

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

DEPUTY SECRETARY JOHN N. IRWIN, II

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INTERVIEW

Q: I have the privilege of being in Mr. John Irwin's office in Rockefeller Center and I am about to interview him primarily about his experiences as ambassador to France. We will touch on other things, and with no more ado the first question that my colleagues at Georgetown University have asked me to touch on Mr. Ambassador, is what in your life propelled you to want to be of service in the foreign service field, in international affairs?

IRWIN: Partly historical interests and partly good luck. My first government service was truly in the army. I had a reserve commission from college and was called to active duty in 1941, in September. It was for one year, but ended up for almost five years, four years of which was essentially in the Pacific. I was sent to Australia in March of 1942 and came home from Tokyo in 1946. I was always grateful to have been sent to the Pacific because I had been to Oxford after Princeton in my early life so I had seen something of Europe, but I had no experience in Asia. So Australia, New Guinea, Philippines, Borneo and Japan made a most interesting war. War is never good, but as wars go I have to say I had an interesting one. Coming back from the war I started practicing law, which I studied before the war with a firm, Davis, Polk, Wardwell, Sunderland and Kiendl, whose other names have undoubtedly changed, but the Davis, Polk remains.

One of my friends in the Pacific, particularly in the Philippines, was a partner of Davis, Polk. We had gotten to know each other there and he invited me to come into Davis, Polk as an associate, which I did. Shortly thereafter he was appointed as a commissioner on a joint

Philippine finance commission and asked me if I would join their staff since I had been in the Philippines quite a bit. I did and we spent six months in the Philippines and that was my first government job really, other than the army which one does not truly count. That was for the Treasury Department, it was a staff job for this commission. The commission was ultimately responsible for various recommendations on the financial life of the Philippines, how the United States might help, and was instrumental in establishing what became the Central Bank of the Philippines.

Following that I always had in the back of my mind the desire to sometime go into the government, not necessarily to the foreign service world, but into the government. Some years passed and I left Davis, Polk and joined Patterson, Belknap and Webb at the invitation of Judge Patterson, who had come from being Secretary of the Army back to civilian life. Unfortunately he was killed in an air crash in 1951, just at the height of his career. He had been a federal judge, Secretary of the Army, he had been in the army in World War I, started in the army in World War II and was in a boot camp up in New York state when he was called in to be Assistant Secretary of the Army, later becoming Secretary.

First I felt it was important to become a partner in my firm so you had a firm base on which to live and to come back to if you went into the government. I was fortunate to become a partner in Patterson, Belknap in 1950 and I remained working in the law until 1957 -- through the Truman administration and through the first Eisenhower administration. Being essentially a Republican, although I have voted for Democrats, I thought the second Eisenhower administration might be a very good time to go into the government, if I could find a position. So I let known to some friends that I was interested in working for the government. Just by good fortune Mansfield Sprague, who was Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs in the Defense Department, wanted a deputy assistant secretary. A couple of friends recommended me to him, I went down and talked with him and left the law for that particular post. Manny Sprague left the government a year later or so and at that time I became Assistant Secretary of ISA and remained there until President Kennedy was elected in 1961.

At that time I thought that ISA was the best job in Washington. It handled all of the foreign affairs of the Defense Department and worked very closely with State on all overseas matters. All the international agreements, they all effected Defense in one way or another, particularly at NATO and even CENTO at that time. I was also fortunate in being the one from the Defense Department who was invited to travel the Secretary of State when he went somewhere. He took several of his own staff and one person from the Pentagon, and it seemed to be the ISA was the one to follow him. It was again my fortune to go with Mr. Dulles quite a few times. In those days it was a four - prop airplane, very comfortable, but it slept ten people, so Secretary Dulles restricted his group to ten, that included himself, Mrs. Dulles usually, his secretary, then depending on where he was going it would be a different composition. Usually he took, in his case, a legal advisor, he took the assistant secretary for the area to which he was going, often he would take the desk officer of the particular country he was going to or the area and then sometimes the deputy under secretary for

political or economic affairs, depending on the trip. That was always interesting and fun, we did work on the airplane, but on the other hand after you had done the work Mr. Dulles would often say, "well I have done enough work, I would like to play bridge". I enjoyed playing bridge, there were four of us, including Mr. Dulles, who would play bridge before we slept on the airplane. That of course enhanced my interest in the government and the great benefits that one learned while working in the government so that when I returned to private law practice at Patterson, Belknap and Webb in 1961 I knew I would always be interested if an opportunity came to work again in the government.

