because I never had any problem. In fact, I had a lot of cooperation throughout, in the JCS, in ISA, US Forces Japan, US Forces Korea, the NATO delegation. I had tremendous cooperation. In fact, I spent, I would say, 85 percent of my time working with the defense establishment out of the State Department. It was a wonderful job. I had to learn to do things in a different way. I had a small - Yes, excuse me.

Q: I want to get the dates. You were there from '89 to when?

HOLMES: I was there from '89 to '93.

Q: I would have thought you would have shied away from the job, because it sounds as if you were the "designated nag" to go around-

HOLMES: "Pickpocket" is more the word. I mean, that's what I did. I went around and picked allied pockets.

Q: To be doing this all the time sounds like either a glutton for punishment or you have a certain amount of Sadomasochism built into you or something.

HOLMES: I liked it because it was a challenge. It was something new, something that I would create, I would set the pattern for. I thought it was a lot of fun.

Q: Could you give me sort of a tour of the horizon of how you viewed the situation as regards your particular work, I mean burdensharing, with our allies at that point, in '89 when you took it?

HOLMES: I sort of surveyed the landscape. I made my calls, including calling on the Secretary of Defense, on Dick Cheney, who immediately invited me to travel with him. He said, "When you start this job, I want you to come with me so I can introduce you at the appropriate levels so we can get some things done." I basically initially looked at three sectors. I looked at Japan first and foremost - that was the big prize, and that was where I felt we could get a lot of help - Korea and our NATO allies. The NATO allies I knew would be the most difficult, and of course it was a little unfair of the Congress to talk about them shirking and not doing their part because, in fact, the NATO allies, through various mechanisms, were already contributing a lot to the common defense.

I started in Asia, because that was the area I knew the least, and my learning curve was going to be a lot steeper there. I had never worked with either the Japanese or the republic of Korea, the ROKs, and so I spent a lot of time preparing for my first mission with those two countries. There was a lot of research and a lot of meetings in Washington talking to people that were knowledgeable about it, and I found that I had a great welcome over in the Defense Department. I started, as I say, in 1989, and it was in 1990, of course, that Saddam invaded Kuwait. It was the summer, wasn't it?

Q: It was in August.

HOLMES: August of 1990.

Q: Around the first of August, I think.

HOLMES: So that was sort of an important point in my negotiations with the Japanese, but I will come to that. I spent basically that first year laying the groundwork, making my calls, going with the new Secretary of Defense on visits. I went with him to Japan and Korea and Europe. I always went with him; for every meeting of defense ministers at NATO, I went with him. He would always have me seated next to him, and it really made a big difference to be able to do it that way. He always made a joke about it, particularly with the Japanese and Koreans, that I was Jim Baker's spy, but it was extremely helpful, not only with senior Japanese and Koreans, but also, frankly, with senior US military in the commands, because they saw, because of his body language and introduction, that he felt this was an important task. It really made my life a lot easier.

It took a lot of work, for example with the Japanese, looking at the range. I visited our facilities throughout Japan, which were extensive, studied the cost-sharing arrangements that we already had to identify areas where this could be improved upon, and obviously also the agreements that we had - the status-of-forces agreement and our treaty with the Japanese and the Koreans. Generally I had a lot of help always in Japan from Mike Armacost, who was our ambassador there. I was a friend. He always invited me to stay with him. He didn't always take me around, but he would introduce me, and the deputy chief of mission helped me, as did their pol-mil officer and the three-star commander of US Forces Japan. So we became a team. This was a very exciting enterprise, and the Japanese were very courteous. It was always a little difficult negotiating with the Japanese, because I had to sort of talk separately to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Defense Ministry - what do they call it? - the Self-Defense Agency. But these were always separate discussions, and the important discussions were with the Finance Ministry, but I tried to eschew direct discussions with them. It thought it was important to deal with the diplomats and the military. They were not very good at coordinating amongst themselves. I thought for a while that they were using me, that they were playing against each other as a way of resisting my entreaties. That was only partly true. As I later discovered, the Japanese basically detest confrontation, whether it's with another country or with another bureaucracy in their own government. They avoid it if at all possible. These discussions took a very long time. But after about, oh, several visits - I guess I'd been at it for about six months - in August of 1990, after Saddam invaded Kuwait and it was very clear that we were going to go to war against Iraq and eject Iraq from Kuwait and we were developing this huge force - and we asked the Japanese to join, and we knew of course that they would not provide combat forces, that was out of the question, they were prevented by their constitution - but we had hoped that they would give us some logistical support, maybe some medical units or logistic support, because obviously they were beneficiaries of the oil coming out of the gulf - In fact they counted on it - so they tested the waters with the Diet and were defeated. Basically, the Diet refused having any substantial participation by the Japanese in this effort. This is right as we were approaching a climactic period in our negotiations on burdensharing, and the Japanese were very ashamed about this, and I remember an evening - they were always very courteous, and we would go out to a Japanese inn and have a wonderful dinner, and their fluent English-speaking Foreign Ministry people would come along - and I had an extensive conversation - these dinners went on for quite a while - and I had a very intense conversation with a mid-level Japanese Foreign Ministry official who confided in me his nightmare. I said, "What is your nightmare?" and he said, "My nightmare is the vision after you all go in against a very well-dug-in Iraqi force in Kuwait, and I see thousands of US body bags being flown back to the United States, and we're not involved in even the most remote support capacity because of the attitude of our Diet." He said, "This is my nightmare, and this will cause great shame among the Japanese people." So I have to say that I was a little bit wicked, I think. I played on this element of shame in my negotiations, because we had already achieved quite a bit in terms of their picking up labor costs for running our bases and so forth. I wanted also to work into that the sizeable Japanese labor force in our post exchanges, and they balked at that. They said, "Well, we understand that the people who work in the post exchanges are not paid for out of a line-item in your budget." I mean, they used phrases like that. They knew how we operated.

Q: I'm surprised at even trying to do that, because-

HOLMES: Well, I was shooting big, you know. I'd already gotten a lot out of them, including a huge buck-up in support costs. I wanted them to pay for all of our utilities, all of our housing, on-base and off-base, and they finally agreed to that, and then I wanted them to pay all the labor costs, too, including in the post exchanges. They wouldn't do that. "That's not a line item in your budget; you pay for that out of your exchange profits." I said, "Well, largely we do. That's perfectly true, although there is some appropriated funding that goes into that as well. But yes, largely out of profits." He said, "What would you do with this?" They kept using the phrase windfall. "If we pay for that, it would be a windfall for you?" I said, "Well, we would lower the costs for our families." Then at a critical point in our discussion I said, "I can't believe that the Japanese Government would object to lowering the costs for the families of our service people who are fighting on our behalf - both of us - in Iraq to preserve our energy resources." Well, you know, that element of shame - it worked. They agreed to that finally, although not at that moment. They said that they would have to think about that. This was sort of the penultimate thing. I went back to Washington after this, and I said that I would await their communication as to when I should return to complete this negotiation. I had a phone call about a week later from a senior official in the Foreign Ministry I'd been working with on this, and he said, "We'd like you to come back next week between such-and-such a date and such-and-such a date, and that's important for us because we'd like you to come in the middle there because on either end of your visit will be some important national security meetings, and we'd like you to come right smack at that time, right in the middle of that process, because the whole question of burdensharing will come up." So I wondered about that. I said, sure, I'd be happy to come. I began to have this feeling that they were stage-managing this, because of their interagency problems. I couldn't quite figure it out, but I agreed to go. So I went back and the usual thing. I made my calls at the Foreign Ministry and in the Defense Agency, and it was a cold shower, because it was closing the loop in the final part of a negotiation, including the issue of paying for utilities and paying for the labor force. I had a very bad meeting at the Defense Ministry, and then that night I had dinner with the Foreign Ministry people, and I got nowhere. I mean it was really a stiff-arm. I went to bed that night quite depressed, thinking that we weren't going to get there, at least on this visit. We were scheduled to have a breakfast meeting with the Defense Ministry people at about seven o'clock, and it was a pretty big breakfast, sort of nine on a side. That morning, at about six o'clock, I had a phone call from my counterpart, and he said, "I'd like to meet with you alone, not nine on a side, but just the two of us." So I said that would be fine, because I could tell - something - that they had been doing some soul-searching during the night. I quickly called the lieutenant general, head of our US Forces in Japan, and he said, oh, absolutely, hey, I'm just going to stay out of this, this sounds like they're warming to a deal, go at it. So I had breakfast with this guy, and he said, "Look, we're going to meet all your demands, but you can't say anything yet because I have to fix it with the Finance Ministry and the Foreign Ministry, and it will take me probably a couple of days, so for the rest of today, your time here, you're going to have to play it as if we're still negotiating, and I hope you can go along with that - but we will do this; you will get everything you have requested; this is a guarantee." So I said, "Okay."

Then the next event was later that morning we went to the Foreign Ministry, and there was this huge hall, where on one side of the table there were about 50 Japanese. I'm not exaggerating. I mean, the Foreign Ministry, the Defense Ministry, and their administrative agency that actually administered all of the bases and our relationship. We had about eight people on our side. And right in the middle, opposite me, was the Defense Ministry guy and the Foreign Ministry guy. They'd produced a document. They said, "Well, here's the agreement we're going to sign." I said, "Hey, wait a minute. I've never seen this agreement." This is in both English and Japanese. He said, "Oh, no, don't worry, it's just a draft." I said, "Well, the first time I see it, I'm happy to go through it with you, but on the understanding that this is ad referendum to my government. I can't agree to anything until our own lawyers have looked at it." He said, "No, no, we understand. Don't worry, just please bear with us, walk through this agreement with us." So we went through the agreement. We started right away in the first paragraph of the agreement, there a sentence and then behind it was a second sentence in brackets. Now normally in a negotiation, one side or the other will bracket something that they can't agree to, and you try alternate formulations. I said, "I don't understand why this second version of this same concept is in brackets. We've never negotiated on this." He said, "Oh, that's the Defense Ministry's bracket." I suddenly realized what was going on here and why they wanted me there during these meetings, these bookend meetings of the national security council. They were using me to settle arguments. They didn't want to have confrontations. So we went through that document. He said, "Well, what do you think?" I said, "Well, I like the first formulation." He looked at the Defense Ministry guy and he says, "Done." We went through the entire agreement paragraph by paragraph, and all I had to say was what my preference was. That settled their interagency arguments. I went back to Washington, and in two days, I had a phone call from him and he said, "We have an agreement; we're ready to sign it." And then I produced it, I went through it, and there were some very subsidiary ancillary agreements, and we took it, the Japanese foreign minister came to Washington, and then we had a big ceremony in the treaty room, and Jim Baker signed for the United States, and it was done - and - this is the best part - we got out of that, in a stair-step agreement, over five years, $17 billion out of the Japanese. The second one that happened later when I was in the Defense Department, different job - they kept going up - the second five-year agreement was for $25 billion. So this was the high-water mark of my time in the burdensharing job, the Japanese agreement. It was the best thing that we did.

