

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

Rusk II

Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas W. Ganschow

circa 1985

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, you talked earlier about this sense of obligation that we had to Chiang Kai-shek. To what extent did that obligation also entail American aid to Chiang Kai-shek in either major or minor forms? I'm just a little bit ignorant on my history about this period for one thing; but if you could, fill me in on the extent of our aid to Chiang Kai-shek during their civil war. And my follow-up question would be, to what extent were we responsible for the hostility that we received from the Chinese communists during and after the fall of China, because perhaps we did side and did take sides in that conflict? I'll ask that as a two-part question.

DEAN RUSK: We did continue aid of various kinds to Chiang Kai-shek during that period, and there was pressure from some segments of the Congress to do even more in aid to Chiang Kai-shek. But whatever aid we might have provided at that time, even if it had been much larger than what, in fact, we provided, would have been trickle in terms of the needs of the Chiang Kai-shek government over against the Chinese communists.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall specifically what the aid was? I presume it would be military aid of some kind.

GANSCHOW: Let's back up just a little. During the war we gave lend-lease aid and things of that type to Chiang Kai-shek. I read a statistic--This might be in the White Paper, in fact--that the total amount of aid that we gave is about only 3.2 percent of the total lend-lease aid given during those years. Now, why? Because it was Europe first, and I am sure--

DEAN RUSK: Well also there is another great reason and that is the limitation on our ability to get it there over the hump.

GANSCHOW: That's right. That's the other thing.

DEAN RUSK: To get it there over the hump.

GANSCHOW: Well, I think Professor Rusk can say that--I am sure that there were many people in Asia who were awfully concerned about this Europe-first approach. I mean, not that it shouldn't be that, but that it was carried to such an extreme, I think, to some extent. Now, once the civil war began, then there were problems. There was the [George Catlett] Marshall mission that found things, as Professor Rusk pointed out, in "plague on both sides" in a sense. There was Truman, who came into power and decided that we're not going to keep pouring money down a rat hole and therefore to teach Chiang a lesson: to straighten things out up there, we're going to try to start cutting back on aid. Then I think it was--wasn't it Madame [Mei-ling Soong] Chiang, who came to try to persuade the Congress to--

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes. She was a very effective ambassador in Washington, and lobbyist to boot. She knew how to stir up the China lobby with a snap of her fingers. The kind of aid that we could have put in there would not have dealt with the problem. The problems are much more organic, much more deep.

RICHARD RUSK: So we could not have really affected the situation, but did we stick enough aid in there on behalf of the nationalists to have partially deserved the hostility that we incurred from the Chinese communists?

GANSCHOW: Of course, later on that's what they will say, Richard. They'll say that most of the supplies--and there was, of course, huge amounts of supplies that were left from the war--were given over to Chiang Kai-shek. There was that amount up in Manchuria that was taken over by the Japanese, but, you know, our supplies were given over to Chiang Kai-shek. Our planes were given over to Chiang Kai-shek. A lot of that kind of aid was given over to Chiang Kai-shek. We did, in fact, fly Chiang Kai-shek, did we not--not him, but his troops--to strategic points?

DEAN RUSK: Sure, we flew the entire army in Burma back into China and put them over in the northeast at his request.

GANSCHOW: So, yes. I think there is that. However, it seems to me that that's just a kind of natural part of life. I mean, sides had to be taken, in a sense.

RICHARD RUSK: Let me put the same question to you, Pop. To what extent did we deserve the degree of hostility that we incurred because of our participation, even if not effectual--

DEAN RUSK: I wouldn't use the word deserve. We got that hostility from the Chinese communists, but we didn't owe them a damn thing. We weren't supposed to pat them on their tail and say, "Go to it, boys. You are wonderful people. We like you very much." So I wouldn't use that word deserve.

RICHARD RUSK: Not deserve--what about surprised? Why should we have been surprised by it?

DEAN RUSK: We weren't. We weren't particularly. We were surprised when they seized some of our diplomatic personnel and beat them up and put them in prison and things of that sort. That kind of mistreatment is not very civilized.