That opportunity came in 1963, I think it was. President Johnson had asked the former Secretary of the Treasury, Robert Anderson, to negotiate with Panama, and asked if I would help Secretary Anderson, which I was happy to do. That was a part time job, maybe fifty percent negotiating and fifty percent practicing law in New York. As a matter of fact I did most of the negotiations, keeping in touch with Secretary Anderson so he could participate to what ever degree he wished.

We ultimately reached an agreement with the Panamanian negotiators, of which there were three, and both presidents, President Johnson and the then president of Panama approved the agreement and were willing to sign, but this was in June 1968, perhaps, or 1967, I am a little uncertain, in any case the president of Panama said "we have an election in September and it is now already June, even though I approve the treaty I think it would be wiser politically here in Panama if we waited until after the election. My party will undoubtedly win, I will not be the president, but my successor, whom I have talked to, will approve the treaty and he will have the support of the electorate, having just been elected." That was a good plan, but his party was defeated, the opposition took over and two weeks later there was a military coup which remained in power until relatively recently. So the agreement was never executed, although the impetus which it started continued and in the late 60's or perhaps even later, Ambassador Bunker and Ambassador Sol Linowitz took over the job of negotiating a treaty with Panama, which they accomplished and which was signed and ratified by our Senate and is now the law in the sense of international law and having revoked the 1903 treaty which was certainly unpopular in Panama, and other countries in South America who supported Panama, even though there was a strong element in the United States that said we received it, it was a legitimate treaty that was negotiated back in 1903 and we should not give it up. My personal view, while understandable, was short sighted. If we had kept the Canal, at the very least there would have been bad relations, not only in Panama but in other Central American countries and in South America and at worst it could have been the type of guerrilla, not real warfare, but attacks on ships or parts of the Canal. As a historical note, those people who said we had a legitimate agreement with Panama in 1903, that is correct, but also it could be stated that in essence the United States encouraged Panama to have a revolution against Colombia, which at that time owned Panama, or considered it part of it. It became two countries, Colombia and Panama, and then we negotiated the 1903 agreement with the new government which we had just helped free itself from Colombia. So you have all this type of background and one can argue both sides.

Actually the treaty accomplished by ambassadors Bunker and Linowitz is better than our treaty considerably, more simple, and that can be ascribed to the fact of the maturing of the views of some of congressmen and senators. When we began negotiating we had to keep in very close touch with the Senate and the House too, and to be sure that we only negotiated what we could get confirmed by the Senate. Whether we were right or wrong, we felt that we had to have more restrictive agreements than Ambassador Bunker and Ambassador Linowitz were able to succeed in accomplishing. I think it is partially because they did not have quite the difficult attitudes in the Senate that existed those five to ten years earlier.

After that negotiation, I came back of course to the law which I was continuing to do part time in New York. At this time I might say that I loved working in Washington. It was a fascinating life and I would urge it on any young man or woman who has the opportunity, but at the same time I was always content to come back to New York and my regular life job when my particular job in Washington was over. I had no desire to hang on in Washington. One of the unfortunate things about Congress, I have often thought, is that a Congressman comes from a small town in the Middle West, such as my origin in Keokuk, Iowa, he becomes so interested and fascinated in the international as well as the broad social life of Washington that he hates to go back to Timbuktu. Therefore he tends when he is defeated or leaves Congress he tends to join a law firm and many of them become lobbyists. Of course, many of them do a legitimate job as lawyers, but still I think it is too bad that more of them do not take back to their hometown and their home state the knowledge and background they have received in Washington. They could be very helpful in their own localities and their own states rather than becoming another ex - congressman in Washington. That is a personal view and obviously not supported by many in Congress.

Back in New York I was busy with my law practice. It was just after, I think, President Nixon was elected, I had a call from Elliot Richardson, who was then the under secretary of state, at that time the under secretary had not been redesignated the deputy secretary, but he was called the under secretary as opposed to the two other deputy under secretaries. Mr. Richardson said that President Nixon would be pleased if I would negotiate -- he gave me two choices actually, (I don't know if they were real choices actually) but he mention two possibilities, one was to be ambassador to NATO and one would be to negotiate with Peru on a recent expropriation they made of the International Petroleum Company. The International Petroleum Company was the subsidiary of a Canadian subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey at that time. They also wished to have somebody make representations about tuna, tuna fishing in the seas off South and Central America. I said I would do that and spent quite a bit of time in Peru negotiating with the generals and admirals who had seized control some time before from the civilian government. Again it was an enjoyable service. I even liked the generals and admirals, as individuals they were nice men. Peru is a most attractive country with a most interesting, hospitable citizenry. At that time it was a pleasant country to visit and to be in. All I really did was to stave off a break in relations between Peru and the United States, because Peru was not willing at that time to meet U.S. wishes and the U.S. was not willing to forego those wishes. But, at the same time, they did not wish to cut off aid and there was the law that required that aid was cut off if the country did certain things that effected our relationship. So while there were negotiations going on

there was no need to break off aid, which would have, perhaps, lead to breaking relationships between the two countries.

