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 White House Staff Exit Interview, Seymour Bolten

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NOTES (in lieu of recording) WITH SEYMOUR BOLTEN, INTELLIGENCE ADVISOR ON DRUG ABUSE POLICY, DOMESTIC POLICY STAFF (now Office of Policy Development)

Room 418, Old Executive Office Building, Washington, DC, 3 PM,
February 4, 1981.

From June 1945-August 1948, Mr. Bolten was in the military government on General Clay's staff, Civil Administration Division, which was responsible for restoration of the political system of Germany. In Berlin during that period, which was to be capital of reunited Germany, but soon became apparent that would only be restoring democratic government in West Germany.

SB had been P.O.W. of Germans in Poland for 23 months. Came home early 1945 and returned then to Germany to work in military government.

Came back to U.S. to work on M.A. in International Relations at Harvard. In Sept. '49 was granted degree and went to work for C.I.A. then. While in Germany, SB had received a letter from Central Intelligence Group (forerunner of C.I.A.), asking if he would be interested in a job. He agreed but would first finish Harvard degree. Speculates that the agency got his name through the Military Government.

1949-1955: SB in D.C., assigned to German, Central and Eastern European affairs. Also worked in conjunction with State Dept. and U.S. embassies.

See attached for assignments in C.I.A., 1949-1977.

1971: SB was included as a student in Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy for State Department. This is a reorientation to U.S. for the most senior foreign service officers, many of them one step removed from ambassadorial posts. As an assignment, he had to do a case study. Had become interested in drug situation during previous year (1970) when served as jury foreman in D.C. and realized how drug traffice influences crime.

Therefore, when asked by C.I.A. director Richard Helms to take on assignment of drug program coordination, SB interested. Drug work was looked upon with skepticism by C.I.A. professionals because didn't fit with national security mission and meant dealing with criminal elements. Program was assigned to C.I.A., however,

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because C.I.A.'s purpose is to collect clandestine information abroad. Collection and analysis are dual roles of C.I.A.

Narcotics Control Group was under Operations Directorate, but also reported to C.I.A. director because of his participation in Cabinet Committee for International Narcotics Control (I.N.C.). Also on committee were secretaries of State, Treasury, H.E.W.; Attorney General; and others.

Within the above-named departments were separate groups (Ex., U.S. Customs of Treasury Dept.) who also were members. Secretary of State was chairman, but associate director of White House Domestic Council was executive director and provided staff support. This person was Egil Krogh under President Nixon.

Late in '72 or early '73 (after Nov. '72 election, at any rate), executive director position was transferred to State Dept. SB thinks this may have had something to do with Watergate closing in so that responsibilities were transferred out of the White House. He doesn't know why this occurred but is sure wouldn't have happened during a normal time.

He considers I.N.C. during early period as model for this type of Cabinet committee. It had a Cabinet secretary as chair and White House staff support. Was time in which committee was most active. Advantages of this type of organization: continuity, ability to coordinate departments and get results on the spot.

There were, however, traditional rivalries between D.E.A. (Drug Enforcement Administration) and Customs, Treasury and State. After committee became State Dept. function, SB saw a decline in momentum and leverage committee could exert. State Dept. did everything it could, held many meetings--not always best way to handle problem that needed muscle to solve.

I.N.C. had subcommittees and task forces. SB was head of Intelligence Subcommittee, with charge of finding what kinds of information should be collected by embassies and in the field: Wanted to professionalize collection of intelligence for use in drug policy development and (to extent possible) drug law enforcement. Many complex legal issues arose that C.I.A. had to deal with. One concerned intelligence reports, which if included in the case files in D.E.A. could then be used in court of law. SB allowed D.E.A.

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to circulate reports, but their D.E.A. Intelligence Division would retain files rather than these being in operational files.

SB decided to retire at end of 1974. Worked in last half of '74 as assistant to director of operations, rather than in drug work.

C.I.A. investigations (Church committee in Senate, Pike committee in House) occurred about same time as SB retired. Was asked to return to C.I.A. to work on investigations because of need for experience with C.I.A. and Congress. As special assistant to the director, SB reported to C.I.A. Director George Bush on congressional hearings. SB was "tremendously impressed with him"; he was "good at providing leadership, giving people a feeling they were on a team." SB's superior was deputy director Knoche.

1976 elections meant change in administrations. SB was asked to help arrange for new C.I.A. director to get in place, sort of an agency transition head. Ted Sorenson was first Carter appointee as director; he bowed out at congressional hearing. Admiral Stansfield Turner appointed, Jan. 1977. SB stayed until March.

Sometime in early Jan. 1977, he had phone call from Dr. Peter Bourne, who knew him from time SB had been on Cabinet committee (I.N.C.). At that time, Bourne had been a member of staff at SAODAP (Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention). This was a separate agency of the Executive Office of the President during the Nixon period. SB had been C.I.A. representative on I.N.C.