Q: Well, the basis behind this was that essentially the Japanese were not paying very much for their own defense-

HOLMES: That's right.

Q: That the United States, with its Air Force, military, and Army contingents were-

HOLMES: Mostly Air and Navy, minimal Army.

Q: -Air and Navy, were providing for the Japanese defense, and the Japanese were not.

HOLMES: That's right.

Q: I mean this wasn't hat in hand. The Japanese were not having to spend an exorbitant amount that every other country practically does in building up its military forces.

HOLMES: That's correct. I think their entire armed forces at that time were about 250,000. It was very small. But we did exercise together. I mean our aircraft flew missions together. We had small naval exercises together. But you're absolutely right. We were providing for their defense, and our facilities were gorgeous. They built absolutely the best facilities I've ever seen anyplace for our forces. I mean, hospital, post exchanges, the clubs, the housing at the various bases - because we had F-15's, we had, of course, a huge setup in Yokosuka, our naval base there, and several air bases, and we had extraordinary facilities, much better than what the Japanese forces had, quite frankly.

Q: As a continuation of this, did you have to negotiate or do something to make sure that the PX did lower its prices? I can see a problem there.

HOLMES: No, I didn't get involved in that, but that was obviously handled by US Forces Japan. It all worked, and the proof of the pudding is that every year they did exactly what they said they would do, and the Diet went along with it. That stair-step agreement that cumulatively represented $17 billion, was absolutely right on schedule, and then the following agreement, the fact that it continued and they were able to increase it to $25 billion. So it worked. They were true to their word. Once the Japanese signed up for something, they did it.

Q: Moving over to Korea.

HOLMES: Now, the Koreans were the most difficult negotiators I've ever encountered. They were absolutely incredible, and the first thing I had to endure when I went there with Cheney was a kisaeng party, which was sort of an evening with the equivalent of Korean geishas. I remember going through the receiving line at this party that the Korean defense minister gave. I was negotiating with the assistant minister of defense, who later was defense minister - and after that he got in trouble and got caught with his hand in the cookie jar and was fired - Mr. Kwan was his name. But the defense minister asked me as I went through the receiving line, "Are you here with your wife?" I said, "No, I'm here alone." He said, "Good, we must have a kisaeng party," and he summoned an ROK brigadier general, a Marine, and he told him to arrange a party. So several of us were subjected to this evening where we went to a sort of a little inn out on the outskirts of Seoul, and there were Korean general officers that were with us, and my host was this assistant minister of defense. These ladies, the Korean ladies in their actually very beautiful, primary-color gowns that Korean women wear, and there was a hostess there for each one of us, and a fifth of scotch at each place. They started serving things. There was this horrible thick, white pasty substance which I instinctively knew that I should consume a great deal of. It looked like something that would be used to hang posters up with, and this was to line your stomach. I drank a lot of that, because I could see we were in for a sort of a disagreeable drinking party. Then I remember we had to sing. I sang the British Marine Corps hymn, a cappella, and we danced. Fortunately, there was a curfew at midnight which spared us all a party that would go into the wee hours.

Q: I spent three years in Seoul, and the curfew was the greatest godsend known to man.

HOLMES: Anyway, there was a sort of a bonding process. It was required, and it made a difference. I mean it actually helped in terms of breaking down the sort of bureaucratic barriers and allowed me to develop a relationship with Kwan - although it wasn't the drinking that brought us... because our first sessions were a disaster. I mean it was just no, no, no, hell no was their attitude when I put our requests on the table. But he was an interesting guy because I found out he was a Christian and he and his church had a bible running underground mission going on. They smuggled bibles to Christian cells in North Korea through China. It was quite fascinating, and he told me all about this, and also his loathing for the Japanese and how his family had suffered at their hands during the 30-odd-year occupation. So we got to be pretty good friends. He told me a lot of things about his background. The fact that he was telling me indicated to me that we were getting close. But it was really a struggle, and I went to Seoul a lot, and before going I would always figure out what I thought was the minimum I could accept from the Koreans for that particular round, and then I would very methodically go around and clear that, or establish it, with the Defense Department, with the NSC, and with the State Department, so that they would know that if I didn't get that that I would walk away from it - which I did. I walked away from the agreement twice, and it makes a huge difference, in any negotiation, being prepared to walk away from it. They were stunned the first time I did it. Each time I did it - the two times - I would get a call in the morning saying, "Would you like to have breakfast together?" and they would say things to me like, "We like you, and we don't want you to get in trouble in Washington when you haven't delivered what you've sought, and so we're going to accede to your request, but it will take us a week or so."

Then they would do some back-pedaling, unlike the Japanese. Once you had an agreement with the Japanese it was done. I remember on flying into Seoul, I would sometimes be seated next to an American businessman, and they would tell me stories about negotiating where they literally, as they were leaving, boarding their aircraft, their Korean business counterpart was walking with them practically onto the aircraft still negotiating something that had been agreed two days earlier.

So it was difficult, and I was not as successful in Korea as I was in Japan, but I still got a program that got us about $300 million a year. I think our US Forces in Korea were surprised that we got as much as we did. I got a lot of help. I always started my visits there with the staff of the US Forces Korea, and of course I would go up and see the CINC and tell him what I was doing. But we made progress, we did make progress there - enough so that we were able to increase the burdensharing portion. Again it was an escalating amount over a period of years, and it was sufficient to satisfy Congress that we were making progress there.

Q: Well, one of the things - a cultural note - in dealing with the Koreans, their talking about not getting you into trouble - this is one of the things that's always tricky with the Koreans because often at middle management or something they're told to go out and do something, and if they don't do it, they really are in trouble. I mean they don't look upon this as just being a negotiation. They tell somebody to go do it. They're supposed to come back with their shield or on it. So it makes it very difficult to deal with these people, because they have a much more personal stake in a negotiation than we do. We go and say, "I gave it my best shot." And it didn't work? Well, we shrug it off and say we'll try again. But it's not on your back. But for them it gets personal.

HOLMES: Well, it does get personal, and you're absolutely right, and I had some very knowledgeable people who were helping me, including very good people in our embassy there who spoke fluent Korean and who understood the culture and explained things like that to me. So I was always very careful to call on a defense minister, not at the beginning, but towards the end of my visit there, and to always praise his negotiators and to say how difficult it was negotiating with them because they were so tough - you know - as a way of doing exactly what you're talking about, to sort of make it easier for them if they didn't get quite what they wanted, you know, what they were willing to deliver to us. You're absolutely right.

But during the several years I was negotiating there, there was a transformation in their culture. One was they clamped down on entertainment. When I first got there, I went to an extraordinary ice capades after dinner, where the skaters were bare-breasted - I mean, it was the most amazing show - I'd never seen ice capades like that, but it was obviously very expensive. But towards the end of my period there, we were reduced to going to the Korean officers' club. I had asked for Korean food, because they were always serving American and French food. I said, "I'd like Korean food." So the last time was a very low-budget entertainment at the officers' club, and we had a Korean dinner, and that was fine with me. But they also had been discouraged from playing so much golf. That was an introduction of the new president of Korea who was trying to get all of his generals and senior officials from spending all of their time on the golf course.

Q: When I was there, back in the late '70s, that's where most of the business was done, on the golf course. I'm a lousy golf player.

HOLMES: There was a huge negotiation going on at that point at the level of Secretary of Defense and the ministry over the golf course on our big complex-

Q: South Post.

HOLMES: -which they got eventually.

Q: Oh, yes.

HOLMES: That was probably the most important strategic piece of real estate in the country. Forget the-

Q: Well, yes. Most of them belonged to it anyway. In fact, when I was there, Park Chung Hee used to go play golf there, cleaned everybody out and he'd go play golf.

Did the Koreans warm up to the idea of doing anything regarding the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and our Desert Storm, Desert Shield? Did they get involved in that?

HOLMES: I think we did have some support from them. It was not an issue in our negotiations.

Q: I wouldn't be surprised that they did something. For one thing, they had laborers there.

HOLMES: As I recall, I think they provided a hospital unit, a rather extensive medical brigade - but it wasn't an issue. It was no problem for them. After all, the Koreans, of course, fought with us in Vietnam. They had substantial forces in Vietnam, and particularly their marines were tough. The Vietnamese avoided combat with them after they'd trapped them on one particular occasion, where they'd baited a trap for them, and they opened up a place and allowed them to come in and then closed the ring around them and then destroyed this North Vietnamese unit by Tae Kwan Do, during the night. The next morning, they were all dead, the Vietnamese were, and they invited the press in. That unit didn't have too many problems after that. They always went with bags of rice every place. They gave rice to the Vietnamese villagers wherever they went. They were quite skillful.

Q: The problem was that the Viet Cong didn't mess with them, but also they didn't go out very far. They had their area, and the orders were don't get into big fights.

HOLMES: Yes, that's right.

Q: The Viet Cong wasn't going to mess with them anyway, so they-

HOLMES: They sort of protected their area and that's it.

Q: Well, now-

HOLMES: No kisaeng activities for them.

Q: What about the Philippines at this time? I mean by this time I would imagine the Philippines would have been of interest.

HOLMES: Yes, the Philippines was of interest. I didn't have in my responsibilities in burdensharing much to do with the Philippines, but I did go. I would go on these trips with Cheney, and I remember on one occasion we did visit the Philippines, and that was fun for me because I got to stay with probably my oldest friend, Nick Platt, who was our ambassador in the Philippines at the time, and we had some very interesting discussions. I mean they had interesting discussions. It was really no burdensharing agenda, but they were, of course, in the beginning part of negotiating for Clark Field and Subic Bay, which later, of course, particularly after Mt. Pinatubo exploded and covered Clark Field in ash, became, in fact, the sort of coup de grace for our presence there, although it probably was a good... It had to happen at some time. After all, the United States had two colonies, basically. We had the Philippines and we had Panama. At some juncture that was bound to end. It had to. It was happening all over the world. We were not a colonial power, but in fact, we had two colonies. It was an exceedingly difficult negotiation with the Filipinos, and now, apparently, I'm told, from people who have been there recently, they have turned Subic Bay, that wonderful complex which it broke our Navy's heart to lose that, but they have turned it into an industrial park that is working. It's actually helping the Philippine economy.

Q: New Zealand, I imagine, was out of bounds at that time.

