

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

Rusk GGGG

Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas J. Schoenbaum

circa 1985

SCHOENBAUM: This is a follow-up interview on essentially World War II. We'll try to cover some holes in the previous interviews. Rich Rusk and Tom Schoenbaum are doing the interviewing. I wanted to ask, first of all, some questions about when you were in G-2 [Military Intelligence] from October 1941 to June of 1943 in the Missions Building on the Mall and you were the Asian expert. We've already got an interview on that. But one question that's quite important: On November 27, 1941, according to the record, there were warnings sent about a Japanese attack: warnings sent by, I think G-2 or by the Joint Chiefs at that time to some of our commanders in the Pacific. Were you involved in that at all?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, to the extent that Southeast Asia was involved. We had very strong indications that the Japanese were going to move on Malaya [Malaysia] and Indonesia before Pearl Harbor. And indeed we had had some joint military talks with the British and the Dutch about that possibility. Then as we approached Pearl Harbor we were following a large Japanese fleet that was moving south toward Malaya and Indonesia. And that very much involved my own responsibilities in G-2, so I followed that very carefully on a day-by-day basis.

SCHOENBAUM: Where were you getting reports?

DEAN RUSK: Getting them from--the most important reports were coming from naval intelligence and wireless intercepts and things of that sort. And we could follow that particular Japanese fleet very well. But alongside of that, the other part of G-2 having to do directly with Japan had lost another Japanese fleet. We didn't know where it was. And that was the fleet that turned out to attack Pearl Harbor under radio silence. But anyhow, we were expecting an attack on Malaya and Indonesia on the weekend of Pearl Harbor. Indeed I myself reported to work about six o'clock that Sunday morning of Pearl Harbor because we were expecting this attack in the area in which I was directly involved.

SCHOENBAUM: Would that have been a landing on Malaya?

DEAN RUSK: We expected an invasion on Malaya and also Indonesia. But anyhow, that part of the attack of the weekend of Pearl Harbor was anticipated and I can't say that the forces in the area were braced for it, either in Malaya or in Indonesia. But nevertheless the attack was expected.

SCHOENBAUM: But it was thought to come to be imminent in Malaya and Indonesia rather than--

DEAN RUSK: Right. Right.

SCHOENBAUM: So that took you by surprise?

DEAN RUSK: Well the Pearl Harbor thing came as a surprise to military intelligence. Indeed, as soon as the Pearl Harbor attack came, immediately after the attack Colonel [Arthur] Compton, the colonel in charge of my section of G-2, came and showed me a memorandum that had been prepared the week before by the Japanese section of G-2 which listed the areas which might be subject to Japanese attack in the Pacific and Pearl Harbor was not on the list. He said, "I thought I ought to show this to you because you will never see this memorandum again because all copies are being gathered up and destroyed." But there is no doubt in my mind that the attack on Pearl Harbor came as a surprise. Now on the morning of Pearl Harbor there were some intercepts that caused some last minute action: people scurrying around trying to get word out to [Husband E.] Kimmel and [Walter] Short in Hawaii.

DEAN RUSK: I was not involved in that. But it was too late then to have them really braced. I think I've already put on tape why I was ordered to G-2 in the first place.

SCHOENBAUM: Yes. Yes we have that.

DEAN RUSK: All right.

SCHOENBAUM: Now, the next thing that happened while you were in G-2 was the invasion of--well Japan--the taking of the Philippines by Japan. There are some interesting things that the historical record has there. I think the book which is a history of World War II that I wrote kind of takes a swipe at [Douglas] MacArthur. It says that MacArthur left for Australia on March 10 and that didn't do any good for the morale of the American troops in the Philippines. And also there was a decision in Washington not to relieve the garrison on the Philippines. Were you involved in that, in those decisions in supplying information or anything like that?

DEAN RUSK: Not at a very high level. Because the decision was made promptly after Pearl Harbor by the United States and Great Britain that we would give first priority to the war against Hitler. That was the main theatre. It was important to defeat Hitler and then we could defeat Japan after that. All through the war, therefore, Europe was the first priority theatre. However I would point out that although the Pacific was the second priority theatre, it was still a major effort. Indeed it was an effort which virtually defeated Japan without major redeployments from the European theatre after the defeat of Hitler. So it was a secondary theatre, but it was a very large secondary, a very strong secondary theatre.

RICHARD RUSK: Were there any major redeployment from Europe to the Pacific before V-E [Victory in Europe] day?

DEAN RUSK: Not before V-E day, no.

RICHARD RUSK: Not before? It was a total effort right up to the very end?

DEAN RUSK: Right. Right.

SCHOENBAUM: The Singapore case--

DEAN RUSK: By the way, I personally think that decision was right. I think Hitler was much the greater threat and that although there was a good deal of stir in American public opinion because the attack on us had come in the Pacific and a lot of people felt that Japan was the main enemy therefore. And when the Japanese landed a few men on one of the Aleutian Islands that created a great stir. Here was American soil under attack. Actually those Japanese in the Aleutians were not going anywhere. It was not a major military problem in the overall point of the war, but politically it was important to winkle them out of there and we had to do that.

SCHOENBAUM: What was your mood before--I guess after Munich you knew that war was inevitable in Europe, and after the oil embargo did it become clear that it was just a matter of time in the Far East as well? After the oil embargo on Japan?