GANSCHOW: In fact I was going to ask Professor Rusk about the Mukden--that Mukden business. I told Richard about it. Do you recall that?

DEAN RUSK: I had rather forget the details of that. But Angus [Lorin] Ward was pretty badly treated out there when they seized him.

GANSCHOW: I mean, that was as serious a seizure of a consulate and its activities. And it went on for a long time, too. I forget how many--it must have been months.

RICHARD RUSK: Is that right?

GANSCHOW: Months.

DEAN RUSK: Before we got him out of there. But you see, there is also another factor, and that is that one has to think long and hard before nailing the American flag and the American prestige and reputation onto a regime that is collapsing. That is multiplying the problem. The question for us there in '46, '47, '48 was what is there to support? And it was pretty hard to find something that could be effectively supported by any means that we had available. We didn't have armed forces available.

GANSCHOW: Do you think if Secretary of State Marshall would have continued to be Secretary of State in those critical years there would have been a difference? Another part of that question: Could you compare Marshall's approach to China as opposed to [Dean Gooderham] Acheson's approach to China?

DEAN RUSK: No, I think on China the two of them saw that situation pretty much in the same way. Marshall had a very keen sense of the relationship between ends and means, and he was very reluctant to see us take on something for which we had no appropriate means to deal with. Dean Acheson was faced with the same problem.

RICHARD RUSK: Tom, I think we circled it without really nailing it down the way I would hope we could, and that is: Some of the revisionist historians claim that we are responsible for at least our share of hostility with Red China back during those years. I think we should really try to nail this point down. We were involved in that civil war, even if in a minor way and if not effectually. What do I want to say here? Do we recognize our degree of responsibility for what happens: the consequences, and what happens when you do take sides in a civil war in a situation like that? Did we realize it then? Do we realize it today? We went through a period of at least several decades of bad or nonexistent relations with a very important country on the other side of the globe and we paid heavily for it. We did, in fact, take sides back there in the late forties, did we not? I won't try to beat a dead horse.

DEAN RUSK: We continued to have relations with and provide some aid to the government that we had relations with for decades and with whom we had fought in World War II. The revisionist historians would attribute some of that same responsibility to our relations with the Soviet Union. Sure, we could have had better relations with the Soviet Union if we had simply given the Soviet Union all they were demanding after World War II. In that sense, I suppose, we had some responsibility for some of the tensions between ourselves and the Soviet Union. We were standing in their way, in various respects.

GANSCHOW: It wasn't that we didn't try to persuade Chiang to change, Richard. I mean, it wasn't that. Isn't that right, Professor Rusk? I mean, didn't we make efforts, real efforts to try to get some reforms?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. We did. We did. But the traffic simply wouldn't bear them. There was no way to get it done. China was pretty much in the position of *sauf qui peut* or every man on his

own as applied to the warlords, to the governors of the provinces, to many officials, and people of that sort. There was just no cohesion left in that government and its very structure.

GANSCHOW: There was also the--you know, I know what you're getting at, Richard, and I think particularly it has become a very sensitive question today. I mean, how much should we support regimes in Central America, for example, who show brutality towards their people? And how much should we support, let's say, rebels? The problem, it seems to me, is that you could put the weighing of these two regimes in kind of idealized form. But when you look at it and what really happens, even Chou En-lai has said that in the early years of the communist regime there millions of people lost their lives. I'm not talking about a few thousand, or twenty thousand, or a hundred thousand. Millions of people lost their lives, in part because they were eliminated. There you've got Chiang, who may not personally be corrupt, although I can't make that judgment, having some corrupt people around him, who runs an inefficient government, weighed against a regime that comes in and destroys millions of people.