HOLMES: I don't know whether we covered this in an earlier session or not, but yes, it was out of bounds because basically - I had sort of suggested it to Shultz when the New Zealanders refused to continue to abide by the neither-confirm-nor-deny policy with respect to the presence or not of nuclear weapons on our warships - we drummed them out of ANZUS, and it became an Australian-US relationship. It was very tough for the Australians to do that, but they agreed. I remember the first meeting we had in San Francisco, chaired by Shultz and his counterpart, where the New Zealanders were not present. It was tough.

Q: How about in Australia? Was there any particular problem with Australia when you were in burdensharing?

HOLMES: No. Of course the big catch, of course, was the - how much was it? - $50 billion we got from the Japanese and other allies for the conduct of the Kuwait campaign. I was consulted a little bit, and I worked on the margins on that, but basically that burdensharing effort was done by the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of the Treasury. Bush sent his Cabinet out to beat the bushes for the money. Basically it was done at that level. It was extraordinary, and it will never happen again. The Japanese, who of course- (end of tape)

The Saudis, who paid a huge amount to cover the costs of that war, had a serious cash-flow problem, and they actually had to go into the international financial marketplace and take out two Japanese-led syndicated loans to meet their payments to us. I mean it was tough, even for them. They weren't used to that.

Q: By the way, on this burdensharing business, what was the role of Baker?

HOLMES: No role. Baker played absolutely no role. I dealt exclusively at that level - at the Cabinet level - with the Secretary of Defense. It just worked out that way. Now basically, Larry Eagleburger, who was Baker's deputy, told me, he said, "Come and let me know what's going on from time to time." So I would go and see Larry every five months or so and just sit down with him and brief him on where we were, and that was it. I mean, that was my reporting chain. The only role that Baker played was when he signed, in the Treaty Room on the Seventh Floor of the State Department, the agreement with the Japanese. I briefed him for about five minutes before it, and he said fine.

Q: It sounds like a perfect relationship. No point in having a Secretary of State mucking around.

HOLMES: Well, you know... Of course, I worked very closely with the Bureau of Asian and Pacific Affairs in the State Department, at the sort of level of assistant secretary, deputy assistant secretary, office director. I worked with anybody who could give me the information that I needed, who could make it happen for me. It didn't matter whether it was the Desk officer or the Secretary of Defense.

Q: Because you were a creature of Congress, did you keep anybody in Congress informed?

HOLMES: Yes, I did. I would occasionally go up and brief members on the Hill - but perfunctorily and not frequently, about once a year.

Q: Turning to NATO, do we have time to finish up NATO, do you think?

HOLMES: Sure.

Q: Why don't we talk about NATO then?

HOLMES: That's the shortest piece, anyway, because I had the least success with NATO. Basically, what I tried to do with NATO was to get some of the NATO international funds. I tried to get a larger participation, particularly with the Germans. I spent a lot of time visiting in Bonn talking with the Defense Ministry, and there I had to deal with the Finance Ministry, and they were just rock hard. I couldn't get through to them.

I got practically nothing out of the Germans, but I had an idea that I think would have helped us a lot if the Administration and the Congress had allowed it, which they didn't. About that time we were going through residual value negotiations with the Germans. We were closing bases and consolidating bases throughout the Federal Republic, and under the arrangements that we had with the German Government, we were required when we gave up bases to settle the residual value. Now we felt that the Germans would owe us money, because we had put a certain amount of investment into German bases that we had occupied since the war. The Germans were very clever in keeping these payments to a minimum, because they would say, "Well, that's right, you put a certain amount in, but there also has been a deleterious effect on the environment. In your motor pool parks and other places, there has been contamination of the soil. There have been impact areas where you have fired weapons and dropped bombs, ruined agricultural areas." So the Germans, of course, were pumping up the environmental costs as we were trying to get as much of the residual value back in the final base settlement as we could.

So I had some discussions with both the US Army in Germany and with some German officers who suggested to me with a wink and a nod, that if in our consolidated base structure we would ensure that the contracts for base maintenance would be available in increasing numbers to German contractors and if the money that they would eventually pay us in residual value payments would stay in Germany, then they wouldn't fight so hard on the environmental costs. They sent me a very clear message. A couple of US brigadier generals and a colonel that I was working with on the Army side thought that this was genuine, and they had already done some preparatory work on this. So I thought this was a terrific idea - rather than forcing the Germans to make out a check (which wouldn't go to the Defense Department anyway; it would go back to the Treasury), if the residual value payments could be recycled into our total costs for our remaining bases in Germany and if, under an open bidding process, the German contractors could get a better deal and the result would be that we would be well taken care of and the bases would run and the money would stay in Germany, I thought it was absolutely the right way to go. I saw this as a sort of an adjunct to a burdensharing agreement. So I worked very hard. We developed a plan, we made a proposal, we sent it to Washington. People liked it, but the Congress didn't like it. They wanted the German Treasury to send money to the United States. We argued about it. There were people that went to the Hill and tried to defend it, and we got a little bit of it going. Here and there, there were a few contracts that were wrapped that helped, but we missed a big opportunity there. We could have had a very substantial system and payments from the Germans if we had been able to apply it in large scale across all of our facilities in Germany. It didn't work. So on the burdensharing front I didn't make much progress in Germany.

The last thing I worked on, just as I was leaving office was an arrangement... I was working with CENTCOM. I went down to Tampa a couple of times on something where I thought we could do a burdensharing arrangement in the Gulf where we would get those allies, European and Japanese, who benefitted the most from our continuing presence in the Gulf, to pay some of the burdensharing costs for our forces in the Gulf. I worked with CENTCOM, and we had a pretty good concept and the beginnings of a plan, and about that time, my time was up.

Q: In dealing with NATO and all, I would have thought that the breaking up of the Soviet Union would have raised all sorts of both opportunities and problems. I mean all of a sudden you've got NATO kind of wondering what the hell it was going to be doing.

HOLMES: Well, don't forget, at that time... I was just finishing up that job as, after all, the Wall came down in, what was it, December, '89?

Q: Yes.

HOLMES: So that was being negotiated during that period but-

Q: The Soviet Union didn't break up until about '92 or something.

HOLMES: Yes, it was really not until about '92 that that happened.

Q: So it wasn't a particular issue at that time.

HOLMES: Well, it was an issue between our governments, obviously, but not something that I was involved in on the burdensharing front. Baker was, of course, doing a heroic... I think one of the finest things that Jim Baker did was to negotiate with the Soviets to allow the unification of Germany with Germany continuing to be a full participating member of NATO provided that we didn't station US forces in what had been Eastern Germany. It was different for the German Army, of course, but that negotiation, which is... I mean, talk about unsung heroes - some day... Well, it's beginning to happen now - people are beginning to recognize that this was really an extraordinary negotiation that was carried out by Baker, very successful. It brought out, he used his best talents as a negotiator.

Q: Yes. Okay, well, then, we'll stop at this point, in '93, when you left being the "burdensharer." You laid your burdensharing down, I guess.

HOLMES: Right.

Q: Where did you go?

HOLMES: To the Defense Department.

Q: Okay.

HOLMES: I was offered a job by Secretary Les Aspen and Undersecretary Frank Wisner to come to the Defense Department and be the assistant secretary for special operations and low-intensity conflict.

Q: Okay, and we'll pick it up next time there.

HOLMES: Okay.

Q: Great.

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Today is June 22, 1999. Allen, in '93, you're off to the Department of Defense. You were there from '93 to when?

HOLMES: I was there from November of '93 to the end of January, '99, when I left and started my retirement proceedings in the Department of State.

Q: Could you explain what your job was and where did it fit within the Department of Defense?

HOLMES: Well, I took on a job that had been created in 1986 at the time that the special operations community of the armed forces were gathered together in one command known as the Special Operations Command and given various special responsibilities and resources including the ability to budget for research, development, testing, evaluation, and procurement of special-operations-peculiar equipment. They felt at the time that they needed somebody at the assistant secretary level to act as a kind of service secretariat for what was a unique command and to oversee the policy and resources of that special operations command. So that was the job I was recruited into. It was my charter responsibility, but I had other responsibilities as well.

Q: We'll talk about the other responsibilities as this goes, but could you define - I mean we're talking about people who are going to be reading this in a different era and all - what do we mean by "special operations" at that particular time?

HOLMES: Well, it was a unique job that in terms of special operations sort of went against the grain of the traditional organization and mission of the armed forces. Basically, special operations included all of the commando-type elements of the armed forces - the Navy Seals, that used to be known as Underwater Demolition Teams at the time of the Korean War, and later became the Seals; the Air Force, where all of the air commandos, the C-130 aircraft that were used for infiltration and exfiltration of commandos and rangers; the AC-130 gunships that were used for close air support; the intelligence gathering aircraft; the PAVE LOW helicopters, arguably the most complex helicopter in existence - all of that grouping. Then the Army - the majority of the special operations force was Army - included all of the special forces, the Green Berets, the Ranger Regiment, the Special Operations Aviation Regiment at Fort Campbell, the Civil affairs people, and the Psychological Operations Command. All of them were included in the Special Operations Command of the Army, which was part of the Special Operations Joint Command. There was another unit which is difficult to talk about in an unclassified history, but let it suffice to say that it was made up of "special mission units" of both Army and Navy and components that were available for the full range of difficult counter-terrorism types of missions and combat missions as well.

Q: We hear the term "Delta Force" used.

HOLMES: Yes, that is the popular term, and that, in fact, was the Army component of that command.

Q: Well, you know, those of us that have been around for a while know about the military. There's always been this annoyance, from World War II on, the commandos and all taking the cream off and going off on these special missions and all, which sort of raises hob with regular units and all. I would have thought that you would have found yourself in the very difficult position with sort of the mainline forces looking upon you all as the Cinderellas, getting special money, and all that.