DEAN RUSK: Well I developed stronger and stronger feelings throughout the thirties that war was inevitable because of the momentum that the aggressors in Japan and [Benito] Mussolini and Hitler were developing.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you remember a specific time when you thought, "That's it. If I wasn't convinced before, I'm now convinced."?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think I've told you earlier that when the Japanese seized Manchuria I thought that something very important had happened.

DEAN RUSK: And I must say the successive moves during the thirties to me was very much of an alert that war was on the way. I mean, the attitude of the United States at that time was pacifist and isolationist. I was aware that Secretary of State Henry [Lewis] Stimson thought that we ought to do something about the Japanese seizure of Manchuria but that Herbert [Clark] Hoover wouldn't let him. Of course we, on the West Coast where I was living at the time--Well, where I came to be living caused us to be especially alert to Japan's war against China and the threat there in the Pacific: a concern that was not shared by the east and the south in this country. They weren't as sensitive to Pacific Ocean affairs as we were in California.

SCHOENBAUM: And you were in the Third division which was later sent, was it to Italy or was it to--or was that the division that was sent to Corregidor and Battan?

DEAN RUSK: No, the Third division was in the North African campaign, and then to Sicily in the Italian campaigns, and then it was pulled out to take part in the Normandy landings. It went right through the war and had a brilliant record. But I left the third division before it went overseas. I was transferred back to G-2 and the War Department.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, I understand. Now, Singapore was a major defeat for the British, of course, and therefore for us indirectly. Again, was there somewhat of a problem with [Winston Leonard Spencer] Churchill? Some of the accounts say that Churchill was bullheaded over

mounting an offensive in North Africa and he neglected to reinforce Singapore and the Japanese used the back door to compensate for it.

DEAN RUSK: Well they landed in Northern Malaya initially.

SCHOENBAUM: And you predicted that, didn't you?

DEAN RUSK: Well when I studied the terrain of Malaya, it was clear to me that the Japanese would not simply slog in purely land operations down that peninsula: mountainous terrain, much of it, covered with thick jungle. And it seemed to be obvious that the Japanese were going to make a series of amphibious moves into the river mouths on both sides of the peninsula down the peninsula. And I prepared a map showing these stages that the Japanese would almost certainly use and which indeed the Japanese did use. That got me some brownie points in G-2. But it seemed to be obvious. Now Singapore's static defenses had been aimed toward the sea. Their big guns and things of that sort were all positioned to resist an attack by sea. They were not aimed toward the land side of Singapore. And in any event the forces there were simply not adequate for the task. Unfortunately one Australian division which was on its way to the Middle East was diverted into Singapore just in time for the surrender.

SCHOENBAUM: To be captured.

DEAN RUSK: And that created some very bitter feelings between Australia and the British and Winston Churchill.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you attempt to warn or did you attempt to--you were lower level

DEAN RUSK: Well I think I was a captain at that time. I told my own superiors what I thought was in the works. But I don't know how far up that went.

SCHOENBAUM: You knew they were headed toward Singapore and you knew what Singapore was--

DEAN RUSK: Oh, well they were already attacking Indonesia. So it was certain to include Singapore.

SCHOENBAUM: But you didn't know anything about--there was apparently exchange that somebody asked Churchill to reinforce Singapore and Churchill said "no."

DEAN RUSK: I don't believe that any reinforcements of Singapore would have done any good because they would not have been on the scale required to fend off the Japanese attack.

SCHOENBAUM: In G-2, then, did you have anything to do with the--then once Singapore fell, Burma and India, well Burma anyway, was next and even Australia was at peril. What were your duties in G-2 after that?

DEAN RUSK: Well I followed those operations very closely and we knew in Washington that the defense forces in Burma, for example, would have no chance against the Japanese. They were very thin; they were native troops by and large, under British officers; there was no way to supply them or really reinforce them in any significant fashion. So it seemed to me that the British and General Stilwell and his few Chinese were going to be driven out of Burma, and the chief question was how to get them out.

SCHOENBAUM: How to get them out and how to save India or--?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. We were somewhat concerned about India. Of course, in retrospect--and I think we were aware of this at the time--India is such a mass that it would have required almost all the forces the Japanese could bring to bear. After all they had put millions of troops into China and were not able to conquer China, to occupy China and take it out of the war. India would have presented the same kind of problem. All those hundreds of millions of people, there's just no way that any invader is going to take over that kind of place.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you involved at all in Tokyo raid in 1942--

DEAN RUSK: No. No I was not--

SCHOENBAUM: Or the planning of the island hopping--

DEAN RUSK: I was not involved in that.

DEAN RUSK: Ummm.

SCHOENBAUM: The (unintelligible) stages of [Chester W.] Nimitz and MacArthur?

DEAN RUSK: I can't say that I was really. You see during World War II when we established a theatre commander in the theatre headquarters, much of the intelligence and operational responsibilities passed to the theatre commander. So we weren't involved in the detailed planning of any of the island hopping expeditions. Of course we followed them all very carefully and I learned a lot about all those many islands in the South Pacific and the--

SCHOENBAUM: Were you involved in collecting information on those?