DEAN RUSK: There was no democratic alternative available. It just wasn't in the cards. Let me make a few remarks about this question of our recognition of Peking. When the communists first took over, as I said, they seemed to select the United States, the American people, as enemy number one. They abused us and tried to erase all threads of friendship between our two peoples. I remember in 1949, the British Ambassador, Oliver [Shewell] Franks, came in to see me--I was, then I think Deputy Undersecretary--to tell me that the British government had decided to recognize the communist government of China. We expressed regret that America and British policy was diverging on this matter at that point. But then, in a very informal, private conversation between the two of us, we talked about the probability that our policy on this would come together again depending upon the conduct of Peking: that if they behaved themselves and acted like a cooperative member of the community of nations, and so forth, that the Americans would come around to the British point of view. But that if Peking acted the other way, then Britain might come back to the American view and break their relationship with China. Shortly after that, then, the Chinese sent hundreds of thousands of people into Korea. So that deferred any consideration on our side of the recognition of Peking.

Then, during the fifties there was a kind of lull. Of course there was the Quemoy and Matsu problem and one or two other things, but there was a kind of lull during part of the Eisenhower administration. You will be interested to know that in the mid-fifties John Foster Dulles, then Secretary of State, asked me to come down to see him in Washington. I went down and he asked me if I would be willing to undertake a very private and discreet negotiation between himself and Senator Walter [Franklin] George of Georgia, the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, about some changes in our China policy. I told him that I would be willing to if he wanted to, and we spent considerable time talking about various possibilities. Then, about that time, then Governor [Eugene] Herman Talmadge of Georgia announced that he was going to run against Senator Walter George. Senator Walter George looked at his situation and decided that he would not run again for the Senate. So Dulles concluded that under those circumstances, Senator George would not take on so difficult and controversial a matter as the change in China policy. So the whole thing was abandoned.

John Foster Dulles, I think, was thinking somewhat in a two-Chinas approach to the problem at

that time. So much for during the fifties. When President [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy took office, very soon after he took office, I had a one-on-one talk with him about China policy and went over with him some of the alternatives. But he had in front of him a resolution of the Congress, which had been passed just two years before, strongly objecting to the seating of China in the U.N. and bilateral recognition. Eisenhower had told him, on turning over power, that he would try to support Kennedy on foreign policy matters as much as possible, but on one matter he would have to oppose him publicly and strongly. That would be the seating of the Chinese communists in the U.N. and our bilateral recognition.

Kennedy decided that there was not enough in it to be worth taking such a step and taking on all the controversy that would have resulted. As I was leaving the office on the occasion of that conversation, he called out to me and said, "And what's more Mr. Secretary, I don't want to read in the Washington Post or in the New York Times that the State Department is thinking about a change in China policy." So I went on back to the State Department and just played the role of the village idiot when people like Adlai Stevenson and Chester Bowles or anybody else would come in to talk about possible changes in China policy. I would just stonewall it. I didn't tell them about my conversation with Kennedy because we would have read that in the Washington Post or the New York Times. Kennedy was much more cautious about taking on controversial issues than many people think of him as being. He did not think he had had a mandate in the election of 1960: a few tens of thousands of votes. So, he was very cautious. Now had he lived and been reelected with a good, strong vote in '64, he might have reopened the China question. I don't know.

Then during the Vietnam affair, Peking--this was still the Mao [Tse-tung] regime--Peking was strongly opposed to any kind of procedures for the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam struggle. He and Hanoi both strongly objected to its being taken up by the United Nations. Of course, neither one of them was a member of the United Nations at that moment. They said it wasn't the business of the United Nations. So that led a number of members of the U.N. to believe that the U.N. should not try to do anything about Vietnam. There were times when we wanted to bring it before the U.N. Security Council and counted noses and couldn't even find the votes necessary in the Security Council to put it on the agenda. U Thant took the same view: that the U.N. should stay out of it. So then, we turned to the Geneva Conference machinery of which Russia and U.K. were cochairmen. But the Chinese objected strongly to any use of the Geneva Conference machinery. So their attitude on Vietnam precluded any real consideration of recognition. Then came the Nixon period and he made his famous trip to China. I supported him in that. It may have taken a Richard Nixon to change China policy, just as it took a Charles de Gaulle to give independence to Algeria. Because if a democratic President had visited Peking, he would have been torn to pieces by the Republicans, including Richard Nixon. Richard Nixon blocked off the most obvious and strongest sources of objection to a change in China policy.