HOLMES: Yes, it was very difficult. Beginning back in 1986 approximately - that was, of course, several years before I arrived on the scene - the formation of the Special Operations Command met the combined resistance of all the services. First of all, they didn't like the fact that their special operations people were being removed from the regular services and put into a special command. Traditionally when there were periods of cutbacks, that cycle that the Defense Department like other departments of government goes through, they found it convenient to use their special operations people to cut, when they had to take cuts. The Army, for example, was very oriented towards the "heavy" Army, towards armor and heavy artillery. After all, this command was born during the Cold War, when our mission was to withstand the Soviet Army across the north German plain or through the Fulda Gap, and so their major budget requests were directed towards improving, basically, their heavy armament. So the idea of special units - light infantry trained in special tactics - were a sort of nice-to-have add-on to what their main concentration was on. Now what was remarkable about the formation of this unit was the prescience of then-Senator Bill Cohen and Sam Nunn and Representative Dan Daniels, who at the height of the Cold War, with the emphasis on strategic systems and heavy armor and so forth, had the prescience to look beyond the Cold War to a day when it would be important to have a command like this with its own resources - and that really is the key. Something called Major Force Program 11 (MFP-11) was a special budget for the Special Operations Command. No other command has its own budget. The commander in chief of the Special Operations Command had what they call head-of-agency authority, which allowed him to work with a budget of over $3 billion. Most of that is a classic Defense Department budget. The majority, over 50 percent, went to pay allowances and training. But they did have their own development budget basically to perform research, development, testing, and evaluation of special-operations-peculiar equipment. What they did was to take the normal equipment that was available in the armed services and outfit the special operators with those and then adapt some of that equipment to the needs of their mission and also develop and procure additional equipment. This is unique, and it did incite a certain jealousy among the traditional commands. Now you have to understand that the command basically is a training command. They take the cream - the selection process is rigorous in these training programs - the cream of the Army, Navy, and air and helicopter pilots and develop them, train them, select them, and then feed them back to the regional war-fighting commands, the five regional commands, some of them assigned on a regular basis and others available for assignment based on the mission that might be given a particular-

Q: So they're not just a sitting group. They train, put them back, and then they can call in when they need it.

HOLMES: That's right. An example would be in the early period of the Bosnia effort, the intervention force and the stabilization force - IFOR and SFOR. During that period at least half of the 352nd Special Operations Group of the Air Force Special Operations Command, which is stationed in England, in Mendenhall, was forward-deployed in Brindisi, in Italy. They had C-130s there for rescue operations. The had some Pave Low 53 J helicopters. They had some AC-130 gunships to provide support. They had a platoon of Navy Seals there as well, and their mission was to rescue downed flyers, basically. That was their major mission. They would rotate them out of England and then when they needed reinforcements - because the AC-130 gunships, for example, are never assigned forward on a permanent basis; they're always kept back at Hurlburt Field, which is the headquarters of the Air Force Special Operations Command, and then as needed, they're deployed forward and assigned to the regional CINC and as part of, in that case, the European Special Operations Command. There is a small unit. The European and the Pacific ones were the two most robust, probably 1,800 to 2,000 people permanently deployed as part of that command and then reinforced as necessary from assets drawn from the United States. If they needed for an operation, let's say, an airfield take-down operation, and they needed a battalion of Rangers, then the Ranger Regiment part of the Army Special Operations Command would forward-deploy a battalion, integrated into that force under the command of the regional CINC, and then that mission would be carried out in that way. But it caused a lot of jealousy. It was fiercely resisted by the services when this command was first set up.

Q: The command was first set up when?

HOLMES: It was 1986, and by the end of 1987 they were really fully in business. But they were fiercely resisted, and the Navy, for example, never completely agreed to give up all of its seals, so that the naval special warfare command in Coronado, which was the Navy part of Special Operations, had to rotate their Seals in and out of the fleet as well, because the fleet commanders liked to have detachments of Seals on board for their mission. So there was always a certain amount of jealousy there, although that situation has been improved tremendously over the years, as the command grew in respect and was finally recognized. I would say that by 1994 or 95, the command was fully recognized and greatly appreciated because of their capabilities and the kind of missions that the armed forces in the '90s were being asked to perform. They really came into their own at that point.

Q: Well, was this command the ultimate result of the failed mission to rescue the hostages in Iran?HOLMES: Yes. You're absolutely right. What they called Desert One, which was the place where the rescue mission was aborted in the spring of 1980 - if memory serves me correctly. The takeover of the embassy in Teheran was November 4, approximately, 1979. By the following spring, the administration had put together a rescue force which was made up of Air and Army commandos, and they had never trained together, their equipment was inappropriate for the mission, it was skimpy, it was hastily convened. I mean, it was a classic example of bad preparation, bad equipment, and bad planning. It ended in failure - despite the gallantry of individual members - in the desert when a couple of helicopters were down. When they aborted the mission, in the sandstorm and the darkness taking off, they crashed into each other and had quite a few losses. Well, that led to various investigative commissions. One of them, I believe, was carried out by Admiral Holloway, and then after a number of soul-searching examinations of this failure, a conclusion was that the armed services needed to have a regular special operations unit of some sort to be able to carry out this kind of mission. The goal was always to have equipment - helicopters and/or aircraft - that could depart and carry out a mission under the cover of one period of darkness, because that was one of the problems in Desert One, the question of refueling - the aircraft that they had did not have long legs and allow them to get all the way to Teheran and... I mean, basically they had a very thorough plan and some very good people recruited who were already on the ground in Teheran. I mean they had special operators that were already there, Farsi-speaking, that had made contact with people and who were doing the arrangements at the other end. When things went sour, they just quietly disappeared, got out of Iran. But that was really the crucible within which the Special Operations Command of today was born, and it is a remarkable growth in capability because today there's no question but that they're the finest special operations capability anywhere in the world - highly motivated, extremely well trained, well equipped, well led, and now, as I say, fully respected and integrated into the war-fighting commands. In fact, for example in Europe, the real discovery was General Joulwan, when he was the commander in chief of the European Command. He had not known much about his special operations command until they had to mount the Bosnia mission, and all of a sudden he had this superb capability available, and he suddenly began to notice that for example the finest helicopter pilots in the world... They did all their training at night, and they could perform small miracles in mobility and the ability to get in in a quiet way and do things. Then when Secretary Brown's aircraft went down-

Q: They crashed - Secretary of Commerce Brown was killed in Dubrovnik, I think.

HOLMES: It wasn't Dubrovnik but it was near. It was in Croatia. I can't remember the name of the town, but it was a remote area, and it crashed, and it was basically the Special Operations Command of Europe that went in, found the body, got him out. They barely had time to do their laundry after that when they were called upon to perform really an extraordinary rescue mission of our embassy in Monrovia. So by the time of those sort of three very difficult missions in rapid succession, the commander-in-chief of the European Command was absolutely sold on them, as was his successor, Wes Clark. They did some remarkable work, and remarkable work in Bosnia as well.

Q: You were part of the-

HOLMES: Yes, I didn't explain that. Let me think where we fit. As you know, the Defense Department is basically divided into several components. There are the services, the three services and the Marine Corps as part of the naval service; and then there are the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff that supports them, and they are completely integrated and joint. There are the defense agencies, and they are many - they are legion - agencies that carry out special research and intelligence - DIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, for example. Then there is the office of the Secretary of Defense, a very large office. The senior civilian staff of the Department of Defense, led by the Secretary of Defense, the deputy secretary, and then the four under secretaries - we used to joke about it and say the four under secretaries were responsible for things, people, money, and words. The things, of course, were the enormous research and acquisition budget. The people were personnel. Money was the comptroller. The undersecretary for policy was in charge of words. This is sort of a military joke. But our office was in that part of the Department of Defense. When I first arrived, Secretary Aspen had been doing some experimentation with the civilian side of the Defense Department and had created... He had taken what had been three assistant secretaryships and had expanded them into six policy areas. Well, that had a sort of an unhappy wobbly history, and eventually, by I would say two and one-half years later, we were back down to three. My job, the SOLIC, the special operations and low-intensity conflict assistant secretaryship, stayed throughout that and, in fact, acquired additional responsibilities, so that during my last two years in the job I basically had five deputy assistant secretaries. It was a lot of work. One, Policy and Missions, which contained in, I would say, the sort of flagship responsibility of that office, which was combating terrorism - both the offense and the defense, counter-terrorism and antiterrorism force protection - which of course acquired huge new responsibilities after the twin bombings in Saudi Arabia culminating in the disastrous one at the Khobar Towers. There was also something called Forces and Resources, which was basically a budget-support analysis staff that worked within the Department of Defense and helped the budget people in Tampa, Florida, at MacDill Air Force Base, where the Special Operations Command had its headquarters, work on their program operations memorandum, their budget, every year, guiding it through the thickets of the Defense Department and working with the committees. They provided remarkable continuity because they were civil servants several of whom had been there from the beginning of the creation of this office, and they were invaluable to the people at the headquarters in helping them get through the whole budget cycle and maintain the integrity of the budget and avoid raids and provide explanations and the techniques of putting together a good budget presentation. So that was another one. About a year into the Aspen administration, about the time that Aspen left the Defense Department, the very large counter-drug office, which had been in another part of the Defense Department, came to us as a deputy assistant secretaryship, with a very large budget. When it first arrived it was over a billion dollars, and we did cut that way back in the process of analysis and off-sites and analysis and help from the Congress that was quite willing to cut it back, so that was a very large, I would say, horizontally integrated office that had its own tiny budget shop and that also had... They had two missions basically - supply reduction and to work with the President's counter-drug program and all the agencies of the government that were involved in this, and that was training American law enforcement and training law enforcement and military forces particularly along the Andean Ridge but also in Thailand to go to the source of the drugs that were coming into the United States and to try to disrupt that activity, and working obviously with the State Department and the DEA and others. Most of the money in that program went to supply reduction.

But also we had a very vigorous demand reduction program within the Department of Defense, and we supervised that program, because you'll recall that at the end of the Vietnam War the armed services had a major drug problem. It was a disaster. And thanks to some very dedicated officers who stayed on after Vietnam and were determined to rebuild the Army, people like Barry McCaffrey, who ended up as a four-star commander in chief of the Southern Command and then resigned his commission and became the drug coordinator for the President in a cabinet position. He was one of those who fought that fight, and the result was a very happy one, because today in the armed forces drug use is about one and a half percent, and it's based on a zero tolerance policy. In other words, if you get caught, you're out. There are no second chances, unless some chemical imbalance produces a false positive.

Q: They can check and recheck.