DEAN RUSK: Yep. Of course we briefed the bigwigs every morning about the progress of the war and I was involved in a number of those briefings.

RICHARD RUSK: Who were the bigwigs?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, the Chief of Staff of the Army, George [Catlett] Marshall, and--

SCHOENBAUM: Oh, you worked with Marshall on a daily basis even then.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Have I put on tape my first encounter with General Marshall?

RICHARD RUSK: Yep. We got that.

SCHOENBAUM: Let's see, was that--Yeah. We got that. We got that.

DEAN RUSK: Based on ray study vacation in Guernsey and the Channel Islands?

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. That's right. That was while you were in G-2.

DEAN RUSK: No. That was while I was at Oxford. Well, while I was in G-2 I--

SCHOENBAUM: Your first encounter with Marshall was in G-2?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. We've got that. Yeah, we've got that.

DEAN RUSK: I knew that they were planning the possibility of an air invasion of these Channel Islands. So the colonel under whom I was working discovered that I'd spent an Oxford vacation on Guernsey, one of the Channel Islands, and--

SCHOENBAUM: Was that Compton?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. So he went running up to tell George Marshall, "I've got a captain who spent three months there," and so forth, you see? And so Marshall sent for me.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: But you've got that story.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, we've got that.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, you came to Marshall's attention during the war when you were with Stilwell and evidently the talent scouts in Washington picked up on your cables and your various reputations over in CBI [China-Burma-India theatre]. Did Marshall pick up on your abilities at all while you were briefing him as a captain?

DEAN RUSK: I don't think so. No, I was just another captain.

SCHOENBAUM: In 1942 WBTPD, the War Plans Division became the OPD. What was the relationship of WPD when you were there to G-2? How did you fit into--

DEAN RUSK: First the War Plans Division, later the Operations Division, called upon G-2 heavily for all sorts of information, you see. And our job was to try to furnish them the information that they needed. Occasionally we would volunteer information whether they asked

for it or not. But there was a very close working relationship between G-2 and the Operations Division, which in lower echelon was called G-3. G-3 is Operations.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, there's not a whole lot written that we can tell about [George Arthur] Abe Lincoln's brigade. How did that work? Do you recall any individual who worked for that group who may have written memoirs of their own or may have spoken in some detail about the work that was done?

DEAN RUSK: Hmmm.

RICHARD RUSK: Would Lincoln himself, or--

DEAN RUSK: I don't think that Abe Lincoln, or Tick [Charles Hartwell] Bonesteel ,or Ted Parker or any of those fellows actually wrote books about it. But Abe Lincoln, who overlapped--well, he was finishing up at Oxford his third year when I first got there for my first year, so I knew him casually at Oxford. But apparently--I'm not sure if I'm repeating myself--in May I was sent home for a month of rest and rehabilitation.

SCHOENBAUM: '45, yeah.

DEAN RUSK: In '45. But then while I was in Oakland, California in early June I received orders to report to the Operations Division of the general staff in Washington and not to go back to India.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: And when I got back to Washington in June of '45, they told me that they had sent a telegram out to the CBI headquarters asking for the identity of the staff officer that had been writing General Stilwell's cables. And they gave them my name, and so I was transferred back. When I got there I found myself among some other friends. For example, the head of my immediate section in the Operations Division was Tick Bonesteel, Charles Bonesteel. He and I were very close at Oxford and we had been good friends there. Then another member of that group was a fellow named [James] McCormack, who also was at Oxford at the same time. So we were a natural team when we found ourselves working together. My section of that Operations Division had to do with longer-range policies and planning.

SCHOENBAUM: The Far East in particular or--?

DEAN RUSK: No, worldwide.

SCHOENBAUM: Worldwide?

DEAN RUSK: And so we were heavily involved in various policy questions involving the occupation of Germany and the problems we were having with Russia in that regard and with the policies involved in the windup of the war against Japan, the launching of the United Nations,

and questions of that sort. Indeed that group had a considerable effect upon American policy because during the war itself Franklin [Delano] Roosevelt turned to Secretary of War Stimson and to the military for a lot of policy issues which normally would have been questions for the Department of State. But so many of these issues were directly linked to the prosecution and windup of the war that we found ourselves dealing with a lot of questions that normally would have been dealt with primarily in the State Department.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you involved in the planning then for the Terminal Conference at Potsdam, 16-24 July in 1945? Is that part of the preliminary work?

DEAN RUSK: There was some work done in our section on that, but by and large--Well that was when--the policy issues there were at long last being worked on strongly by the State Department, but we were directly involved. You see, we had what was called the State War Navy Coordinating Committee, SWINK, and that met regularly at least once a week, sometimes more often. That committee was made up of the Assistant Secretary of State; the Assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy; and a Navy colleague. They met regularly and my section of the Operations Division was the staff backstop through John J. McCloy in his participation in SWINK. So we would prepare papers for him on things that were on the agenda of these meetings of SWINK and we'd brief him personally. We also were the backstop to George Marshall for his participation in the meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. So we were backstopping both the civilian and the military leadership of the War Department in those days.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you see [Harry S] Truman for the first time personally during this time or was that later?

DEAN RUSK: No. When I was in the military I did not meet personally with Truman. After all, I was pretty junior. But my direct personal contacts with him began when I went to the State Department as head of United Nations affairs.