Bourne invited SB to join staff of Office of Drug Abuse Policy because he wanted someone with professional intelligence background who knew something about drugs. Were approximately 10 on ODAP staff at that time, each doing a study.

SB did study on intelligence, which is still classified (went to Central Files). As a result of his study, N.I.C. (Narcotics Intelligence Consumers) was established. Additional recommendations:
redefining intelligence missions of each agency involved
in drug programs,
the role of Customs,
stimulation of financial information on drug traffickers
(SB sees money as the "principal vulnerability" of traffickers),

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use of sensitive information and the legal problems therein, forecasting opium production using technology available.

The report came out in Feb. '78. After that time, to the present, his work was on: trends (production, political implications of actions), keeping Bourne (then later Lee Dogoloff) informed, monitoring implementation of above six recommendations, and especially encouraging the development of procedures for financial investigations and prosecutions. He brought EB.I. in much more. Multiple agencies are involved (D.E.A., Customs, I.R.S., etc.).

Evaluation: in financial area, an area SB feels can make a real impact on drug problem, he feels he has done something worthwhile in the sense of providing a sense of movement. Just as a president is supposed to lead the nation, he feels the White House staff should carry out policy with "enthusiasm and professionalism." He finds that while the Drug Abuse Policy Staff has "provided the dynamics," that they have lost momentum during the transition.

The biggest disappointment in the last four years he sees in the area of crop eradication. In Mexico this was very successful. The U.S. needs to be willing to engage in diplomatic efforts to see that crops that find their way into the U.S. drug market are destroyed at the source. Crop diversion would be useful in Southwest Asia and Burma. Crop destruction is the most cost-effective way to cut the drug trade, along with financial interception.

Feb. 5, 1981, Room 418, 3:45 PM

On the subject of facilitating interdepartmental coordination: Cabinet member responsibility and the White House role was combined in a good balance in the I.N.C. early in '72, SB feels (the weight of the White House and its support combined with formal chairmanship by a Cabinet member). Meetings were run by the Cabinet member, but follow-up was done by the White House. This

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provided a channel for White House coordination and oversight. SB saw a gradual decline of the committee's influence and importance until its end in 1977. The White House still participated, but the committee didn't have the old clout to mediate between departments. During the pre-'77 period, the White House Domestic Council was for the most part responsible for the drug program, but part of the time the drug function was given to O.M.B. (Office of Management and Budget).

When the committee was liquidated, it was replaced by the Principals Group and a Strategy Council. The Principals Group held informal meetings once a month. As for the Strategy Council, it did not satisfy public members or Cabinet members and proved a problem for the Drug Abuse Policy Staff. SB would recommend that it be called something like an "advisory strategy council" and have only public members. Departmental representation is important, and so the departments could be consultants to a Cabinet committee in a possible reorganization. Such a council could review strategy yearly (as is mandated by law) and review trends. From his experience, SB sees the optimum structure as being headed by the White House Office of Policy Development, supported by an advisory strategy council, with a small Office of Policy Development staff to provide services.

The Principals Group could be retained as a gathering place for top people in the drug field, who would continue to meet informally. Such people would likely be on the Cabinet committee anyhow, he points out. Basically, what is needed is a "rational structure," and then "good people who are committed."

On the subject of formulation and implementation of policy: the Domestic Policy Staff in the last four years paid more attention to the formulation of policy and legislation, "forgetting or ignoring to a large extent" their oversight role, in SB's opinion. This doesn't mean the D.P.S. should serve as "Super I.G.s," since that is the business of the departments. But the President is Chief Executive of the U.S., and unless he has a way of knowing that the departments and agencies are carrying out his policies, "you only have one part of the action"; the oversight role and

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weighing the results of programs is thus left off. CETA is a classic example that should have had zero-based budgeting applied. Although D.P.S. head Stuart Eizenstat has been quoted as saying that he didn't want D.P.S. to administer programs, it is SB's feeling that if the Domestic Staff doesn't do so, who will? Furthermore, he finds that the new White House staff, including O.M.B., is doing what needs doing, i.e., cutting government spending. The Carter Administration was "behind the power curve," always behind, always reacting rather than acting.

In answer to a question about the effect of the administrative move of the Office of Drug Abuse Policy (ODAP) to D.P.S., he said it was, for a time, traumatic. "We were like orphans," yet SB has no regrets about it. As long as Peter Bourne was head of the office, the Drug Abuse Policy Staff wouldn't have been put under D.P.S.; the organization was dependent on the personality of Bourne.

ODAP was set up by legislation passed under President Ford, but Ford Administration didn't fund it. Congress wanted a single place in the executive branch to go to on drug matters, and the bill was pushed through Congress without regard to the views of the White House. Although SB says there probably was some consultation with the Cabinet-level committee (I.N.C.), the "degree was not all that great."