HOLMES: But this is a very vigorous program carried out by the services and supervised and funded out of the counter-drug office within SOLIC. So that was a very big program. Then we also had peacekeeping and humanitarian affairs, and I had done some rearranging of the boxes in this organization because, one, we had multiple reorganizations during the five years that I was there in the office of Secretary of Defense. It was constantly being reviewed and reshaped, and one responsibility I hung onto from the beginning was the humanitarian de-mining policy and operations. I did that because our office basically created that. I take a certain amount of satisfaction in having pushed that myself because I saw the need, and it was a perfect mission for special operations forces, bringing their remarkable skills, their language skills, their ability to work with people in small units, in twos and threes and fours, and to make a difference that was vastly disproportionate to their small numbers. The Green Berets, the Special Forces, the Psychological Operations people, and the Civil Affairs people were the ones who did that program, and I was right. It was a wonderful mission for them. It was also very good for the United States and for the CINCs around the world because typically what happened, taking Cambodia as an example because it was an early example, the Cambodians asked for some help because they were losing people in villages every day. Dozens of people were either being killed or losing limbs as a result of the enormous infestation of land mines in their country. So the first group that went in there was a psychological operations major and two non-commissioned officers, and they stayed for several months, and they put together a mine awareness program. First of all, they surveyed the situation. They put together a mine awareness program, designed a sort of a psychological plan, publicity basically, and they even hired a couple of Cambodians to do a comic book in the Khmer language with drawings of children wandering in a field and finding a land mine and then being told to put a ring of stones around it and then walking off to inform a village elder or teacher or a soldier of what had been found. On the inside of this little comic book, there was photograph of the 10 or 12 different kinds of land mines that were infesting, basically, Cambodian soil. That was the first thing. The Cambodian Government wrote an incredible message of gratitude and praise for this operation and begged the American to come back and train them. So phase two then became a train-the-trainers operation. This was undertaken by the first battalion of the First Special Forces Group, stationed in Okinawa. They even had a couple of people who spoke Khmer and who were able to go in there. They trained several platoons of Cambodian, quote, engineers. I mean, when they got there, there was nothing. They didn't even have boots. They had no military discipline or a sense of unit or mission, so basically, they took them and gave them basic training, managed to get boots and khaki shorts and tee shirts for them, and by the end of the year they had two platoons who were clearing roads and fields of land mines. It was an incredible operation, and they didn't work alone. They also coordinated what they were doing with the civilian Mine Action Center in Phnom Penh, because there were a number of civilian de-miners and also doctors who were working on the rehabilitation/prosthetics part of the problem. It was an enormous problem. But anyway, it was a highly successful program, and this spread, and I think at this point we have either been in or are in maybe as many as 28 countries - Eritrea, Ethiopia, Central America, Namibia, Mozambique, Laos (where there was more unexploded ordnance and mines, and they were able to adapt to that and get a program going there as well). But it's been a remarkable program that has helped a lot of people. It motivated the troops. They loved helping people. It also allowed them to train and use their military skills. We had a hell of a time with the Congress getting this thing off the ground in '93 and '94 because they couldn't understand why the Defense Department should do a program like this. They said, "This sounds like an aid program. It should be done by AID." And yes, it could have been. There were civilian mine actions, but the point was that with the remarkable capabilities and the discipline and the ability to live in the field and to speak local tongues - not at Foreign Service 4/4 level, but at a sort of a 2/2 or 2+ level - these Special Forces and Civil Affairs people were perfect for this mission.

Q: Well, absolutely.

HOLMES: They also acted - and this we don't talk about, we didn't talk about very much, but they also were also the eyes and ears of the commander-in-chief of that regional command, because these were mostly in countries where we did not have established DOD-Ministry of Defense programs. Many of the countries were former enemies or battlegrounds, and so-

Q: We're getting the lay of the land.

HOLMES: Absolutely.

Q: How things worked, at the right level.

HOLMES: So anyway, that was, I think, a real success story for the Special Forces and Civil Affairs people, and they did a wonderful job and are continuing to do this job.

Q: Was this mainly a request from the countries?

HOLMES: Finally the word got around, and we publicized it, obviously, through the Department of State and through the attachï¿½s. Typically an ambassador would send in a message and ask for a survey team to come out very quickly, and then that would lead, depending on what they found, in rapid succession to a mine awareness program, and then a train-the-trainers program, and then they would set up the programs and they would do what they called "sustainment training." Once it was up and running, they would send back a warrant officer or a couple of people from that particular regional Special Forces Group to check on the program, that is, to kind of give some advice on how it might be improved or to spot any problems with the program. So this was terrific, and that was part of the... I shifted that operation into the Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance part of the SOLIC, and today, they have been incredible busy. Just to give you an example of what they have been doing today for Kosovo - before the bombing campaign was over all the countries were building refugee camps, in Macedonia and in Albania, we built, basically, and our people in SOLIC- (end of tape)

So they supervised the construction of the camp at Fort Dix that received the Kosovar refugees that came to the United States and then three camps in the zone. These were 20,000-people camps, and basically, by the time the bombing war was over, they had two in operation and a third on the drawing board. So they were very busy, and that was right on top of the Hurricane Mitch operation, where they also were extremely-

Q: In Honduras?

HOLMES: That was in Central America. It basically hit all the countries. It think Honduras was probably the worst, but they were all hit, and it was a huge operation, carried out by Southern Command and supported by, again, this Office of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance. All the peacekeeping operations around the world, mostly observer missions but many of the UN missions have US members, and we participated in the design and funding of these missions and worked with the Department of Peacekeeping at the UN.

Q: Wasn't there almost a permanent one in the Sinai, now?

HOLMES: Well, the one in the Sinai has been there ever since the Camp David Accords, and I have my own view on that. I tried to begin to phase out the US battalion because I thought - even though relations continued to be tense, particularly during the Netanyahu Government, relations between Israel and Egypt were tense - the Sinai is policed. There is an international mission there headed by a Scandinavian general officer, but we have always rotated a battalion of paratroops, which seems like an enormous commitment-

Q: And a waste.

HOLMES: Well, but it was part of the accord. I took some stabs at it with the State Department, and my blade was broken very quickly. They simply didn't want to even talk about it. Now I think this will happen because, clearly, with the downsizing and reduction of the size of the armed forces and particularly highly trained troops like airborne, it is a waste in today's world. I mean it's a very low priority. It's something that now has endured all these years and works. I realized I was in trouble, that it would be very difficult if not impossible to make headway on that, when we went into a tremendous flail after the destruction of the Khobar Towers billet.

Q: This was a terrorist explosion.

HOLMES: A terrorist explosion that took place in June of 1996 in Saudi Arabia, near Dhahran, where there was an Air Force composite wing that flew the missions out of Saudi Arabia to enforce the no-fly zone in southern Iraq. That was their mission. It was largely an American mission, but there were also some British and French aircraft that participated, that flew the missions out of there. Some of the pilots were billeted in this apartment building, a place called Khobar Towers, outside of Dhahran, and they were hit with an enormous truck with explosives equivalent to somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 pounds. The losses were high, and after that - which was the second attack against our forces in Saudi Arabia, the first having been in, I believe it was, seven months earlier, November, '95, in Riyadh, and that was an attack against our mission to train the Saudi national guard - so after these two attacks, the Defense Department went to general quarters - I can only describe it that way - and for three months, Secretary Perry and General Shalikashvili really turned the place upside down, and we went through a major revision of our whole antiterrorism force protection program. We were in the middle of it in SOLIC because that had been one of our charter responsibilities. In fact, our office already, at the time that the Oklahoma City disaster occurred, had the only sort of comprehensive handbook, which we had put together, on all the different aspects of physical counter-terrorism and training and setback distances from roads. When the chief of staff of the White House gathered the whole government together to do something about he safety of the federal buildings in Washington and elsewhere, this little document we had became a bestseller - and was a good platform from which to embark on a major revision of the force protection policies of the Defense Department, from training, physical protection, and development budgets and so forth. This was a huge program that ensued, and a successful one - so successful, in fact, that with the hardening of military facilities around the world, the terrorists were on the prowl and looking for vulnerable embassies, and when they attacked our two embassies in East Africa - which were not in high-threat areas - it caused us all to rethink the whole process of protection for US installations abroad and to not place so much emphasis on being in a high-threat, medium-threat, or low-threat area but instead to look at the vulnerabilities of our installations. Because certainly in neither Dar Es Salaam nor Nairobi could you describe it as a high-threat area with a well-known high profile terrorist group. There was criminality, yes - that had been there for a long time - but anyway... This occupied a lot of our time.

Q: Could you talk a bit about-

HOLMES: Excuse me, I didn't finish. I was describing the organization of SOLIC. I talked about the counter-drug section and the peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance one, and then finally, the fifth unit was basically the Office of Latin American Affairs. It was the first time that SOLIC had received a regional, as opposed to a functional, office under its responsibility, and this was part of this reorganization, and the thinking was that given the very large stake that the Defense Department had in counter-terrorism and particularly counter-drugs in Latin America, that if you were going to redistribute the portfolios, it made sense to put Latin America in SOLIC. That became part of our responsibility as well, and we did a lot of work with the Argentines and the Chileans and the Brazilians and the Mexicans out of that operation.

Q: Well, you are and were at that time a Foreign Service officer, and the Pentagon has its own - it's ISA, isn't it?

HOLMES: Yes, International Security Affairs.

Q: An awful lot of what you all were pointed towards doing was doing something in case something happened in some foreign country. How did you relate to this ISA?

HOLMES: Oh, very well. Actually, we had excellent relationships within the policy area and worked very closely. For example, I worked a lot with the deputy assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs in ISA because our office did some very special liaison work with the Israelis on counter-terrorism. This was born out of the President's visit to Sharm el-Sheikh, after the succession of human bombings that had taken place in Israel and Rabin, you recall, was assassinated and the government was getting quite panicked about how to stop this and asked for help. So there was first a conference in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt, where it was quite remarkable to see the Israeli delegation going around shaking hands with Gulf Arabs. It was basically what to do about the common problem of Terrorism. I was the DOD representative on that trip. We then went to Israel, and I stayed behind for a couple of days to put together a program of cooperation with the Israeli Government, particularly with the IDF with their Ministry of Defense, people I had worked with before as assistant secretary for political-military affairs in the State Department, so it was kind of a little bit of a homecoming. We put together a special program in two fiscal years for a total of $100 million to help them install anti-terrorism equipment, detectors, sensors along their border posts and then also training. We learned from that, too. We had an exchange of visits where, as we began to worry about our own homeland defense against terrorism in the United States (because, of course, for years we seemed to be immune from it - you know, it will never happen in America), with the bombing of the Twin Towers, the World Trade Center in New York, America lost its innocence... It was suddenly, My God, we have terrorism in the United States. We began increasingly, inter-agency - not just the Defense Department, working across the board particularly with the Justice Department, FEMA, and the Public Health Service, and began to look at our own problems within the United States. The Israelis had done a remarkable thing in setting up their own home defense command after experiencing the missile bombings that took place against Israel during the Gulf War, all the Scuds that rained down on Haifa and Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. When that was over, the Israelis decided that they would carve out of their armed forces a special home defense command. We visited them and learned a lot from the kinds of things they were doing to protect their population and to train them, and we had a number of exchanges that were extremely interesting. Basically, it was a two-way street, because we provided some funding and some equipment for them, but we got a lot of ideas from them as well.

Q: Well, now, can you talk about - you had three secretaries of defense while you were there - Les Aspen, William Perry, and then William Cohen.