SCHOENBAUM: Now getting back to the issues which you dealt with in SWINK: at that time there were many interesting issues. You mentioned our problems with the Soviets over Germany and possible future Soviet expansion started at that time, did it not? Is that your first inkling that we were going to have trouble with the Soviets?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we were determined that we would not give to the Soviet Union a Soviet zone of occupation in Japan. We had had such bitter experiences with them in trying to work out relations regarding Germany. And after all, the Soviets were in the war against Japan only about three days and we felt that they had not earned any zone of occupation in Japan. So we succeeded in denying to the Soviet Union as, say Hokkaido Island or any other zone of occupation there. We also had a major role in the decision to retain the emperor.

SCHOENBAUM: Oh you did? You did that?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes. Yes.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you study the Japanese history for that purpose?

DEAN RUSK: Well we thought that the only chance to have a peaceful occupation of Japan would be through the emperor. And his position was such that [if] he called upon the Japanese people to accept the occupation, that they would do it. Because we knew that if the Japanese resisted the occupation in Japan with the same fervor and determination with which they had prosecuted the war that we'd have to put millions of American soldiers into Japan just to control the Japanese people. So we in the Army had a major influence on it. There were some in the State Department who wanted to get rid of the emperor. But we effectively resisted that and brought about the decision to retain the emperor. And I still think that that was a very wise thing for us to do.

SCHOENBAUM: Was there any possibility--of course the Soviets still hold the Kuril Islands there. Did you talk about the Kuril Islands at that time? I guess the Russians were on them at that time.

DEAN RUSK: No we didn't. We more or less accepted the fact that the Kurils would go to the Soviet Union.

RICHARD RUSK: This decision to retain the emperor, were you quite influential with that piece of advice?

DEAN RUSK: Well, our group was. I wouldn't isolate myself out. But Bonesteel and Abe Lincoln and the rest of us, we all concurred on that. We all had the common point of view.

RICHARD RUSK: Incidentally, when Russia came into the war against Japan in the last three days, what did they do? Formally declare war within three days of Hiroshima?

DEAN RUSK: I think they did declare war. You see, we had thought incorrectly all through the war that there was major and elite Japanese--what they call a route array in Manchuria. And it was one of our concerns about what that army might do even if we succeeded in defeating Japan proper. But actually when the Russians attacked we found that this route army had been largely depleted for the purpose of reinforcing other Japanese positions in the Pacific and that it was more or less of a shell, so the Russians had very little opposition when they came into the war in Manchuria.

SCHOENBAUM: And that was basically the Potsdam Agreement and the surrender ultimatum that was joined in by--in July that's how the Soviets entered the war. Did you have a hand in those final ultimatums?

DEAN RUSK: No, we had gotten in effect no cooperation from Russia in the war against Japan until the last few days. For example, they would not let [James Harold] Doolittle's planes land in Russian airfields. They would not give us any facility for overflying Japan for intelligence purposes. They just weren't cooperating at all, possibly because they simply did not want to get involved with Japan until well after the defeat of Hitler. But also I think they too possibly overestimated the strength of the Japanese forces in Manchuria. You see their own forces out there had to come along and be supplied by that very inadequate trans-Siberian Railway. So they

might have had some real nervousness about what Japanese forces in Manchuria could do to them if they got into the war prematurely.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you have some input on that Potsdam surrender ultimatum to Japan, the wording of that, or the policy, to issue the ultimatum.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. We looked at that. I don't recall the details, but we did. Of course there was a lot of planning related to the surrender of Japan which had to take place. And the actual surrender of Japan came sooner than we all thought it would occur.

SCHOENBAUM: As a result of the bomb.

DEAN RUSK: So we had some very intensive all night meetings to put together the terms of surrender for Japan, MacArthur's General Order Number One, getting all the documents embossed to be signed on the Battleship Missouri, and straightening out all sorts of things.

SCHOENBAUM: Your group prepared those documents basically, didn't they?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, we had a lot to do with them. One thing that President Truman wanted, which we fully agreed, was to keep things as simple as possible; not to get into all kinds of complicated issues. For example, we did not make any arrangement about what would happen to the Koreans who were living in Japan at the end of the war. We agreed that Korea should emerge as an independent nation as a result of World War II, but we did not address ourselves to the position of Korean nationals who were living in Japan, what would happen to them. Well, that's just one small sign that we were trying to keep things just as simple as possible, not try to complicate them with a lot of things.

RICHARD RUSK: Incidentally, Pop, when MacArthur personally landed his plane in Tokyo, I believe it was, and accepted the Japanese surrender, I know he formally accepted on behalf of the United States the Japanese surrender on the Battleship Missouri. But didn't he himself land in a plane, a civilian transport plane, at an airstrip that was guarded by Japanese troops at a time when it was very uncertain what the Japanese reaction would be? Do you recall that?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, that took some courage on MacArthur's part because that was the first test we had as to the character of the Japanese and their response to the surrender situation. But he boldly went in there on the assumption that things were going to be all right and indeed he was proved correct on that.

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RICHARD RUSK: Did anyone in your group advise MacArthur that that type of thing could have been suicidal?

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall that we advised him one way or the other about when and under what circumstances he would himself go into Japan.

