

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

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Dean Rusk interviewed by Thomas J. Schoenbaum

circa 1984 January 24

SCHOENBAUM: I wanted to talk about the period when you were Deputy Undersecretary of State and Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. Specifically I know a couple of interesting things. One is that in Present at the Creation, Dean [Gooderham] Acheson mentions you a couple of times within interesting incidents. One is the occasion when you came in and offered him your resignation as Deputy Undersecretary and offered to take the job as Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs. And he, in his memoirs, writes about that as a very magnanimous gesture on your part and one that he really didn't understand why you did it. It was a demotion for you. He was touched by it. And I wondered, have you read his account?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I have seen that and he and I talked about it once or twice. But in the first place, no technical demotion was involved. I had been Assistant Secretary for United Nations Affairs. Well, that necessarily brought me in touch regularly with the so-called geographic bureaus--European, Asian and so forth--because of the large number of items that turned up on the agenda of the United Nations every year, particularly in the General Assembly. So it was not all that much of a change for me to be designated as a Deputy Undersecretary for Political Affairs because that was the kind of work that I had been doing when I was in charge of United Nations Affairs: that is, the coordination of the different bureaus into a single American policy. But while I was Deputy Undersecretary for Political Affairs, my technical position was still that of Assistant Secretary. I was simply an Assistant Secretary who had been named to that spot. Now when things were looking very disagreeable in Washington about Far Eastern Affairs, the McCarthyist attack on some of the old China hands and sharp divisions between some of the leaders of both parties on Far Eastern policy, the State Department was caught in the mangle. A lot of individuals there were caught up in that controversy, many of them quite unfairly. And so in the spring of 1950 it appeared that there might be some advantage in getting a fresh start in the Far Eastern section of the State Department. Well, I had worked on the Far East a good deal. When I was living in California before World War II, of course, we gave a lot of attention to Asian and Far Eastern affairs. I served in China-Burma-India for three years during the war. At the end of the war, in the Pentagon I was very much involved in such issues as the surrender of Japan, the occupation of Japan and Korea, the negotiations of the Japanese Peace Treaty, and many other such things. So, I just told Dean Acheson that if he would like for me to take on the job of Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs that I would be willing to do it. And he thought there might be some advantage in a fresh start, so I made that shift over. But again, my rank simply continued to be that of an Assistant Secretary of State. I didn't have to go to the Senate again for confirmation, for example.

SCHOENBAUM: How did he react when you told him that? Was he visibly moved?

DEAN RUSK: Well, you know, grown men don't weep on each other's shoulders. No, he thought about it and expressed his appreciation for the idea and decided to make that move. But

later he told me that he had very much appreciated it. But I think I have indicated to you before that for some reason I myself was not caught up on the McCarthy affair, possibly because some Republican senators went to Joe McCarthy and told him to keep his hands off me. I had worked very closely with a number of Republican senators beginning with Senator Arthur [Hendrick] Vandenberg. So that at least we got away from those personal attacks on the person who happened to be sitting in that chair. Now, at the same time we made two other personnel changes. Dean Acheson and I recommended to Mr. Truman that he bring Mr. John Foster Dulles back into the administration to try to work on a bipartisan foreign policy for the Far East. But when this recommendation got over to the White House some of the little people around Harry Truman said to him, "Mr. President, you can't possibly do this because look at that mean, dirty campaign that John Foster Dulles just ran against Senator Layman in New York." And Harry Truman apparently laughed at them and said, "Look, you fellows don't understand politics. Of course, Dulles is going to take time out every two years to be a Republican because he is a Republican, but in between times we are going to work with him if he will work with us." So we brought John Foster Dulles back into the administration, and he went to work in consultations on Capitol Hill and around the government. And on the whole, except for China, we worked out a pretty good bipartisan understanding on our relations in Asia.

SCHOENBAUM: So that's an interesting relationship. You were Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs and John Foster Dulles was in charge of a long-term policy--

DEAN RUSK: Well, he was brought in as a kind of extra wheel to try his hand at reaching some broad understanding with the leaders of both parties about Far Eastern policy. But we found that there was no possibility of a genuine bipartisan approach to the China question. But as far as other matters in Asia were concerned there was no particular problem.

SCHOENBAUM: What was the specific disagreement over China at that time? In 1950, of course, Mao Tse-tung took control. But what was the disagreement? Everyone was against communism in both parties. What was the precise disagreement?

DEAN RUSK: Well, there had been a rather sharp debate about who lost China. The Republicans tended to try to pin that on the Democrats. Well the simple truth was that we didn't lose China because we didn't have China. It wasn't ours to lose. When the Chinese communists made their move, they did so at a time when we were disarmed. And those of us who had any experience with China, such as myself, knew that we could mobilize several million men and could do no more than occupy a few coastal cities in China. We would just repeat the experience that the Japanese had with their millions of people in China, but there was no way in which we could use any military force to affect the situation in China. And we knew directly from close personal experience the extent of the collapse of the institutions of the nationalist government of China after that decade of war against Japan in which they were fighting the Japanese more or less alone, while we were supplying oil and scrap iron to Japan. I mean we had a pretty good understanding of the emptiness of the political structure and the social structure of the nationalist regime. So we did not want to commit ourselves to guaranteeing that the national government of China would succeed on the mainland. Now President Truman had sent George [Catlett] Marshall out there to try to bring about an agreement between the nationalists and the communists but that failed because, well, at the end of the day the simple truth was that the

communists knew that they could take over the whole works if they just persisted, that there was a kind of dry rot. The mandate of heaven was shifting in China so they weren't going to deny themselves what they thought they had at hand.