HOLMES: That's correct, yes.

Q: How did they, each one, from your perspective, how did you deal with them?

HOLMES: Well, I had access to all of them, because under the statute that created my job, I was supposed to have access and direct access if I needed to have it. Only on one occasion did I have to go directly to Secretary Perry about a problem that we had on the Hill where I was testifying, but usually I worked very closely with Walt Slocombe - first Frank Wisner. Frank wasn't there very long. Frank was there about as long as Les Aspen was, which was basically the first year, and then he went off to be ambassador in India and was replaced by his deputy, Walt Slocombe. So I worked very closely with Walt in that whole period.

A lot depended on the style of the individual secretary. Aspen was very approachable, and he liked to have contact with his assistant secretaries as well has his under secretaries because he was an ideas guy, and he loved to sit around late at night and churn up ideas and new ways of attacking problems. But as I say, my overlap with him was only a few months because I didn't get to the Defense Department until November, and he was close to the end of his year. Actually, he was in office just slightly less than a year.

Bill Perry, whom I'd known in the Carter Administration, was very approachable, and liked to have a lot of contact with the people - not only assistant secretaries, but also the Desk officers, the people that were really knowledgeable about the problems that he would inevitably have to deal with. So in preparing of program decisions or visits by foreign leaders, Bill Perry inevitably had the Desk officer present and the assistant secretary and brought them into the conversation, would invite you to speak and participate. That was his style, reminiscent of the way George Shultz operated in the State Department.

Bill Cohen had a different style. He came to the Defense Department with basically two trusted senior special assistants that had been with him for many, many years. One of them had been with him for almost 15 years. One was his sort of chief of staff, more knowledgeable of the politics of the Hill and of the administration, and the other was a substantive, brilliant guy. Then there was an officer, the three-star Marine Corps lieutenant general who had worked on the Hill and had been in Cohen's office during a tour of duty on the hill, and they'd stayed in touch over the years. So he asked the Marine Corps to release him. He was a little senior to be a military assistant. Normally the Secretary of Defense's military assistant is a major general. But he asked the Marine Corps to release this man, and by the way, I see now, I heard the other day, it sounds like he's been rewarded. He's going to be the new commandant of the Marine Corps, Jim Jones. But anyway, these three officers really were his tight group around him that kind of basically ran the Defense Department. Now as time went on and as Cohen got to know other individuals in the Pentagon, that circle enlarged, but it was a different style. It was a slightly more remote way of doing business. Fortunately, I had known him before, as a senator, and actually even knowing that he was one of the fathers of the Special Operations Command, I had briefed him a couple of times, just on my own initiative (and also looking for some support on some of the new activities that we were engaged in), so I had an easy relationship with him. He was fond of telling people he would look at General Hugh Shelton, who was the new chairman but who had been the commander-in-chief of the Special Operations Command and my partner for almost two years, and he would look at this very tall six-foot-five officer and myself, and he would say, "These are my children. I created them" - harking back to his days with Sam Nunn in setting up the office and the command.

Q: Well, how did you deal with... There must have been... The guts of your organization was training, and this, of course, was not your particular... I mean it shouldn't have been your specialty at all.

HOLMES: No, it wasn't. The training, the mission of the command, was carried out by the commander in chief. My job was to be the sort of supervisor from a policy perspective and from a resources perspective. Now on the resources side, I co-chaired something called the board of directors. The board of directors of the Special Operations Command, the two co-chairmen were the... Well, I would say, I have to put it this way - we were nominally called co-chairmen, but in fact the commander in chief was the chairman, and I was the co-chairman.

Q: The commander in chief being?

HOLMES: The four-star commander in chief of the Joint Special Operations Command, which had these four components, Army, Navy, Air, and then the Special Missions people. The other members of the board of directors were the subordinate commanders, and together, after a lengthy process of producing what they call the POM (Program Operations Memorandum), which is basically a six-year budget projection with more attention to the first couple of years than in the out years - that is, revised in a major way every two years and in a minor way on the off-years. We were constantly working the cycle of decisions on the programs that we needed, and it was a process that was pretty loose when I first got there. It was under development, and it got better and better as it went on, and there were about 10 officers from all the services sort of at the level of lieutenant colonel or commander and colonel - what they call in the military O-6 level - who were the assessment directors. Their full-time job at the headquarters, basically, was to review this whole budget cycle, what we needed in the way of equipment, the research process. The head of the acquisition executive, who was a civilian, had vast experience. That was his major responsibility, looking at the programs and connecting them with the various missions of other commands.

Typically what happened was that, as the budget shrank and the services took a number of reductions during the period, we remained pretty constant. Our budget was flatlined, basically, which meant that in terms of inflation we were losing ground. But we lost less comparatively than the services did. But it was a constant struggle to sort of stay ahead of the technology curve. Now we absolutely were determined not to sacrifice readiness. Training was the god that we worshiped, and of course this force, arguably, the readiest of the ready. So training had an enormously high emphasis, and so did structure. In other words, we needed, as we were called upon to do more and more missions around the world, what the military called "force multipliers" - I used to call them "diplomacy multipliers" because increasingly in small countries around the world ambassadors heard about and would ask for Special Forces and Civil Affairs teams to come and do humanitarian civic action, humanitarian de-mining, all kinds of missions that were very helpful to the diplomatic mission of that particular chief of mission, that particular ambassador. So we didn't want to sacrifice force structure. We certainly were not going to sacrifice readiness. So guess what got sacrificed: the development budget. I watched that budget drop from 28 percent of the MFP-11 budget (Major Force Program 11 budget) from 28 percent to 24 percent during the approximately first three years that I was there. When Hugh Shelton got there and he saw the problem right away, he didn't want to cut back either, but the employment of these forces was just going out of all reason. It was just constantly escalating, and so he capped it and said, "We can't have more than this number of forces deployed abroad." Because on any given day, there were probably several thousand special operators deployed in as many as sixty or sixty-five countries. Some of them were very small deployments - a half a dozen people - but the problem was that they were spending so much time away from home. One, they were away from their families and, two, they weren't able to retrain. These are people who are trained and trained and retrained intensively. By the time that Pete Schoonmaker, who has now been the commander in chief for about a year and a half, arrived, we had to do something serious about getting rid of the programs that were of marginal use, because we were falling behind in technology.

When I first got there in 1993, they were very proud of saying, "We own the night," meaning that first of all, that people trained at night continuously, but all the technologies, like night-vision goggles and that sort of thing, they were way ahead of everybody else. But very quickly, within about three years, you could go to your local sports store and buy very good night-vision goggles, and of course the global positioning system communications - that is now available to everybody. So you have to stay ahead. But that also means that you've got to have somebody as a leader of that effort who is experienced and who does have a sort of a future-looking vision of what the shape of the security world will be like and what the mission of the Special Operations Command will be in the years 2010 to 2020 - very difficult to do. Schoonmaker is a remarkable leader in that respect, and so shortly after Schoonmaker arrived, we went through, in our board of directors, a very thorough vetting process of the budget and programs that we had underway at that time, and we basically divided them into five categories, what we called legacy systems (things that we inherited), excess capacity, present systems (that we needed today), things that we would need in 10 years, and then a transition (those things which would get us from today to 10 years out) - those five categories. We were able to identify that way where we could absolutely make some serious decisions on cutting programs without incurring too much risk. We did take some risks, but we had to do that in order to be able to build back up the development budget so that this force, which is very ready today, would be ready to do whatever it was called upon to do 10 years from now.

Q: Did you find yourself putting a more rigorous vetting of requests for assistance from ambassadors and other people? In other words, was your response being cut down towards the end?

HOLMES: Not much, not much. We did cut back a little bit on some of the training because we basically had more than enough. The training budget was from various sources. We had our own training budget. Then the Joint Chiefs had a budget. The chairman had his budget. Then the regional commanders had their budgets. So we found that we were able to reduce by somewhere between 8 and 10 percent of the training budget and still not sacrifice any of the readiness of the force but allow monies to be put in other places and allow people to spend more time at home seeing their families and retraining.

Q: Well, would you, on a daily basis or something, take a look at the globe and figure out, God, there are some problems here in Algeria. Maybe we've got to be ready to extract people from our embassy there - you know, looking at the situation in Zaire or what have you.

HOLMES: Yes, we did that, and we did it in two ways - basically three ways. We did it within OSD. Now here's where you asked me a minute ago how my relations were with the assistant secretary for international security affairs. Well, we worked very closely, because he basically - Frank Kramer - had all of the regions of the world, and at one time we even had a sort of a "hot spots" exercise where, working with the State Department and with DIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, we would monitor - because we had an intelligence briefing every morning - every morning we got for 20 minutes almost exactly the same intelligence briefing that the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had had half an hour earlier. There were a few very sensitive things which we didn't receive, but I would say 96 percent of what was given to them we got. So that would give us a daily look at what was going on, not only where the armed forces were deployed but also other hot spots. We were monitoring that and thinking about where we might have to get involved. So that was on the civilian side and the intelligence side. All the regional commands, of course, were also looking at the hot areas in their... The European Command had a daunting task because they had not only all of Europe but they also had Africa, so they had a huge responsibility. It was almost overwhelming. In fact, later on they did some redistribution. And then also from the State Department, because we were also getting a certain number of State Department reports and coordinating with them. So we were definitely looking at that. It's not to say that the Special Operations Command had the exclusive responsibility for what we would call NEO's (Noncombatant Evacuation Operations). The Marine Corps did it as well. I mean, it would sort of depend. There was a blowup in Liberia, and the nearest amphibious ready group was six steaming days away, so that was when, right on the heels of the Ron Brown crash site operation, the European Special Operations Command went down and secured the embassy. Every morning - actually several times a day - we would be on a video and audio linkup with the Department of State and with the embassy in Monrovia. Bill Milam was our ambassador there, and he would say, "Well, things are really getting pretty bad here, and we've got a lot of property, we have people here inside the embassy compound, and there are Americans outside who are at risk, and I think it would be good if we could get a little help." So finally it was decided to send in a platoon of Seals from the European Command. I think there were 18 of them. They didn't do a "rubber duck" operation, which they love to do, because it was right off Mamba Point there in the water. But that can be pretty hazardous, and if you don't have to do it, you don't want to unnecessarily risk losing people. So they actually came in by helicopter at night and basically secured the embassy. Others came in later, some of the Pave Low, the special Air Force Special Operations Command helicopters - they had to take the blades off of them, put them in C-5s, fly them into Sierra Leone, and then we ran a huge rescue operation and evacuated about 2,000 people - not just Americans but third-country nationals as well. The remarkable point of that whole story was... They secured the embassy; they evacuated all of those people; they never had to shoot anybody. They never killed anybody. I thought it was a remarkable testimony to the skill and discipline of these special operators, because the Liberian kids with AK-47's were out of control, and machetes, and they were chopping heads off, and so a Navy Seal would just get somebody - he would see a sniper on a roof, and he would lift his weapon and let the guy see that he had him in his sights, and that was enough. It was sort of using his weapon for psychological purposes. They never shot anybody. It was absolutely remarkable. Anyway, they did a number of operations of that kind. Brazzaville was another one. When things got bad later on in Sierra Leone, there happened to be a small Special Forces training team - six people - and they helped our embassy sort of hunker down and protect them and get them out. Rwanda was another case in point.