RICHARD RUSK: When did you know that the Second World War had been won?

DEAN RUSK: I think not really until the surrender itself came. Because, you see the Japanese had fought with such tenacity and fanaticism throughout the war that we still had to keep in mind the possibility that there would not only be a very bloody and costly invasion of Japan itself, but that the Japanese forces on the mainland in China, Manchuria, might fight with the same fanaticism, in which case the war could be prolonged for quite a while even after the defeat of Japan and the main home islands.

RICHARD RUSK: In general terms, when did you know that the Americans and the Allies were going to win World War II? Not the actual moment of surrender.

DEAN RUSK: I had no real doubt about that myself--maybe it was the overconfidence of youth--from the very beginning when I was in G-2 back in 1941-42. We had a group of colonels in G-2 who had taken a tour at the Potsdam War Academy in Hitler's Germany. And they, by and large, thought that Hitler was invincible; that he could not be defeated. We used to call them the Potsdam Club. But we younger officers simply did not agree with that. And we resisted that kind of--I remember on one occasion some of these people in G-2 sent a word over to President Roosevelt that Russia would be knocked out of the war in the course of the next six or eight weeks--things like that. So there was the impact of those who simply felt that Hitler's armies were invincible. Now when they got their tails beat in Russia, their influence waned rapidly.

SCHOENBAUM: It's interesting and we've talked about this before, but when you were in SWINK working for Abe Lincoln, right up to the day the bomb was dropped, you've said before you didn't know about that, and your group was apparently working on invasion-plans assumptions and occupation assumptions as if the Manhattan project did not exist.

DEAN RUSK: That's right. We were busily engaged in planning for the invasion of Japan. And it was clear to us that any invasion of the main islands of Japan could be a very costly. To begin with, millions of Japanese would have lost their lives because we would not have gone in without a sustained period of saturation bombing of Japan and its flimsy cities. We killed more people in one fire bomb raid on Tokyo than we did at Hiroshima. Then estimates of American casualties going into Japan ranged from four or five hundred thousand all the way up to MacArthur's figure of a million, which was his estimate as to how many American casualties would be involved. We were looking toward a very bloody end of the war if that had become possible.

SCHOENBAUM: Apparently, right near your group, in Abe Lincoln's group there were some rumors of the Manhattan project. In fact, the official account says that General [John E.] Hull [sic] told one officer to quit trying to find out what the Manhattan project was.

DEAN RUSK: Well I think General Hull knew about it. He was the head of the Operations Division as a whole, with its several elements. And I have no doubt that he knew about the Manhattan project.

SCHOENBAUM: But apparently others knew below him and he, in fact, told one officer under him to stop: "Stop your questions. Don't try to find out about that!" Do you remember anything about that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, you know, yeah. This term Manhattan project itself sort of got out here and there, but any indication of curiosity about what this was immediately squelched.

SCHOENBAUM: Is that right?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: So you had heard the term "Manhattan project?"

DEAN RUSK: I had heard the phrase, but I didn't know anything about it and my section was not involved in--

SCHOENBAUM: Were you at all curious?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, well sure one is curious about that. We also learned to keep your mouth shut and respect the need-to-know attitude.

SCHOENBAUM: I understand. What was your planning with respect to Germany during that time, that summer of '45? That was a lively--what did you do with respect to that theatre?

DEAN RUSK: Well we did a good deal of work on the four-power occupation of Germany and the troubles we were having with the Russians, but one of the major questions we ran into was the simple business of finding food for the people of Germany. There was a very severe worldwide food shortage at the end of World War II and here we were with all these millions of Germans as a direct responsibility of ours. And we had a responsibility to feed them and we set up a special task force to scurry around to find food and it was not easy.

SCHOENBAUM: Where did you go for food? To international relief organizations or U.S. government?

DEAN RUSK: I don't remember exactly. No, chiefly an American problem. Because you see some of our own food production had dropped off when we put so many men into uniform. But we did a good deal of scrimping and scratching and managed somehow to put it together.

SCHOENBAUM: Were there problems? That was, of course, even before Winston Churchill's Fulton Missouri speech which occurred in early 1946. But that summer of '45 you knew that there were wrangles with the Russians--

DEAN RUSK: Oh, yes, indeed--

SCHOENBAUM: Over Germany?

DEAN RUSK: Before Franklin Roosevelt died he had come to realize that we were going to have major problems with the Soviets at the end of the war and in the immediate postwar period. And Averell Harriman also was among those who was fully aware of the difficulties we were headed for. Although many who were strong supporters of the United Nations thought that a new era had arrived and that the great powers were going to cooperate with each other, there were many who doubted very much that we would get that kind of cooperation with Joseph Stalin.

SCHOENBAUM: And did you have something to do, then, with the setting up of the four zones and the occupation of Germany?

DEAN RUSK: No that had come before I got back to the Operations Division. That was while I was still in India.

SCHOENBAUM: But you had something to do with Berlin at that point.

DEAN RUSK: Well the actual four-power arrangements for the occupation of Germany and the four zones in Berlin were things that we wrestled with and we gradually had to recognize the fact that the Russians simply were not going to be easy partners in these four-power arrangements for Germany and we could not get the four-power machinery to work very well in Germany. And that contributed a lot to our determination not to let the Russians have a zone of occupation in Japan.