That too, as a negotiation, was continued at a later date. Other people successfully solved in that each country interpreted an agreement reached their own terms. Peru interpreted it that it had not met the wishes of the United States and the United States interpreted as having adequate satisfaction so both countries kept their so - called pride, but did reach an agreement and our relations were never broken off. Everyone knows that Peru has suffered greatly since, as a matter of fact, it never recovered from the military coup that took place. In some areas the military did all right, but they had one problem after another, and today with the rebels [Shining Path] and one can only hope that future holds something better for the very fine little country of Peru.

After Peru I again came back to the law practice and in early 1973 President Nixon moved Under Secretary Richardson to be Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare and invited me to take the under secretaryship, which I was delighted to do to go back to the interesting life of Washington. While I was in office they changed to title from being the under secretary to deputy secretary, largely I thought because the Defense Department had the deputy secretary and other departments were beginning to have deputy secretaries. I was the only voice that said we should retain keep the title the under secretary, it had been a traditional title, but my boss, then Secretary William Rogers, decided that we change the title to deputy under secretary so my title changed with no change in duties whatsoever. I continued in State until the end of 1974, at that time there was a vacancy in the embassy in France and President Nixon asked if I wanted to go to France. He appointed Kenneth Rusk as deputy secretary of state and I accepted to go to the embassy in France.

I had known in moderation France, but never intimately. Paris itself is such a beautiful city that it was a delight to be in. I found the French charming and hospitable. Often I would have Americans come to me and say that "I find the French so irritating" whether they were just passing in the street or what their experience in a shop had been. I would say, "Yes that is true, they can be, were and are, but you must remember that they can find Americans equally irritating from their perspective so we both have to recognize that we can irritate the other, so let's not let the irritation, at least from the American point of view, overcome our good sense and recognition of the vital role that France plays in Europe, and in much of the rest of the world, originally through its former colonial empire and then through its successful continuance of its friendly and sometimes paternalistic relationship with its former colonies. Anyway France has done a better job in keeping its good relations with its former colonies than perhaps the British have." Although I always thought that when they had colonies Britain ran them better than France, but that is one of those uncertain things that one never knows too much about.

Perhaps my first experience in France goes back to my days in the Defense Department. I traveled with President Eisenhower when we went to London, Bonn and Paris. At that time the U - 2 had just been shot down over the Soviet Union, Secretary Dulles had died and Secretary Herter was Secretary of State. We were at a meeting of NATO in Turkey and I

remember the incident well; we had just left NATO and were flying to Athens and this message came to Secretary Herter that the U - 2 had been shot down. It was partially a result of that that we returned more quickly to the United States. There was a debate as to whether or not we should avow the U - 2 or whether we should just keep silent on it, or say nothing about it as if it were not basically our aircraft. However the ultimate decision reached by President Eisenhower was that it be accepted as our airplane. As a matter of fact he gave out all the pictures that had been taken to show what it could take in Russia. The plane used to fly from Pakistan to, I think, Norway and then back and forth. It had made many successful flights, it could fly above what was thought to be the range of any then artillery or missile, but on the day that Gary Powers was flying it from Pakistan to Norway, whether the plane was low or the missile was higher than it was thought to be, it was shot down, and the pilot, whose name was Gary Powers, was taken prisoner. Later on he was exchanged for a spy [Colonel. Abel] whom we had incarcerated over here.

That U - 2 incident of course aggravated the relationship between Russia and the United States; Premier Khrushchev had previously visited the United States and there was beginning to be a softening of relationships, a least a little better relationship.

Q: I think he went to your home state.