RICHARD RUSK: His opposition was the Democratic opposition, which was far milder on that question of a changed structure towards China.

DEAN RUSK: I think I can say that no one now living has done as much in the executive branch of the government to support the position of the Republic of China on Taiwan than I have. I say that without embarrassment because it's simply true. During all those years,

wrangling over the seat in the U.N. and other things, our friends in Taiwan imposed upon us an impossible political burden. That is, their myth that they were the government of all China and they were going back to the mainland. On that point there was steady erosion of international support, including our allies, until the final vote came in the early seventies and the Chinese seat was changed. I have the impression that as late as the mid-sixties there could have been strong international support for two Chinese seats in the U.N. But the one thing on which both Taiwan and Peking agreed was that there was one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. So both of them turned that idea down. By the way--

[break in recording]

GANSCHOW: Next time I'll start off with just that question about the first impressions you had about the Korean War. I mean, when you heard that the North Koreans. I would kind of like to--

DEAN RUSK: Well we had been trying to train and equip a South Korean army, but we had only reached the level of battalion exercises and the kinds of weapons that might be appropriate to battalion level, which was rifles and mortars and machine guns and things of that sort. We had not reached the brigade or division level with a lot of artillery and things of that sort. So any notion that somehow the South Koreans had attacked the North is just nonsense. When the North Koreans attacked, Mrs. [Virginia Foisie] Rusk and I were having dinner with Joe [Joseph Wright] Alsop in Washington that evening. Among the other guests were Justice Felix Frankfurter and Frank [C.] Pace, [Jr.], the Secretary of the Army, was also there. The flash came in. Fortunately our ambassador, Ambassador [John J.] Muccio, appreciated what was happening almost immediately because he reported that the North Koreans were attacking on a broad front for the purpose of seizing South Korea. So Frank Pace and I left the dinner party that night to go to our respective offices to sort of take a look at what was going on. The actual timing of the attack came as a surprise. When something like that occurs the intelligence community will comb back through the thousands and thousands of pieces and bits to try to prove that they had in fact anticipated it. But nobody telephoned the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs and said the North Koreans were about to attack. [Douglas] MacArthur's own G-2 was on leave, so it was a surprise. Then came the very important question as to whether the United States should intervene with its armed forces. I was at the sessions where that was discussed and decided.

GANSCHOW: Can I ask you, then--(unintelligible)--Can I ask you, did you have any--did you think that the Chinese were involved in that war immediately? I mean, I remember, of course--now as an historian you can look back and there are all kinds of arguments: When did China really get into the war? Did she have knowledge about the war coming up? What was Mao--Mao had gone to the Soviet Union in the spring before the war and talked to Stalin, so there was a lot of question what they talked about. But, as far as we know as of now Richard, the Chinese were not involved with that war until later. Did you personally have any sense that the Chinese were involved in that war?

DEAN RUSK: Not at the time that the North Koreans attacked. But something came up later which raises a real question about the point you just made. Apparently for quite some months before the North Korean attack they had combed the armies of North China to find Koreans and

people of Korean descent.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you aware of that?

DEAN RUSK: We captured a lot of North Korean prisoners. Prisoner interrogation showed that a good many of these prisoners had been in the Chinese army and had moved over to North Korea in the months preceding the attack. So that suggests to me that somehow the people in Peking were fully aware of what was happening.

RICHARD RUSK: Is that in the literature--

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: I just asked the question of whether this particular point of information, this point of intelligence, is in the record.

DEAN RUSK: I think you'll find it somewhere in the tons upon tons of material in the government, flowing out of prisoner-of-war interrogation in South Korea. But where you would actually put your fingers on it, I don't know.

GANSCHOW: What do you think Richard?

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. We can finish up another time, Pop.

GANSCHOW: I want to make sure you're both comfortable.