Q: Were you geared up for Rwanda, because there was going to be a major operation there, and then it stopped, didn't it?

HOLMES: Well, it stopped because there was a great deal of controversy over what kind of training to give the Rwandans, and there was a lot of conflicting opinion in the NSC over whether to give them lethal training or simply to give them human rights training. I mean it was not a very edifying policy process, I have to say. But there were small groups of special forces people that were in there that were very helpful to the embassy.

Q: You arrived when? In '93 and-

HOLMES: In '93.

Q: What about Somalia, because this... I mean, how did this affect everything you were doing?

HOLMES: It had a big effect, because-

Q: Could you explain why?

HOLMES: Yes. As you know, in the Bush Administration there had been a humanitarian mission launched basically to stop the starvation of the Somali people and to deliver food and to avoid getting sucked into the sort of warlord combat that was going on in Somalia. They did that very well. The Marines and the Army were very disciplined. They avoided the temptation to go in and destroy caches of weapons and some of what they called the "technicals," which were these basically vehicles that had a crew-served weapon mounted on the back of the vehicle. They avoided that. They protected themselves, and they stuck to the mission, and they delivered the food, and basically they succeeded, and they stopped the starvation. Now in the process of changeover from the Bush Administration to the Clinton Administration and with the introduction and the emergence of a more vigorous UN presence, the mission, unfortunately, changed. It evolved. It was, I think unwisely, decided at a certain point that they would try to capture Aidid, who was the principal warlord in Somalia. Special Operations Command was given the mission. It was tasked to send a task force. I think it was called Task Force 160, which was a combination of helicopters and helicopter pilots and commandos to go in and basically capture this guy and carry out a number of missions. Well, it was a very difficult and frustrating mission because they didn't have good intelligence on the ground. Basically, between the time when we closed our embassy and the time we went back in there with the humanitarian mission under the Bush Administration, we had lost all of our intelligence connections, and it's very difficult to set something up in a matter of weeks. So they weren't getting good intelligence as to where the various people were in this sort of rabbit warren of downtown Mogadishu. They had to carry out their missions. When they got tip-offs they tended to be in the daytime, and they had to move fast. They'd prefer to operate at night, but they operated in the daytime. They did a few things. They picked up a few people and were able to bring them back and arrest them, but they were absolutely determined - and ordered - to go after Aidid. At a certain point - I think it was in October of 1993 - this mission took place where they were surprised when they went into this one place in this sort of area of tiny little streets where Aidid's people were basically in command. They were trying to get him at a hotel, and one of their helicopters was shot down, and then a second one was hit, and then things went from bad to worse. You remember the famous photograph of one of the helicopter pilots who was stripped naked and he was dead and he was dragged through the streets. There was another helicopter pilot named Durand. His helicopter was down, and he was wounded and had some ammunition, but was running out of ammunition. His crew chief was dead, and two special Army commandos volunteered. They asked three times and were told no, and then on the third day they were allowed to go in. They knew they were sacrificing themselves. They fast-roped into this area to protect him and stayed with him until their ammunition ran out, and they were both killed. It was rather unusual, they were both awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor. Durand was taken prisoner, but in the ensuing negotiations, he was released, and he's back flying with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment today. But we had a lot of losses. I think we lost something like 19 dead and about 80 wounded in that operation.

Q: It particularly hit your troops dedicated to your-

HOLMES: Oh, yes, these were exclusively troops from the special operations command, and the fighting was absolutely ferocious. And again, it was bad intelligence. Nobody had any idea how many grenade launchers the RPGs, rocket-propelled grenades, were in the hands of Aidid's people. I've talked to some of the pilots that were on that mission, and they said it was like a blizzard. It was a blizzard of RPGs. It wasn't that they were necessarily terrific marksmen, but there were so many of them massed, and they were just firing in volleys that it was a ferocious battle, and they had these losses. They withdrew the following day. It went on more than a day. It went part of a day, through the night, and into the next day. They finally withdrew to the airport in open vehicles and took a lot of fire as they were withdrawing.

But anyway, when the operation was over, this had a traumatic effect on the Clinton Administration, and there was a huge investigation, and I arrived on the scene just about that time, about two weeks afterwards. I had met Wayne Downing, who was then the commander in chief of the Special Operations Command, but Major General Bill Garrison, who had commanded the unit that went to Somalia - he and Wayne Downing came by my office to do sort of a dress rehearsal, a dry run, of the briefing that we all then went and gave in the presence of Secretary Aspen to Senator John Warner and Senator Levin, who had been designated by Sam Nunn, who was then the chairman, to conduct a searching investigation of this action in Mogadishu. So that's where I came in, a few weeks after this had happened.

Q: Well, during the Kosovo crisis or just before, some of the Serb commanders, when talking to our people when we were trying to get them to be nicer to the Kosovars, would throw the figure 18 at them, which was I think their reckoning of how many special forces we'd lost in Mogadishu. What they were saying was, "Look, your army is so delicate now because of public opinion that all we have to do is kill 18 people and you're out of it, so don't bluff us that you're going to do anything." I mean, was that an element in your planning, decision-making, and everything else?

HOLMES: Well, that hung like a bad cloud over the American national security scene for a very long time. As a matter of fact, it wasn't too long after that that we were trying to send a sort of a civil affairs peacekeeping mission into Haiti, and there was a ship called the Harlan County - you may remember - that was steaming into Port-au-Prince, and there was a bit of a riot on the docks. In retrospect, I think our people were alarmed by this riot, but it isn't as if they were butchering people on the docks. It was a riot. But because of that, people in Washington gave the order to turn the Harlan County away. I mean they were looking at another potential Mogadishu, they thought. In other words, they were looking at it through Somali eyeglasses, and they were frightened by what might happen because of this tremendous public opinion reaction to the battle of Mogadishu. Well, just about everybody in the Pentagon and certainly the commander in chief of the Atlantic Command was just furious at this sort of pusillanimous reaction. Of course, we later recovered and actually carried out a pretty major mission in Haiti. But you're absolutely right. This problem - and it still exists today... It is born in part out of the Gulf War - that we conducted in the Bush Administration this extraordinary warfare with absolutely minimal losses, and there's a perception now in the United States that it's possible, because we're so powerful and have all these weapons and accurate missiles and bombs, that it's possible to carry out an operation with no losses - which is impossible.

Q: This has been reinforced because of our 78 days of bombing in Serbia and Kosovo we didn't take a single loss. This was great, but at the same time, it leaves a very false impression.

HOLMES: It was a false impression, and one reason we didn't take any losses was that we flew so high - basically to protect the pilots. We had a couple of pilots, by the way, that did get hit. There was a Stealth fighter and another aircraft, which I think was a- (end of tape)

Q: Here you were sort of on the pointing edge of going in and doing things. Was there concern, not so much at the Secretary of Defense level, about the support you'd get and all about the White House? I mean, Clinton had not served in the military, and he was seen as... and not just Clinton but the people around him as being almost anti-military and not very good at using military. Was that a perception?

HOLMES: Well, that situation improved during the life of the Clinton Administration. Certainly, it's absolutely clear from the record, and we all saw it, that Clinton got off on the wrong foot with the military. The first thing was the whole issue about the gays and how to handle that issue. I remember there was an incident where Barry McCaffrey, the most decorated American serviceman in uniform - two Distinguished Service Crosses from service in Vietnam - terribly wounded in Vietnam, spent a year being operated on continually to rebuild his body in Walter Reed Hospital, this incredibly gallant soldier, shows up - at that point he's a three-star, a lieutenant general, the J-5 in the Joint Staff. He shows up at the White House for a meeting - he has to go to a meeting - and he encounters a couple of young Clinton aides who basically are very rude to him and say that they don't like to see military people in uniform in the Clinton White House. This got into the newspapers. It was quite a celebrated case. The President, I must say, to his credit, saw that this was unfair to this guy, and so he made a point later on on a trip, where McCaffrey was also present, of jogging with him and had the press see this happen. I must say that since that very low point, the way the Clinton Administration started off, the President himself made a huge effort and, I think, a largely successful one, in making our service people feel that he was their commander-in-chief. I mean he visited them in the field. He would go and have Thanksgiving dinner with them in various places. Troops love to be visited, and they appreciated that. I think he won adherence. He won a lot of loyalty from the forces. But nonetheless, that said, we are in an era today - let's face it - where the body of people with military experience, people who are veterans of war or have even served in the military, are a vanishing breed. I mean today you have the unusual situation, for example, where not only the President, the commander-in-chief who didn't do military service, but neither the Secretary of Defense nor the deputy secretary of defense did military service. Bill Perry did, but Bill Cohen didn't, and neither did John Hamre, who's today's deputy secretary. Of course, that's happening in the Congress as well.

Q: Oh, yes.

HOLMES: So you have a whole new generation of young leaders that are coming into office that have no military experience, don't understand the culture, and don't quite know how to use the national security apparatus as an underpinning. Now that said, and that does present problems, and what is ironic is this problem of having a casualty-free military exercise, because it's really quite ironic because, first of all, it's a volunteer force. We're not talking about a draft today. Everybody who goes into the armed forces today must know or certainly is told that at some point in their career they may be put in harm's way, and they're volunteering to do that. Most of them accept that. Certainly going into the Gulf War there were only a handful of people that, I think, refused to go and said, "We didn't sign up to go into combat; we signed up to get a college degree at night time with the help of the military." But our military are absolutely prepared to go into harm's way and to do the job that they are hired and trained to do. It's basically the fear of political repercussions. Of course, in this age of instant communications - and the press is everywhere - it basically has an almost paralyzing effect on some political leaders today. It's true, because in other democracies we don't have the same.. The French, for example, have a rather high tolerance for losses. People forget that the French stood up and did their job in Bosnia long before we got there.

Q: Yes, under the UN, and they took real losses.