SCHOENBAUM: I see. But you got the best deal you could, you felt, in the Germany situation at that time?

DEAN RUSK: Well one thing in retrospect that was absolutely a mistake: During the war we had some negotiations in London--Ambassador [John G.] Winant was the American negotiator--about where the various forces would be at the time of the defeat of Germany. Our own forces had marched deeply into Silesia, Thuringia, and places like that. But in these negotiations in Germany, in London, we agreed, I think prematurely, as to the zones of occupation in Germany. As far as Berlin was concerned we made the mistake of not requiring a land corridor fully under our control leading to Berlin. Ambassador Winant in London apparently decided--and this idea was put to him--that he just did not want to irritate the Russians and didn't ask for a land corridor because that would reflect some mistrust to the Russians or something. But anyhow, these arrangements were concluded in London and the result was that we had to pull back our forces from a considerable part of what is now East Germany to comply with those agreements that had been reached, I think, prematurely about where the various armies would be at the end of the war.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you feel there was anything at all that could be done about that?

DEAN RUSK: Not really. Not really.

SCHOENBAUM: So you had to accept that and work under--

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. And in effect we withdrew from these areas in East Germany and in exchange got for it, if you like, the position of West Berlin and the so-called access rights that leads [sic] to it.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you involved in the access rights negotiation or advice?

DEAN RUSK: No. No, that happened before I got back to OPD.

SCHOENBAUM: Now between September second and February of '46 you went over to the State Department. What was primary after the Japanese surrender? What was on the agenda primarily those six months or so?

DEAN RUSK: When I was demobilized from the Army, I think in February of '46, I went over to the State Department to become Assistant Division Chief of the Division of International Security Affairs under the office of Special Political Affairs, as it was then called. Joseph [Esrey] Johnson, who later became head of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was head of that division and I had been working with those fellows a good deal when I was in the Pentagon backstopping John J. McCloy in SWINK, so I got to know them pretty well. I was very much interested in the United Nations and they were preoccupied with getting the United Nations off to its start. So I went over there for several months to the State Department and the head of that office at that time was Alger Hiss. Then after a few months I was invited to come back across the Potomac to the Pentagon to become a special assistant to Secretary of War, Robert [P.] Patterson and I spent several months there working on the same subjects: the United Nations, the occupation problems, dealing with the Far Eastern Commission, and things of that sort.

SCHOENBAUM: And you first worked on the United Nations, though, when you were working for SWINK in the summer of '45.

DEAN RUSK: Only in the most general way because those plans were well along and indeed before I was ordered back to OPD, the San Francisco conference to complete the United Nations Charter was in session. They were in session in San Francisco when I was on leave across the bay in Oakland. But there were a good many United Nations questions which directly affected the military. For example, the arrangements under Chapter VII for United Nations forces and things of that sort; the organization of a military staff committee under the U.N. Security Council; and questions of trusteeship. For example, we accepted the idea that the islands in the Pacific that we had taken from Japan would be under a United Nations trusteeship, but we were very determined that we would maintain control over those islands from a military point of view. And indeed at that time we were relatively comfortable with the idea that the United States should control every wave of the Pacific Ocean. So we arranged what is called a strategic trusteeship for these Pacific islands. Under a strategic trusteeship the agreement of the trust power is worked out between the trust power and the U.N. Security Council, not with the U.N.

General Assembly. And in the U.N. Security Council we had a veto and so we did include a trust agreement with regard to these Pacific Islands under the heading of a Strategic Trusteeship. We had complete control and we could veto any effort in the Security Council to change that control. So that worked out, from our point of view, reasonably successfully.

SCHOENBAUM: You worked that out in '45 still, while you were mobilized?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: I wanted to ask, going back to Stilwell--I don't think we have on tape your first meeting with Stilwell. Wasn't that in San Francisco?

DEAN RUSK: I never asked you about it, because I hoped you had forgotten the first encounter I had with him. We were at a summer reserve training camp, reserve officers training camp, and General Stilwell was our direct commander at that time, out of San Francisco. He came down to pay us a visit at the end of our tour of training and we had dinner for him. I was named to be the master of ceremonies of that dinner. Well the program committee had put together a program and in effect handed me the program maybe an hour before the dinner. Well, included on the program was a striptease gal. (laughter) I was sitting next to General Stilwell and had to introduce this striptease dancer. (laughter) That created a very sour impression on General Stilwell.

SCHOENBAUM: Really?

DEAN RUSK: I'm not sure whether he remembered that later. I hope he didn't.

SCHOENBAUM: That was before you went to G-2?

DEAN RUSK: That was before I was called to active duty.

SCHOENBAUM: Before you were called to active duty. You were still at Mills?

DEAN RUSK: Summer training camp.

RICHARD RUSK: He didn't think that was all that funny?

DEAN RUSK: But this stripteaser was quite a stripper and quite a teaser. So that was my first meeting with Stilwell. But anyhow, then early '43 I was taken out of G-2 to join a group of people who would get a very intensive preparation for overseas duty. I had asked for overseas duty.

