

Pat M. Holt

Chief of Staff

Foreign Relations Committee

Preface

by Donald A. Ritchie

The evolution of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from bipartisan support to challenge and confrontation of presidential foreign policy has been perhaps the most dramatic movement in the history of the Senate since World War II. The unity fostered by the Cold War was shattered in the 1960's by such shocks as the Bay of pigs invasion, the landing of American troops in the Dominican Republic and Vietnam, the efforts to destabilize the Allende government in Chile, and the perception of a "credibility gap" between the White House and Congress. With great reluctance, Chairman [J. William Fulbright](#) and other members of the committee broke with the administrations of [Lyndon Johnson](#) and [Richard Nixon](#) and began to redefine the Senate's role in foreign policy. This movement from the days of [Arthur Vandenberg](#) and [Tom Connally](#) to those of Fulbright, [Eugene McCarthy](#), [George McGovern](#), and [Frank Church](#), is here recounted by Pat M. Holt, who served on the Foreign Relations Committee's staff from 1950 to 1977, retiring as its chief of staff.

Beginning in 1958, almost by accident, Pat Holt became the committee's specialist on Latin American relations. Shortly afterwards came Vice President Nixon's ill-fated tour of South America, ending with the storming of his limousine in Venezuela, and then Fidel Castro's revolution in Cuba. Latin American relations thereafter assumed an increasingly important position on the committee's agenda. Suspicions over the Johnson administration's version of conditions in the Dominican Republic--as reflected in Holt's examination of state Department and CIA records--clearly shaped the committee's response to reports coming out of Vietnam. The various investigations of events in Chile also significantly affected the committee's dealings with the Nixon administration.

Pat Mayo Holt was born on September 5, 1920, in Gatesville, Texas. He attended the University of Texas and the Columbia School of Journalism and served as a reporter for the *Melbourne Herald* in 1941, the *Providence Journal* from 1942 to 1946, the *Congressional Quarterly* from 1946 to 1949, and the *Reporter* from 1949 to 1950. Drafted into the Army during World War II, he came to Washington as a Japanese language translator, and remained in the capital after the war. In 1950, Chairman Tom Connally hired Holt as a member of the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and he remained with the committee for the next twenty-seven years. During that time he served under the chairmanships of Connally, [Alexander Wiley](#), Walter George, [Theodore Green](#), J. William Fulbright, and [John Sparkman](#), all of whom he discusses in these interviews.

As an observer of American foreign relations, Pat Holt wrote several books, including *Colombia Today--and Tomorrow* (New York: Praeger, 1964), *U.S. Policy in World Affairs* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971), *The War Powers Resolution* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1978), and *Invitation to Struggle* (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1980), with Cecil Crabb. To these writings, this oral history adds his personal reminiscences of the men and events associated with the Senate Foreign Relations committee during his twenty-seven years of service. Holt died on September 24, 2007.

About the Interviewer--Donald A. Ritchie is associate historian of the Senate Historical office. A graduate of C.C.N.Y., he received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland. He has taught at the University College of the University of Maryland, George Mason University, and the Northern Virginia Community College, and conducted a survey of automated bibliographical systems for the American Historical Association. He has published several articles on American political and economic history, and a book, *James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), and has served as editor of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Historical Series of executive session transcripts. A member of the Oral History Association, he is an officer of OHMAR (Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region).