IRWIN: Yes, he went to Iowa, California, several places across the country. A meeting between France, England, Russia and the United States had been set for Paris and that came just after the U - 2. President de Gaulle was then still alive and in power. There was the assembly of the four heads of those states, but it was clear that the meeting that could have been profitable under the relationship pre - U2 could not have continued in the atmosphere because of the attitude and indignation of the Soviet government. At that meeting I would say that although President de Gaulle has never been particularly popular with Americans, he generally was not popular with our military, at that time I thought he was very helpful to President Eisenhower in easing the situation at the meeting between Khrushchev and Eisenhower. There was no question that de Gaulle, while trying to keep the meeting in even temper, was clearly in Eisenhower's corner.

Another incident of de Gaulle I would mention that I did not know about, but only heard about, but in that same line. Was in the Cuban missile crisis when President Kennedy had taken over. Later on our aerial photography showed missiles being moved into Cuba by the Soviet Union and it was at that point that President Kennedy faced up to Primer Khrushchev that they be withdrawn. President Kennedy sent emissaries to the European countries and show them pictures of the missiles and explain the background so that we would have the support of our NATO allies and they would understand what was going on. I have always been told that when the emissary got to President de Gaulle, President de Gaulle said, "You don't have to show me the pictures. Tell President Kennedy he has my support". So while I think that the French are always individualistic, they are always zealous and jealous of their so - called French independence, they are particularly keen to be sure their language remains pure and they can be mischievous when their people with their language are involved, you may remember when General de Gaulle visited Canada.

When he left he said, "*Viva Quebec libre!*" which did not please the Canadian government at all, although it did please the French nationalists in Quebec.

My having left the State Department which brings us to our present topic. I might say that my only tie to the government since I left France was that I served on a commission to UNESCO under President Reagan. That was an interesting short term service.

Now in France it is difficult, both because of faulty memory and I have kept no records, I left them in the State Department and I failed to keep a diary. In my next life, if I ever have the opportunity, I will keep a diary. In preparing for this interview I asked two of my former colleagues in Paris, Dan Phillips, who is now ambassador to the Congo, and Hank Cohen, who was political counselor and is now assistant secretary for Near East and Africa, to remind me of principle issues. So what I say is more a measure of their memories than it is of mine.

My ambassadorship came at a time when France was moving into a new internal relationship as well as a relationship, perhaps, with its NATO allies and the United States. The transitional period in French politics was from de Gaulle to whomever was ultimately to follow, but the immediate transition was to President Pompidou. President Pompidou took office immediately following President de Gaulle's resignation and continued to the election of Giscard D'Estaing in early 1974. It was clear that President Pompidou did not have the charisma and the wide appeal that General de Gaulle had, but he did have a sense of pragmatism, which I felt was very valuable at that time. In fact at the time of his death I felt that France lost at his early death, I think that if he had survived for a couple of more years it would have been better for the transition from de Gaulle to, as it turned out, President Giscard than as it was, his having died that early. But all was not easy with the Pompidou regime. He himself was a much easier man to deal with than General de Gaulle, partially because of his pragmatism and partially because he had been a businessman a considerable part of his life, he was a partner in one of the Rothschild operations. He was just a solid, fine individual, at least in my mind.

While he was in the Elysée Palace his primary assistant for foreign affairs was Michele Joubert and while M. Joubert was in the Elysée I found him always helpful. When I had problems and while we may have disagreed with a problem he was helpful. Then President Pompidou appointed him foreign minister and he moved to the Quai d'Orsay and from then on he was unhelpful. I have never quite understood the change, almost in personality, that occurred from Joubert leaving the Elysée Palace and then going to the Quai. Perhaps it was the issue, perhaps it was because he was in more true foreign policy charge of the issues. Other people have queried whether it was a sense of competition with the then Secretary Kissinger who had been in a comparable position with the Nixon in the White House before he became Secretary of State, whatever it was he did make quite a change. That does get on further than the issues to which I might speak.

During Pompidou's regime, his party, the UDR, the *Union [?] de la République*, was losing strength. The center and center right and just left of center were gaining strength, and that