RICHARD RUSK: This is the story of Pop telling about General George Marshall.

DEAN RUSK: Secretary Marshall once told me about his dealings with Madame Chiang Kai-shek during WWII. She came to Washington to go and see President [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt, to put in a request for very, very large quantities of the most modern arms we had, that were in short supply for our own troops. We were already in combat. FDR sent her over to Secretary Marshall and Marshall told me that he kept a bottom drawer of his desk filled with lists of surplus materials that we did not want or need anymore. He would listen to Madame Chiang Kai-shek, then he would say, "Well, it would be pretty difficult on that one, but let me see what we can do." And he would reach down into this bottom drawer and bring out various lists of things that he was very happy to give. (laughter)

At one point Tom, Chiang Kai-shek asked us to use our entire tonnage over the hump to take Chinese currency over to China for his use. We refused. But that's how much things had gone to pot. Just before the first Burma road was closed, we sent an awful lot of automobile tires, truck tires, to Hunan Province. But then when the road was closed the governor of Hunan passed a regulation that every wheeled vehicle had to have rubber tires. He sold those damn rubber tires off to any kind of carts or anything else that was moving around, and pocketed the money. (laughter) Chiang Kai-shek did pull one slick one on the governor of Hunan. He sent the governor of Hunan's forces down to Indochina to receive the Japanese surrender. While those

troops were gone, Chiang Kai-shek seized control of the Hunan province. (laughter)

GANSCHOW: This can be appreciated by Americans: selling the tires. We're industrious; we want to make money; we know how to make a fast buck; we can appreciate a story like this. The Chinese act just like that. On the one hand, they can be very Confucian in the whole, just like people can be very Christian in the whole: read the Bible, read Confucian sayings, and things of this nature. And that is very good. I mean, in the family they're very good. But out in the business world, outside the home, standing in line to get into a train or a bus, it is every man for himself, and you better believe it. The one thing I learned--The first thing I learned, Professor Rusk, is that I thought I was going to be a polite American and just sort of stand in line and not be pushy to get into a--Hell, I was left standing on the side. You know, I learned that I had to kick the old ladies and step on toes.

DEAN RUSK: You know, once I wanted to visit a Chinese division that was deep down in the woods in Burma. And I flew into Assam and then took a Piper Cub plane down for quite a few miles, then got on horseback and rode quite a few miles to get to this division. The division commander asked me to have lunch with him. He served shark's fin soup. I said, "Where in the world did you get this shark fin soup?" He said, "Ten days ago that shark's fin was in Shanghai." I said, "But Shanghai is occupied by the Japanese." He smiled and said, "You Americans do not understand us Orientals." (laughter) You know, I do not know whether you ever knew, maybe I ought to use this with discretion because I do not know how to back it up. But during the war we bought hog bristles from the Japanese in China because, for some industrial reasons that I never quite understood, we needed hog bristles more than we thought they needed the dollars. So through some subterranean channel, we bought hog bristles from the Japanese, in the middle of the war.

RICHARD RUSK: Hey, how do you like being interviewed by a fellow who knows China, and has a degree of enthusiasm for going into some of the little details?

DEAN RUSK: I am delighted.

GANSCHOW: Let me tell you, Professor Rusk has known more about China than all I have heard, has forgotten more about China than I have ever heard. I mean that sincerely. This is something I can never get out of a book. You see, I can't get this kind of personal experience.

RICHARD RUSK: I do not know if you fellows are aware of it, but I think in the course of this oral history we are accumulating something that is really kind of worthwhile.

GANSCHOW: I think so.

DEAN RUSK: Chiang Kai-shek once gave me my own chop-- a little seal that you print on sealing wax, sort of a signature.

END OF SIDE 1



## BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

DEAN RUSK: Something like lo-si-kuh, which Chiang Kai-shek said meant, scholar and warrior.

RICHARD RUSK: Oh, is that just a Chinese type snow job?