One other Drug Abuse Policy accomplishment (one that SB did not work on directly) that should be added to those previously mentioned: an increasing awareness of the health consequences of marijuana--an awareness fostered through research, films, and parent groups. He cites LSD and PCP as examples of drugs whose use fell off as a result of the public's awareness of the consequences, heroin to some extent. Marijuana is gradually being seen as "something more than just a benign drug." SB considers it the most dangerous drug because of its widespread use, because it is a social problem, because the health consequences are pernicious, and because it may well be carcinogenic, just like tobacco, when all the research is in.

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On the Holocaust Commission: SB became involved when Edward Sanders, Special Advisor to President Carter, talked with him in December '78. Mr. Sanders was a Los Angeles attorney, active in many Jewish organizations, and was Mr. Carter's liaison with the Jewish community before Al Moses took that position. SB had been recommended by mutual friends as someone who could be of help, having had experience in government. Sanders had been given responsibility for the Presidential Commission on the Holocaust, and at this time (Dec. '78) nothing was happening while the choice of a director was in dispute. Eizenstat, SB's boss, had been one of the founders of the commission in April '78, the 30th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel. President Carter announced in a Rose Garden ceremony that he was appointing a commission to come up with a suitable memorial for the Holocaust victims.

Day-to-day work was with Sanders; occasionally they would go to Eizenstat for a decision. SB worked with the commission's deputy director, who was headquartered in the New Executive Office Building. (The director stayed in New York for the most part.) SB's responsibility was to obtain space and budget for the commission.

Disagreements arose as to the concept of the memorial: should it only be to Jews or also to other victims of the Nazis? This became an emotional issue. SB felt if this was to be an American national memorial, not just Jewish, that it should be something everyone could identify with, not just Jews. The disagreement caused an uproar and manifested itself in controversy over selection of a successor group, the Holocaust Council, established by executive order. The final report of the commission in Sept. '79 had recommended establishment of a museum as a living memorial and a research foundation. The council spent five months haggling over its membership, all against the background of the fundamental disagreement of making this an exclusively Jewish memorial. SB became "increasingly disillusioned and frustrated" and "wanted out."

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In the meantime, the Holocaust Council had received its own budget, recognized by legislation in Sept. '80. It is still under the Department of the Interior (National Park Service), with three ex-officio members from the State, Education, and Interior departments. SB felt this executive branch membership would mean that the council wouldn't "go off without executive branch guidance."

Since the end of the Carter administration, SB has had no further responsibility re the commission or the council. It would be his hope that a memorial might create an understanding of what the Holocaust meant.

Emily Soapes

Emily Williams Soapes, Presidential Papers Staff

APPENDIX

Rather than go into detail about his various positions with the Central Intelligence Agency, Mr. Bolten provided this listing to accompany the notes on the interview.

Assistant to the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence (July 1976 - March 1977): Assisted the Deputy Director in a variety of matters related to day-to-day management of Agency at a time of major change in the leadership and guidelines governing American intelligence. Developed and promoted Agency positions on governmental oversight, other sensitive issues, and external Agency relationships requiring coordinated Agency responses.

Assistant to the Director of Central Intelligence/Review Staff (January 1975 - July 1976): Served as the Director's focal point for coordination and development of Agency responses to the House and Senate Select Committees on Intelligence during their investigations of the CIA. This involved extensive and direct working liaison with members and staff of the House and Senate Select Committees on Intelligence.

Special Assistant to the Deputy Director for Operations (July 1974 - December 1974): Assisted in developing and coordinating Directorate positions and responses on a variety of doctrinal, legislative and legal issues affecting foreign intelligence.

Chief of Narcotics Control Group (June 1972 - June 1974): Developed operational doctrine and coordinated Agency effort to collect foreign intelligence on international narcotics traffic. Represented the Director of Central Intelligence on the Cabinet Committee for International Narcotics Control (CCINC) and served as Chairman of the Foreign Intelligence Subcommittee of CCINC.

Member Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy, Department of State (August 1971 - June 1972): CIA representative to Department of State Course for senior diplomats and other executive branch officers.

Chief of a functional staff (1968 - 1971): Responsible for intelligence activities dealing with Soviet and Eastern European affairs.

Special Assistant for Operations to Deputy Director for Plans (1965 - 1968): Handled sensitive problems for the Deputy Director dealing with a variety of geographic and functional issues arising from events abroad which had an impact on the foreign intelligence responsibilities of the Agency. During this period served as the CIA member of an interdepartmental task force assigned to review the structure and functions of a large American embassy in Latin America, a mission which resulted in management reorganization and major reductions in the number of personnel assigned to that embassy.

Chief of several staffs (1962 - 1965): Responsible for intelligence operations dealing with Latin American affairs.

Estimates Staff, Office of National Estimates (1960 - 1961): Drafted and coordinated interdepartmental National Intelligence Estimates, particularly those on Western and Central Europe.

Various positions dealing with German, Central and Eastern European affairs (1949 - 1955): During this period was chief of a branch requiring supervision of a large staff (approximately seventy-five professionals) and direction of a multi-million dollar foreign intelligence program.