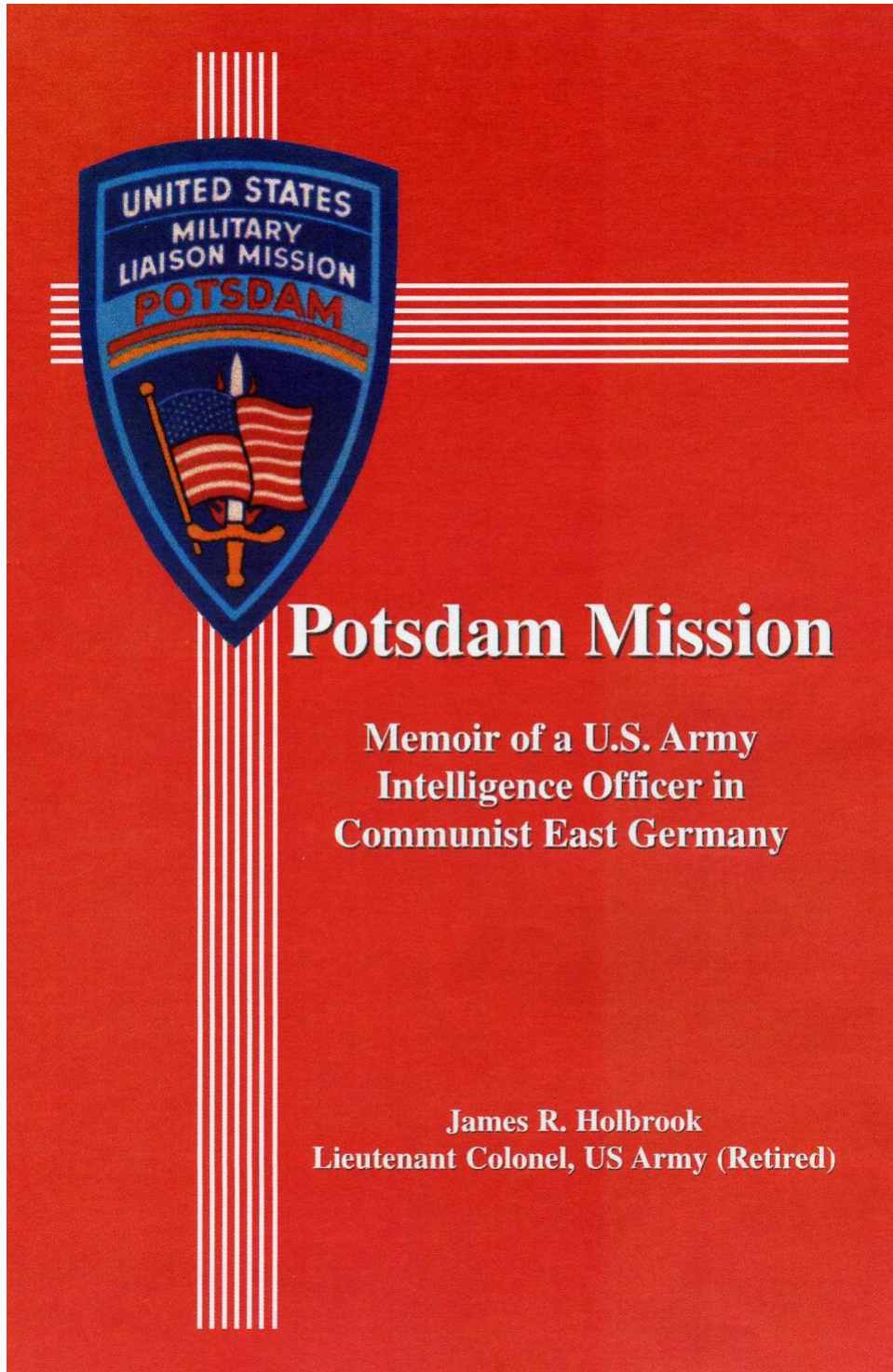


THE FOLLOWING IS A SAMPLE TAKEN FROM

*Potsdam Mission:  
Memoir of a U.S. Army Intelligence Officer in  
Communist East Germany*



Visit <https://holbrookrussia.com/> to learn more or to purchase the book.

As we started across a bridge on the highway, a chain snapped up in front of us. Sergeant Germaine slammed on the Opel's brakes and we screeched into the chain barrier. From underneath the bridge a squad of armed Soviet soldiers scrambled up onto the bridge and pointed their rifles at us. They were led by a lieutenant.

"What the hell!" Sergeant Germaine said as he looked over at me.

"I don't know what this is," I said.

Having rifles pointed at one is not a comfortable feeling. This had never happened before to either of us in East Germany. Once, on an earlier tour in East Germany, as we came around a corner in the middle of a forest, a solitary, armed Soviet soldier guarding his installation had confronted my driver and me. He was as surprised by us as we were to see him. He didn't point his rifle at us, however, and I was able to extricate us from that situation by not speaking Russian at all, but rather making hand signals to the effect that we were lost and would immediately back away.

The lieutenant came over to my side of the Opel. I rolled down the window.

"What the hell is this all about," I shouted at him. He asked me for my pass.

"Why should I give my pass to some young lieutenant who doesn't have enough sense to have his soldiers lower their weapons. What if one of them gets the crazy idea to be a hero and shoot an American soldier." I didn't sound frightened, but I was.

The lieutenant turned back to his soldiers and gave some kind of signal. They all drew back the mechanisms on their AK-47 assault rifles, presumably putting a round into the firing chamber. I was concerned one of the soldiers would make a mistake and bump his trigger. In retrospect, the weapons were probably not loaded, or the rounds were blanks, as the Soviets rationed their ammunition very carefully. Moreover, given the lack of trust in their own soldiers, the Soviets probably wouldn't have let a patrol run around with live ammo. But I've always felt even unloaded weapons are "loaded."