SCHOENBAUM: Oh you asked for it?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. And I was put in a group that was sent out to Fort Leavenworth for a ninety-day period of very special training and apparently I had done well at that so they put me on a list of, oh, ten or twenty officers who were available, if you like, for some kind of special

assignment overseas. And Stilwell came back to Washington for consultation in '43. He was looking for a couple of staff people and apparently he looked over the list and picked me out as one that he would like to go with him out to--

SCHOENBAUM: He didn't interview you beforehand?

DEAN RUSK: Nope. But I saw him immediately as soon as my orders were issued. Then, as a matter of fact, I flew back to India with him.

SCHOENBAUM: Via London, and that's where the--We have that on tape. We don't need to spend time on the CBI. But one question: What was your reaction--Stilwell was relieved in October of '44. Did you see that coming? Specifically, I was reading [Theodore H.] Teddy White's book and apparently Stilwell, sitting in Chungking, very depressed, in October of '44 unburdened his soul to Teddy White, according to Teddy White. And he said to Teddy White, "You look at all the 'eyes only' cables. I know I am violating Army regulations, but I want you to know what's happening." And he unburdened his soul and told Teddy White how that [sic] we are headed for trouble and that Chiang [Kai-shek] was--did he really call Chiang 'peanut'? Called him Peanut! That Peanut was worthless and he apparently wanted to do more toward making a move to cooperate with Mao Tse-tung. Did he ever unburden himself to you like that?

DEAN RUSK: Well I was fully aware of these problems and so he didn't have to do a lot of unburdening as far as I was concerned. Indeed I was drafting a lot of his cables back to Washington on these issues. But Stilwell ran into increasing opposition from [Me-ling Soong] Madame Chiang Kai-shek, General [Claire Lee] Chennault, and General Chennault's aide, a lieutenant called Joseph Alsop. They were actively conspiring in Washington against Joseph Stilwell. And Chiang Kai-shek, of course, was fully behind Madame Chiang Kai-shek in such things.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you aware of that Washington conspiracy?

DEAN RUSK: I knew about it. I have no doubt myself that when John [Stewart] Service of the State Department was sent back to Washington that he was instructed by General Stilwell to get Stilwell's story out to the press. Well when John Service got back, he unfortunately chose Amerasia, a publication that was under some suspicion at that time, as one of his channels. But had General Stilwell lived and been able to be present to testify in John Service's boards, considering his loyalty and security situation, I have no doubt that John Service would have been cleared. But I am sure that General Stilwell himself asked John Service to get some of these things out to the press as a sort of backfire to what General Chennault, Joe Alsop, and Madame Chiang Kai-shek were doing with the press.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you remember the moment you heard that Stilwell was relieved, was fired basically?

DEAN RUSK: I don't remember the incident, but that broke the China-Burma-India theatre up into two theatres. The China theatre was put under General [Albert C.] Wedemeyer, and the India-Burma theatre, as far as American troops were concerned, was put under General [Daniel

I.] Sultan, General Dan Sultan. So I worked very closely with General Dan Sultan after the split of the theatre.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you there when Abe Lincoln came around in February of '45? Made his worldwide tour and he stopped in Delhi with Sultan?

DEAN RUSK: Yes.

SCHOENBAUM: You were involved in those talks?

DEAN RUSK: I was there. Yes.

SCHOENBAUM: What happened then?

DEAN RUSK: Well I forget really.

SCHOENBAUM: Just a briefing.

DEAN RUSK: You see, this China-Burma-India was, in effect, the last priority theatre. Well that's proved by the fact that they allowed a young college professor like me to be Chief of War Plans for the theatre. That shows what a low priority the theatre was. And so they were the last in line to get resources, personnel, things of that sort. So we had to struggle with that.

SCHOENBAUM: In planning, did you plan his--At one point didn't he have some plans to go to open attack on the Japanese and drive to Canton? Were you actively involved in planning operations in China?

DEAN RUSK: Well we were trying to build up in China itself a force comparable to the Chinese force that was in Burma. The Chinese force in Burma had been assembled, trained, well fed, well lead, well-armed, and they gave a very good account of themselves in the return to Burma, particularly from the North. Well we were trying to build up a similar force across the Yangtze River in China. That depended a good deal on the amount of supply we could move into China. Well General Chennault wanted almost all of the air tonnage that we could get into China to go to his air force. And this suited Chiang Kai-shek very well because that meant that he would not have to do much about committing his Chinese forces. Well Stilwell pointed out to Chennault and to Washington that if Chennault did, in fact, build up his capacity to use air in China; the Japanese would simply come and take his airfields away.

SCHOENBAUM: Which they did.

DEAN RUSK: Which they did. So this was involved in the long standing feud between Stilwell and one of his own subordinates, General Chennault. General Chennault used his back channels to Washington to take this feud back to Washington. General Marshall always loyally supported Joseph Stilwell.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you share the historical "what ifs" of Barbara Tuchman and Teddy White that if Stilwell had prevailed in the CBI over Chennault that he would have made friends with Mao Tse-tung and we would have all lived happily ever after?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I have great misgivings about that. After all, Mao Tse-tung was not going to turn himself into a loyal ally or puppet of the United States. Indeed, our chief interest in Mao Tse-tung at that time was that we were interested in encouraging anybody who was willing to shoot at the Japanese. So we sent missions up there and we sent some supplies of different kinds, just as we did with Ho Chi Minh down in Indochina during that period. We were trying to get any and everybody to fight the Japanese who would be willing to.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you personally--I knew you personally authorized the supplies to Ho Chi Minh. Did you personally authorize the supplies to Mao and his forces too?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, but they were rather limited. They were rather limited because of the limitations on the tonnage we could move across the hump. Also Chiang Kai-shek would not cooperate in sending anything whatever up to Mao Tse-tung.