was Valery Giscard D'Estaing's *Federation National de Republican Independant* or RI as we would say, Republicans Independent, along with other centrist parties, Servan Schreiber's Radical Party, called CD. They were moving towards becoming the primary political force, if you joined them all together in France. In the elections in early 1974 or you could say that the early elections in 1973 you could say that while the UDR, the Gaullist party, had the largest party in the Assembly, it no longer had an absolutist majority. It had to work with Giscard D'Estaing's Republican Independents with the Radical Party and with the CD in order to have an absolute majority. At the 1973 election in France in which the UDR Party one the largest number of seats but not an absolute majority the Socialist Party under François Mitterrand won a number of seats, I don't remember how many, but it was enough to be recognized as a small section of the parliament. Mitterrand almost immediately began to develop a relationship with the Communist Party, trying to get them to work together on socialist issues. This was displeasing to the United States and Secretary Kissinger was concerned and asked that the embassy make a demarche to M. Mitterrand to see if he would not break off from the Communists. The concern was that the Communists might through the Socialists develop too much influence in the overall two parties and therefor effect the relationship that France had with its allies. We made such a demarche, which M. Mitterrand did not accept and as ultimate political events showed, he was correct. You have to skip a few years until the election in which the Socialist won and President Mitterrand came to power. He brought the Communists into power with him but they steadily lost power in the French electorate and they went down from something like fifteen to twenty percent or even a little more to down to under ten percent, maybe under five percent. So Mitterrand strategy of bringing them in and then encompassing them and smothering them, you might say, within his own party was successful both for his view and to a large degree for ours -- I am getting a little ahead of ourselves for that happened considerably after. The consideration came much later than when he was a small party in the French parliament in 1973.

As mentioned earlier the de Gaulle government was almost fanatical in its desire to be independent, particularly to be seen in Europe and by the Soviet Union as not a dependent of the United States. It had a combined view of the United States, or rather, a schizophrenic view almost, on one hand it had certain resentments against the United States in theory, not in any particular issue, but just the concept of we being too powerful in Europe, on the other hand it recognized the importance of the military strength of the United States in back of the NATO allies. Any one who listens to this tape will know that General de Gaulle withdrew militarily from the NATO alliance, he drew his military forces out from under the military command of the NATO headquarters, however France remained a member of NATO, often that is misunderstood in the United States and people thought that France just withdrew from NATO. They only withdrew from the military arm of NATO. They would not have thought of moving away from the political side of NATO for that would have lessened their political influence in Europe. That is one of the key ambitions of France, to remain powerful politically in Europe and in the Third World.

In 1973 the United States had various objectives. One of them was to try to move the Gaullist government, the UDR government, then under President Pompidou to a more

productive relationship with the United States, or at least a more open and less confrontational dialogue. For this purpose the embassy met at all levels with the French government. I would meet with President Pompidou, with Foreign Minister Joubert, with Premier Jacques Chirac, and later on Premier Chabblom Delmonte and others while the staff of the embassy would be meeting with their opposite numbers in the Quai d'Orsay, or perhaps with the Treasury or with the Interior Ministry or whatever it may be. We tried to cover the whole gamut of relationships so we could find out what the French were thinking and doing throughout its government and report that to our government, and so that we could tell the various arms of the French government our views and thoughts, whether they were acceptable to the French or not. That is what we wanted to achieve, a dialogue, even if we disagreed, rather than the sense we had a difficult time talking to each other, which had existed under de Gaulle.

As well as meeting with the government, of course, we met with the other political parties, particularly with Giscard D'Estaing's party and the other centrist parties and with the Socialists. We would hope that our relationships that developed with the centrist parties would have been one of the reasons when Giscard came to the presidency in May 1974 that the United States was able to have good relationships with him to a much greater degree than it had with de Gaulle and considerably better than with M. Pompidou and M. Joubert.

Carrying on the same tradition with the Socialists we met at all levels with the Socialists. I had then M. Mitterrand, now President Mitterrand, to lunch at least once and to my memory he came twice and some of the younger Socialists were invited to visit the United States as part of the USIA international visitors' program. This included certain men who became ministers later on under the Mitterrand government. M. Mitterrand did not speak English but was considered a French intellectual among the French intellectuals which was somewhat unique for a French politician just as it would be for an American politician. But you would have to say that M. Mitterrand had been an opportunist. One time he worked closely with de Gaulle in the early days, then he ran for political office under one of the centrist or conservative parties and did not do well. Finally he shifted to the Socialist Party and it was there that he came into his success, first in this modest way in 1973 and then later on as all of us know, as president of France. This is jumping to his presidency. During his first two years as president he put forward many of the Socialist theories as part of his government program. It was only after two years of in effect failure and watching the economy of France deteriorate substantially, that he switched from socialism and became quite pragmatic and went into a different phase which drew criticism over the past few years from some of his theoretical socialists, but some acceptance from the business community. They would now say that he is not as bad as they originally thought him to be or expected him to be. That does not say that most of the businessmen you meet in France would not say they would like to see the Socialists defeated in the next election. But at almost the same breath they would fear that there is no one on the horizon that could defeat them. Speaking today rather than as I should be talking about my embassy, I believe the Socialists could be defeated, and rather easily, but only if M. Giscard D'Estaing, M. Chirac and M. Barre, who are the three principle centrist or rightist who will all independently run for president, but none of them will succeed, if all of them were to get together, and say

"We have agreed not to run, but will support so - and - so" they could pick out whomever they wished out of the center parties, then I think France would really have a chance for a new look. A new president who would defeat the Socialists, who would not be far right, but have the support of those three gentlemen who had power in the past politically and still have power, but not sufficient power. Again as many know M. Chirac has been an excellent mayor of Paris, but will not, in my mind, succeed in becoming president of France.