GANSCHOW: No. No. Oh, no. This is a very--when the Chinese want to compliment you they will transliterate your name into Chinese, but they will be sure to compliment you in the way in which they perceive you. The way in which they perceive you.

RICHARD RUSK: How many dealings with Chiang Kai-shek did you have over the years?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I met with him several times. Two or three times during the war, but several times after the war. But always in Taiwan, he never visited the United States, that I can recall. Did he ever come here?

GANSCHOW: I do not think he ever came here. Do you know--

RICHARD RUSK: Any other anecdotes about that fellow while we are talking about Chiang Kai-shek? Personal impressions?

GANSCHOW: You know you have to understand, Richard, and I am sure you have read this, but the man did remarkably well in China in a certain way. I mean, he lost all those coastal cities, he lost the industrial areas, he lost a good portion of the rich agricultural areas. The Japanese were convinced that Chiang was going to give up, that once they gave up then they could turn their attention to the Pacific islands. And that die-hard did not give up.

DEAN RUSK: Did I put on tape the story about Madame Chiang Kai-shek's coolie train across the Himalayas?

RICHARD RUSK: No. Go ahead.

DEAN RUSK: On one of Madame Chiang's visits to Washington during the period when there was no land access to China through Burma, she visited FDR. And shortly after that, we in the Pentagon got a note from him saying Madame Chiang has told me that she would provide two million coolies to provide a coolie train across the mountains to carry supplies to China: organize it for FDR. It did not take us long with our computered slide rules to figure out that these coolies, each one of them, would eat up four or five times his carrying load in the food he would need through that difficult and barren country. So we sent back a note to Franklin Roosevelt saying this is not operationally possible for this reason. So he sent back another note saying, "Well then drop them their food by air." Whereupon we had to remind him that if we had the planes to drop them their food by air then we could carry the stuff into China in the first place. (laughter) But she was quite a charmer when she came by.

GANSCHOW: Oh she could be. Somebody told me--Now this is what I have heard and I cannot remember where I heard it--that when she would speak before the Congressional Committee --

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: Again--we lost that, even though it's--

GANSCHOW: Oh, I don't know--I could never prove--

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: Go ahead, stick it on there.

DEAN RUSK: There are some of these things, we can't deal with. It's scholarly standards, Rich. This is the point.

RICHARD RUSK: Okay, all right--

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: Lyndon Johnson asked me to take to Chiang Kai-shek, as a gift from him, a new Bulova clock. This was a timepiece operating on a tuning fork--a wholly different principle of time keeping that had come out of the space program. This clock had appropriate inscriptions to Chiang Kai-shek from President Johnson. I went on out to Taipei and I mentioned this to one of the officers in the Embassy there. He turned pale and said, "Oh, no, no, no, you must never give a timepiece to a Chinese. That means his time has run out." So I had to scurry around and find another present for Chiang Kai-shek.

RICHARD RUSK: That was on a trip to Taiwan in the late 1960s, I guess.

DEAN RUSK: The latter part of the sixties.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: That's a deadly insult.

RICHARD RUSK: Never expose the sole of your shoe.

DEAN RUSK: --the sole of your foot or your shoe to a Thai when you cross your legs. You have to keep them flat on the floor. That's a deadly insult. There are a lot of little things like that.

GANSCHOW: Let me tell you a story about Senator [Sam] Nunn. I got a call--This must have been, probably three years ago--a Senator from Georgia, Senator Nunn. He asked me--we were going off to China--and he asked me whether certain topics would be appropriate to bring up with the Chinese. So I said, "Well you just tell me topics and we'll see." He said, "Well I'd like to

talk to them about Senator [Richard Brevard] Russell and his involvement with China and the awards that he had gotten from the Chinese. And I said, "Oh, no. I don't think you want to talk about that because I'm sure that those awards came from Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang Kai-shek." And I said, "I don't think you want to bring that up." And he said, "Oh, well then, I'm glad I called," he said, "or I might be bringing the wrong things up."

DEAN RUSK: I've got a high award of some sort from--

END OF SIDE 2