HOLMES: The French and the British. The French, I think, lost in total something like 60 or 70 people in fighting, carrying out that very unpleasant... during the UN protection force era. So they have more of a tolerance. The British have more of a tolerance as well. The Germans, remarkably - I mean the Germans have a very special problem because of the baggage from World War II, and now we're seeing for the first time German infantry actually deployed in Kosovo, which is a quite remarkable evolution. But we have a problem in that _____. There's no question about it. We have a serious problem because we lose more people in training in the United States. We lose a lot of people, because our people train hard. There are accidents - regrettable, and you try to avoid them, but it's a serious problem, because we are going to be called upon more and more, and some of the missions are political-military missions. They're humanitarian missions, as we're seeing today in Kosovo. That's a humanitarian mission, but it's dangerous as hell.

Q: Just today, two British soldiers were killed by mines.

HOLMES: Yes, two Gurkhas.

Q: Two Gurkhas. First losses in that. Let's talk about Bosnia, because this is the big thing for you when you were there - you know, the thing - how did that develop from your perspective? Were we sort of sitting on the sidelines thinking about, Gee, we're going to go in sometime, making plans, but... You know, at first we were saying this is a European operation; let them take care of it, and all that. What was your perspective?

HOLMES: My perspective is that I think that when the Clinton Administration came into office, they did a very poor job of assuming the mantle of leadership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. When Secretary of State Warren Christopher made his first trip after coming into office to the North Atlantic Council, he announced that he was there to listen. I found this absolutely extraordinary. The allies didn't quite know what to make of it, because traditionally they gripe, they complain, they fight, they quarrel, they leak to the press about the heavy-handedness of the United States, but they expect the United States to lead. This is the way it's always been, and here comes the Secretary of State who says he's there to listen. For the first year, approximately - maybe more than a year, closer to maybe to a year and a half - of the Clinton Administration, I would say that the Administration is guilty of default of leadership in NATO. I'm giving you this sort of back-looking perspective because I think it has a lot to do with what we eventually ended up doing in Bosnia. In other words, there were two force lines that emerged, that resulted in our commitment to the Bosnia peacekeeping operation known as IFOR. One was, of course, the Dayton Accords, but the other was this very wobbly NATO leadership. I believe that by the time that decision was made, it was understood that we had done a poor job of leading NATO, despite the strong efforts of SACEUR, of General Shalikashvili and the Partnership for Peace, which was I think a great undertaking. But we had done a poor job. We had criticized the UN protection force and our allies were in there, and they wanted us to be there but we weren't. So finally, it seems to me that this was an opportunity not only to try to do something about putting some stability back into the Balkans as a result of the Dayton Accords, but also it was a question of NATO leadership. So we went into that - finally - and I was, frankly, very pleased to see us take our natural place in that effort, with three zones carved out, one by us, one by the British, and one by the French, with the overall command being an American officer. It was the way it should have been at the beginning, in my view.

Q: Was there a certain amount of restiveness as we watched this thing develop, particularly the Serbs were bullying the UN - it's the only way. I mean, here were you know I mean they were humiliating these peacekeepers by including killing a vice president of Bosnia in a French troop carrier.

HOLMES: Yes, it was very restive, and people were very upset. I remember a small Dutch platoon that was at a killing spree in Srebrenica, which was-

Q: Yes, you know, they were surrounded by a thousand bloodlust troops, and they were something like a platoon or so, and there really wasn't much they could do, but they shouldn't have been put in that position.

HOLMES: They shouldn't have been put in that position, and the Dutch were angry. They were angry, humiliated, and determined to get back into things. Then later on, of course, they did participate in arresting some of the war criminals in Bosnia. But it was a very bad situation, and it really only changed after the Dayton Accords. Of course we did the bombing, that first bombing run, which brought them to the table and resulted in the agreement - with Milosevic, of course, participating. But that finally worked out, and I must say, by the time I visited Bosnia, for the first and only time in the last summer, the summer of 1998, I went and visited our Special Operations Forces in Italy, Brindisi, Sarajevo, went up to Tuzla and then to Brcko and then on to Europe, Stuttgart and the United Kingdom. Things had really turned around by that time, and they were operating extremely well together, not only in the American sector but also with their British and French and Italian and other NATO allies.

Q: I would have thought that there would be a problem in our special operations because we had such a high degree of using technology - I mean it's extremely important - and equipment. I would have thought that, say, particularly the British, the French and the Germans would be maybe one step down or something like that. Or how did that work?

HOLMES: Well, actually, curiously, I'm going to say something that may surprise you. The thing that marks the difference is really the quality of the people, much more than the equipment, because actually the British and the French are pretty well equipped as well, but it's the quality of the training. I think that your average US special operator - that one who stays for a while, the senior noncommissioned officer - he's probably had $200,000 of training put in him - per individual. I saw this in Brcko, when I visited... I don't know if I recounted this in an earlier session, but in Brcko I visited what was called a Joint Commission Operations house - JCO. In Brcko, in just a regular little house, living in the community, were eight US special forces soldiers wearing uniforms, the fatigues, BDUs, without any rank or unit insignia. All they had on their uniforms was US ARMY and their name. The reason for that was that they were all so competent and they didn't want people that they were working with to know who's the officer or who's the senior non-commissioned officer. They were all sergeants, one warrant officer, and a young captain. Between them they had a remarkable assemblage of language skills. Among the eight they had Serbo-Croatian, German, Russian, Ukrainian, French, and Polish - terrific assembly there, number of European languages. They were able to go around, and they would go around without helmets or Kevlar vests or weapons. They would go around in pairs, either on foot or in a vehicle, and just make themselves known and get to know the various ethnic communities and talk to them and find out what their problems were. They would frequently be called in to sort of adjudicate little neighborhood squabbles. It was a remarkable operation. This was really based on the quality of the people, that they were able to do that in their training. They were the eyes and ears of the IFOR or SFOR command in Sarajevo. Tthey would report back what was going on, and they'd talk with the US ambassador there, who was a kind of an international civil servant trying to adjudicate problems at the sort of government level in Brcko.

This was a successful effort, and the other allies began to take up that mission, because we had those little JCO houses scattered throughout Bosnia, but we didn't have enough people, and eventually the British and French decided they were going to do the same thing, so there was a great deal of coordination and sort of cross-training and discussion with our allies. The French have now a special operations force, a command that is designed along the lines of the US command. In fact, when they set it up, in about 1993-94, they spent a lot of time in Tampa talking with the leadership down there of the Special Operations and to see how they did it. So it's sort of modeled on the US model. They were very selective and put a lot of emphasis on training. But they are in an early phase of their development because they are encountering the same resistance that our people did from their regular forces and not used as much as they should be. The British, of course, have a longer tradition. The SAS and their special boat units had been in business for a long time, and they don't have the same problems.

Q: Was there any thought about, you know, we were trying this Partnership for Peace, to bring the Russians into this? Was there any contact between your operations and our operations?

HOLMES: Yes, there was. This is another mission that the Special Operations Command has, which is what they call liaison missions with foreign forces. In fact, Norman Schwarzkopf called them "The glue that kept the alliance together" in the desert war, because they had these little teams that, using their language skills, went out to the various allied commands. Probably for the first time since World War II we actually ended up in Bosnia with a Russian unit assigned to an American officer, with a sort of tortuous chain of command. The European special operations command recruited a young, fluent Russian-speaking Special Forces captain, who was assigned with a communicator and an intelligence NCO - a small team of three or four people - to be assigned to the Russian headquarters, and they made a difference in terms of connecting that Russian unit with the US command - fluent Russian-speaking. They provided them with communications with this command, with intelligence, and a certain understanding of how the US Army and the NATO force was operating in the field, and made a huge difference. So that was successful, and they went instinctively, by design, the commander-in-chief of our forces in Europe turned to that command because they knew that that was the place to recruit the right kind of coalition support team.

Q: What was the feeling you were getting from the Pentagon about the expansion of NATO, to Poland, to Hungary, to the Czech Republic?

HOLMES: Well, of course, they supported it, because at that time, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was John Shalikashvili, who had been a very successful SACEUR in Europe and who actually came up... He was the father of the idea of the Partnership for Peace. Now there were some people, and I'm one of them, that had a different view - that it wasn't necessary to expand the Alliance so quickly and to risk having an increasingly clumsy organization. As it was at 16, with a consensus rule at the heart of NATO decisions, it was very difficult to operate, and we could see what was happening. Now it's 19 and growing. Our feeling was that it wasn't necessary to move so rapidly - I mean the people that saw it the way I did, that the partnership for peace should have been something that had much more body and mission attached to it. It could have been part of a very long vetting process. In other words, by having non-NATO European allies - the new ones from the old Warsaw Pact - participate in Partnership for Peace exercises, they could have learned from the prospect, they could have seen what was required over the long pull to become a fully participating member of the Alliance, and they could have acquired a kind of an associate status with the Alliance - and giving them already a sense of community which would have psychologically given them some sense of ease vis-ï¿½-vis Russia, which is one reason they all wanted to get into NATO quickly - without encumbering the alliance with all of the liabilities that we have seen by the early entry of these countries. But of course the decision went elsewhere and was made.

Q: It was a major domestic political imperative in this one, too.

HOLMES: There was. My own feeling was that it was not necessary, that there was another way to do this that would have been a more gradual process and more manageable over the long term, but anyway, it was done. You know, there were different views in the Pentagon, but once the decision was made, people just put their shoulders to it and made it work.

Q: Well, Allen, is there anything else we should cover, do you think?

HOLMES: I don't think so. I think we've pretty well sketched the landscape of what was going on - except to say that... I just might finish by saying that I really do believe that if you look back over the last five years at what the armed forces of the United States have been doing, basically political-military work, led by, not exclusively done by but led by, the Special Operations Forces, the kind of work, counter-terrorism, counter-drug, civic and humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, peacekeeping - all these activities, which are basically civil military responses to complex humanitarian crises of different varieties around the world, this is what the armed forces have been doing. Now there's a very interesting debate that is already underway as to whether this is appropriate. Is this what the armed forces should be doing? Is this an appropriate use of the members of the armed forces and of the budget of the Defense Department, to get increasingly involved in this kind of work abroad and to some degree domestically? There is a lot of discussion going on now about homeland defense, and so I think there has been an early chapter where they have proven to be of benefit to the country, not just as the security underpinning of foreign policy, but at a higher level of engagement very much involved with the Department of State, AID, and other agencies of our government in the conduct of foreign relations. I think there's a good question that remains now: is this going to be the pattern as we go into the 21st century? Should it be? Should we resist it? Should we maintain a more traditional view of the preparation and equipping of our armed forces? Should it be more strategic? These are unanswered questions.

Q: Okay. Well, thank...

End of interview