However, that may be wrong, but as we go back to the time of 1974 and de Gaulle and Pompidou, energy was one of our issues, there was disagreement. As you may remember, OPEC had recently been formed and the price of oil was rising because of the policies of OPEC. Secretary Kissinger wanted the United States to lead a bloc of the Western countries and take a tough attitude in the negotiations with OPEC. Pompidou and Joubert preferred to have a French - led dialogue with OPEC on behalf of the Western countries, including the United States. They argued that they had a special relationship with Arabs in contrast with the United States relationship with Israel which they felt would be disadvantageous with the Arabs. The combination would qualify France for the leadership. There was merit in the French position, but it also reflected their deep - seated resistance to U.S. leadership over Europe. They recognized U.S. leadership in military affairs and leadership in other parts of the world, but they always strived to prevent a domination by the United States, at least what they considered a domination, of Europe even through NATO.

Foreign Minister Joubert took a harsh line against the United States also on the issue also on the issue of the formation of the International Energy Agency. We strongly favored its creation. Kissinger pushed it hard with the rest of Europe and Joubert became more Gaullist than de Gaulle and was abusive both of the United States and its allies over the issue. In fact, he opened one of the EEC Council of Ministers meetings at that time by saying to his European colleagues, *Bonjour Monsieur l'Trait!* As an aside on M. Joubert, even with his anti - U.S. views at the time he was Minister of Foreign Affairs, his wife is an American and his child was at that time attending the American School in Paris. In the end France was isolated in opposing the IEA and as time went on Joubert faded from prominence when Giscard won the presidency. Throughout that period the embassy's mission was to present the U.S. views forcefully but diplomatically in the sense that I mentioned earlier, seeking a dialogue rather than just a confrontation.

In defense there was also disagreements between the United States and France. Some of them were the abstract differences arising from France's so - called desire for independence, but also there were concrete issues, such as the financial one of the replacement of aircraft by Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway. The issue was the U.S. F - 16 pitted against the Mirage M - 53. There was great political pressure by France on its neighbors and the U.S. too was trying to sell its airplane, although at that time and I think it is still largely the policy of the United States as the government generally kept out of economic issues of trying to persuade a country to buy a particular American product. We would speak generally to the ambassadors of European countries in Paris or other ambassadors would talk to the countries to which they were assigned, we did not

exert the same kind of political pressure on the potential purchasers of an aircraft that France did, directly in support of its industry. That of course is true of most other countries.

The United States is almost isolated in its traditional distancing itself from the business of the United States rather than looking at the examples of the France, Japan, the Soviet Union and even Britain, all of whom support to a much greater degree their economic outreach than the United States has. I hope in more recent times, and in the future, the United States is moving towards more support of its private sector because so much of the world today is international economic competition. If the United States business has no support from the United States government and the other countries have support it makes it a much more difficult competitive environment for an individual American business, particularly a small business in the United States. That, of course, is personal opinion.

Another less publicized issue was the problem that arose from the visit of U.S. naval ships which might have nuclear weapons aboard to French ports. The United States never will state whether or not a particular vessel has or has not nuclear weapons, but it just in effect desires our ships to come ashore. The French did not object to our coming into port, but there was a difference of opinion as to the type of indemnity that would result if there were an accident, particularly a nuclear accident, when a vessel of the United States was in a French port. The French wanted to have any indemnity or fault decided by the French courts. The United States held that it should be subject to bi-lateral negotiations. It was not decided during my time.