SCHOENBAUM: But you did try to get some to--

DEAN RUSK: We tried to get a little--

SCHOENBAUM: To Mao?

DEAN RUSK: Token feed up there to them.

RICHARD RUSK: Was it Stilwell who authorized these things or did you, in his absence while he was out in the field authorize these shipments?

DEAN RUSK: Well you can't draw that distinction. I was on his staff and these things came across my desk. Whatever was done there, I'm sure I saw and authorized.

SCHOENBAUM: As Chief of War Plans, it sounds like it was mainly a not so much military planning as such: "Here's the objective." It was more [that] a lot of logistics went into it.

RICHARD RUSK: A lot of politics.

DEAN RUSK: Well, as Chief of War Plans out there, my job was about fifty percent military and fifty percent political. I had to deal with our relations with the British high command there in Delhi and they were very resistant toward major active operations against the Japanese and that whole theatre. I had to work out Stilwell's relations with Lord Louis Mountbatten, who was Southeast Asia Commander for all that theatre except China. And we had to give a lot of thought to our relations with the Indian nationalists. And we had some real frictions with the British on what is called psychological warfare because President Roosevelt had made a major effort to get Churchill's agreement that India would come out of the war as an independent nation and Churchill wouldn't buy it. Roosevelt sent some special missions out to India during the war to

encourage that idea. On the American side we wanted to do everything we could to make it clear to the Indians that we were out there for the sole purpose of fighting the Japanese; that we were not connected in any way with the return of British power to India. And of course that created some frictions between our psychological warfare or propaganda programs and the British programs. Indeed I was one of three or four people who invented the shoulder patch for the China-Burma-India theatre. That was a shoulder patch which reflected the sun of China, the star of India, and the red and white stripes for the United States. Every American in uniform in the entire theatre wore that same shoulder patch to identify us as something separate from the British. The British didn't like that particularly. On one occasion a British division was put under General Stilwell's command up in north Burma and the commander of that division asked for the privilege of wearing the CBI shoulder patch. We had to say no. So I had a lot of those political issues to deal with. I think I've already put on tape my experience with the Indian nationalists with regard to marrying their daughters and slaughtering their cows.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. We've got that.

DEAN RUSK: You've got that.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you meet [Mohandas Karamchand] Gandhi again?

DEAN RUSK: No, I never met him except at that evening at Oxford that I already talked about. You see he was in prison when I was in the China-Burraa-India theatre.

SCHOENBAUM: Well, I think we're about at the end of another tape. Thank-you very much.

DEAN RUSK: In retrospect, I want to express ray admiration for those fellows in the Operations Division of the War Department General Staff in the summer of '45. I mentioned Bonesteel and McCormack. Bonesteel later became a Four-Star General and McCormack became a Two or Three-Star General and was a very vital part of the Atomic Energy Commission and the development of our nuclear strength at the end of the war. Sidney [Francis] Griffin was another colonel there who later became a Two or Three-Star General and was a Deputy Commandant of the Air War College. It was a very talented group. We had a lot of fun working on fascinating problems and I think were able to make some positive contribution to the state of affairs.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you, among yourselves, divide the world up a little bit?

DEAN RUSK: No.

SCHOENBAUM: How did you decide who would work on what memos?

DEAN RUSK: We were a group of maybe--

SCHOENBAUM: Just six people?

DEAN RUSK: About six people in my little section of the Operations Division, headed by Tick Bonesteel, an old friend, and we reported to George Lincoln, Abe Lincoln, who was the head of a somewhat larger group. And he, in turn, reported to General Hull, who was head of Operations Division as a whole.

SCHOENBAUM: And the process was that somebody would get an assignment to write a memo and then you'd discuss it, a draft memo, with all of the other six?

DEAN RUSK: With all of the others and then do whatever redrafting seemed to be indicated. But we had to work fast and we were tuned to working fast. We didn't just let papers lie on our desks for days or weeks on end; when there was something to do we did it.

SCHOENBAUM: Those were think-piece type memoranda that you had to do?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: And action type memoranda of a couple of pages each?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Sometimes a little longer. But even then, you see, you knew that anything that went up to General Marshall had to be on one page.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: They might not be able to because they usually--

RICHARD RUSK: We have that.

DEAN RUSK: Okay, well, we'll let that go.

SCHOENBAUM: Thanks a lot. I appreciate this. I'm sorry to bother you about that we've been over this, but it's a tremendous amount of material.

DEAN RUSK: No problem.

SCHOENBAUM: Very interesting.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I was very fortunate during the war. There were some incidents where my chances at the time were fifty-fifty. Put together enough of those incidences, I felt that I used up all ray luck in World War II and have been living on borrowed time ever since. But it [sic] was a lot of fascinating problems to deal with.

END OF SIDE 2