With respect to the broader issues of NATO and *detente* and the EEC, by *detente* I really refer to the Soviet Union, at that time President Pompidou and Minister Joubert questioned what they called our over commitment to *detente* with the USSR. That had a certain irony to it because France over the years has looked to itself as the principle link to the Soviet Union for Europe, and itself would have liked to be the real representative for the Western group with the Soviet Union, and even helping the U.S. with the Soviet Union. Along with that there was disagreement on the *Force de Frappe*, the nuclear force of France which grew at the same time that the nuclear force of England was growing. The United States never objected to the nuclear force in England and France, and it fact had helped at certain times, but it was not enthusiastic about it. The Soviet Union was, of course, opposed to it. So there was always an element of question in dealing with France about the *Force de Frappe*, any limited test ban treaty with the Soviet Union, who wished to include the French and British forces and the United States said, "We have no control over them." The Soviet Union was looking in effect for us to have the same type of control over the nuclear forces of France and England as they had over the forces they put into Eastern Europe. Of course, Eastern Europe had no nuclear forces of their own. So France was of two minds, as I mentioned earlier. They wanted not to have the U.S. in too great prominence and control in Europe, but they also worried that if the U.S. was pushed too far from Europe, isolationist sentiment might take over in the United States and it might weaken alliance because of the uncertainty of the military power being available from the United States.

So all through this thing you have this dual view. At the same time that these issues were occurring with France, and of course in different degrees on other issues with other countries, Europe was going through what possibly might be called a difficult phase. Revolutionary change was underway in Portugal with the ultimate end of the Salazar regime, the Greek - Turkish dispute over Cyprus had heated up, there was unrest in Spain and Italy which threatened the democratic underpinnings. At one time there was real concern about the Communist strength in Italy. Of course there was the civil war earlier in Spain and then there was the domination of Franco, and in Italy there was the Communist potential. One was concerned with the future of Spain. Although no one probably remembers it today, there was often discussion in the press and among the commentators who had to look for something to say in their columns, about the Finlandization of areas of Western Europe or all of Western Europe. That disappeared in time, but there was a period when that was of concern.

As a result of all this France did begin to show a degree of greater flexibility in its role towards NATO. The French attitude toward NATO loosened in the sense that it began to cooperate in small, low visibility steps, such as in planning, logistics, more information sharing, joint exercises of our forces even though they maintained independent control of their forces, and that type of military issue in which they could cooperate without appearing to reduce their political independence or their separation of military force. Still it represented a giant step away from de Gaulle's attitude which was perhaps best stated or symbolized by his contentious statement that France nuclear arms defended France from aggression coming from both the East and the West.

Another side of closer French - U.S. cooperation on Europe resulted from a U.S. - EEC agreement to share information and consult as the community developed common foreign policies. This arrangement was originally opposed by France, they were reluctant to reach an agreement but such an agreement was worked out by Secretary Kissinger and Foreign Minister Joubert. The French honored the agreement when it came the time for a Frenchman to be the head of the EEC because it was under each presidency that the president would enter into the discussions with the United States, normally of the embassy in the country which held the presidency of the EEC.

When Giscard took over there was more cooperation. As Pompidou had begun to move away a degree from de Gaulle's firm position, Giscard moved considerably further and was cooperative, and even worked well with the United States. During Giscard's period he initiated a North - South dialogue. The United States was not particularly enthusiastic about that because it felt that it would result on a greater demand on U.S. resources through aid. But we agreed to it and went along with Giscard with it . Similarly Giscard came up with the idea of an economic summit with the Western countries -- that started at the time I was in Paris, but finished thereafter a couple of years later. Not much was done through the embassy. It was largely done by Mr. George Shultz, who was sent as a special, almost a secret, envoy by Dr. Kissinger to work with the countries of Western Europe.

Economics and trade has always been an issue, or potential issue between France and the United States. They support strongly their own agriculture and do not wish to be undersold by any other country, certainly not by the United States shipping large quantities of grain which we have often for sale at a lower price. They were concerned about the floating of the dollar, which -- I forget the exact time it went off the gold standard -- but it occurred while I was in France. If the dollar seemed to be too high the French criticized the United States for undermining French economic stability; it was too low they were apt to charge we were dumping cheap goods on the French market and competing unfairly with their industry. That of course remains a perennial issue and still is one of the facts involved in GATT today and will be involved even more so if we succeed with a free trade agreement with Mexico, the United States and Canada.

The Middle East was always an area of contention. Secretary Kissinger at that time was taking a step by step approach to the Middle East. The French preferred an international conference which they felt that they could have more dominance in politically because of their position, not only within Europe, but because of their previous position and relationships with the Arab world. Because of that Joubert gave great support to Arafat and the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] supporting, as a modest example, Arafat's request to address the United Nations. All of which was irritating to the United States and we, of course, differed frankly with them. The degree which we succeeded to any leadership in the United States, the difference in feeling can be recalled in a comment that M. Joubert made when he spoke of the United States leadership in the Middle East peace process as a humiliation for France. That seems from our point of view a rather narrow, individual view, but anyway that is what his statement was. The embassy's mission was damage limitation and using diplomacy and dialogue rather than confrontation.

In the negotiations to end the Vietnamese war France was very helpful. Most of the negotiations took place in France, secretly by Secretary Kissinger himself dealing with the Vietnamese representatives in France. The embassy had practically nothing to do with that as it was directly out of Kissinger's office when he was National Security Advisor and later, of course, when he was Secretary of State. Again the duality of the French views came forth, some circles in France were happy to see the United States humiliated in Vietnam, others were concerned because they knew that it was essential for a strong Europe to have strong outward looking America who would be willing to cooperate with Europe and not retreat into isolationism, which Europe remembers as a former strong feeling in the United States, certainly at the beginning of World War II.

I spoke earlier about President Giscard D'Estaing's approach being less ideological, but even there he had certain inhibitions because Jacques Chirac was a strong Gaullist and he was his prime minister. All of that limited to some degree Giscard's ability to move away from the Gaullist doctrine although he and his foreign minister, Saviard, became the architects of what could be termed a more benign foreign policy towards the United States and towards the world and accordingly our relations improved.

The embassy in other contexts continued to work with France, criticized French views but presented French views to the United States in a way we could understand the French point of view and not just as a confrontational issue. We tried to oppose voices in Washington that appeared to be confrontational and looked at French views of the French government primarily with pretension and ambition other than trying to get a working agreement together. We tried to point out to both sides that we were in favor of a strong France, economically and militarily, because it would complement the United States' power, not only in NATO and Europe, but throughout the world. That was the approach that Giscard and the U.S. administrations following the time I was in Paris really adopted and worked quite well together with.

There were other important, but less political issues, one of which, for example, dealt with culture. France always was concerned and perhaps upset that after World War II much of the modern painting world, the center of it, shifted to the United States, away from the traditional situation where Paris was the center of all the art world. Now whether that is going on today, there is some question, whether in the 1990s it is shifting partly back to Europe, partly back to here. There was one incident dealing with a painting that the National Gallery was purchasing from a Frenchman. I had Frenchman who had been in what would have been comparable to their supreme court call me as an independent position, he was not calling as an official of France, but calling because he was concerned about the National Gallery purchasing this very fine French painting. He asked me if I could not persuade the National Gallery to take another painting rather than this particular painting. Fortunately I could disavow any part of what the National Gallery was doing, or any influence on it.

But there are elements in France that carry their position not only in the political, military and economic world, but also in the cultural and aspects of business and the media. I think in essence the view in France really remains much the same that it always has, the desire to perpetuate the French language as a beautiful language used throughout the world wherever it has been used and a desire to remain a strong influence in Europe and always looking askance at the United States if we appear to be too dominant in our relationships with NATO or the EEC. It will be interesting to watch the next decade of the 1990's to watch what happens to our relationships in Europe as a result of the situation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Q: I know that we have to break this off. I would say that there are in the archives over two hours of brilliant analysis by an American of extraordinary talent who believes in the foreign policy of the United States and who has been a practitioner in a rich variety of vineyards that our country has maintained throughout the world and I want to thank you.

IRWIN: I want to say what a pleasure it was to talk with you on this, to try bring back to mind...

Q: It is Thursday, May 31, 1991 in Mr. Irwin's office and we are in the process in closing an interview of his experiences regarding the U.S. government in foreign affairs.

IRWIN: If I might repeat what I said at the beginning, it is always a pleasure to work in Washington, at least it has been my pleasure. I have enjoyed the privilege whenever I have had that opportunity to serve.

Going back to making one more point with respect to the Defense Department. Perhaps it can be inserted into my comments on Defense. I thought it was interesting to remark that I served under three secretaries of defense. I arrived under Secretary Charles Wilson who had been the head of General Motors. He was succeeded by Mr. Neil McElroy, who had been CEO of Proctor & Gamble. The next secretary and the last one under whom I served was Secretary Thomas Gates. All three were fine men. If one had to make a choice, I would have to list Secretary Gates as the number one, partially because of his overall background and knowledge, and also because he had served as Secretary of the Navy, then as Deputy Secretary of Defense before he became Secretary of Defense. He had had a long experience in Washington and in military and defense affairs. He was a remarkable man.

End of interview