SCHOENBAUM: Where did Chiang Kai-shek really fail? He had his chance didn't he? Did he make some key mistakes?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think one has to begin by recalling again that his government, his regime, had fought a ten-year war against the Japanese before the outbreak of World War II, before we got into World War II, and the impact of that on the political and economic and social structure of China was greatly underestimated in the United States. You see, on Pearl Harbor Day it was very important for the United States from the point of view of our own morale to pretend that there was great power called China which had been valiantly fighting the Japanese all that time. And we tended to exaggerate the position and the capabilities of China from that situation because the whole scene the first half of 1942 was very bleak all over the world. But Chiang Kai-shek was in a situation where he was constantly bickering with warlords in different parts of China; he had no real control; his armed forces were poorly led, poorly trained, poorly equipped. It was not until General [Joseph W.] Stilwell got six divisions of Chinese troops over into India and got them trained and equipped and ready to go back into Burma that the nationalist Chinese had any effective fighting force.

SCHOENBAUM: Was it just a question of effective fighting force or was it that Chiang wasn't the magnet for the people that even Mao became? Did he handle the people well?

DEAN RUSK: He had been at an earlier stage, but given the circumstances, corruption became rampant throughout China; one little sign of weakness: General Sun Li-jen, a graduate of VMI [Virginia Military Institute], was commander of these Chinese forces in Burma. Well, at the end of the war this Chinese force in Burma was flown back to China and transported up into northeastern China. But Chiang Kai-shek, rather than letting that force operate as an integrated unit, an array of its own, because it had demonstrated in the Burma that it could fight, broke these units up, scattered them around because he seemed to be fearful that Sun Li-jen might take China away from him. So Chiang Kai-shek mismanaged his troops pretty badly. As a matter of fact, we thought in Washington that there was a pretty fair chance that Chiang Kai-shek's forces could at least hold the line at the Yangtze River. But, again, Chiang Kai-shek mismanaged his forces so badly that any hope that he could do that simply collapsed. I remember an American colonel with whom I had served during the war came back from China to Washington when the Chinese Nationalists were along the Yangtze River, and he told us categorically that Chiang Kai-shek could hold the Yangtze River. But when he saw the way Chiang Kai-shek mishandled his troops, this colonel simply shot himself, he was so disconsolate and so bitter about that development.

But when Chiang Kai-shek government moved over into Taiwan, they took with them a lot of sympathy here in the United States. After all they had been our allies in World War II. We had an agreement during the war with the Soviet Union that they would continue to recognize and support the Nationalist Government of China at the end of the war, and they ran out on that agreement. There had been a century of warm and close relations between the Chinese people

and the American people, and these Chinese who fled to Taiwan were the kinds of people with whom we had worked. After all there was the Peking Union Medical College, the finest medical school and hospital in all of Asia. There was Yale in China. Harvard was in China, and schools all over the place, hospitals all over the place. So the reaction here in this country to the seizure of the mainland by the Chinese communists was somewhat like the reaction of a jilted lover. Here China had turned against us after this century of affectionate relationships. [It was] somewhat patronizing on the American side, but nevertheless it was a genuine and warm relationship.

So this opened up the possibility for great bitterness. There were some Republicans like Senator William [Fife] Knowland of California, Senator [Howard Alexander] Smith of New Jersey, who made a lot of hay out of this. Well in any event, Foster Dulles was not able to find a basis for bipartisanship on the China question. But about that time we decided to go ahead for a Japanese Peace Treaty. General [Douglas] MacArthur, the State Department, Defense Department, agreed that the occupation in Japan was running its course, that it was getting into diminishing returns and that the time had come to wind it up. So we asked John Foster Dulles to shift gears and take on the negotiation of the Japanese Peace Treaty, which he did on the basis of a short letter from President Truman telling him what kind of peace treaty he, Truman, wanted. So John Foster Dulles set out around the world with his briefcase and negotiated out the Japanese Peace Treaty with government after government and did a brilliant job, with the full backing of Dean Acheson. Well, during that I was the backstop in the Department of State for John Foster Dulles.

SCHOENBAUM: Aren't you a little bit too modest and self-effacing about your role? You were really in charge of the Department there.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I kept in very close touch with John Foster Dulles at all stages. And he and I--I don't recall that we had any quarrels with each other--but we saw to it that what he was trying to do was consistent with President Truman's letter and the wishes of the Secretary of State. And that relationship worked very smoothly.

SCHOENBAUM: Was there a political reason why you weren't given that job and Foster Dulles was? He was a Republican and he would be the one to exert control on the Republicans on the Hill.

DEAN RUSK: Well, there was some advantage in his being a Republican to negotiate this sort of thing.

SCHOENBAUM: Like Nixon going to China?

DEAN RUSK: That's right. And [Charles Andre Joseph] de Gaulle liberating Algeria. But he was a skillful negotiator.

SCHOENBAUM: But you had had experience with the Israelis, you had had that very same kind of experience.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. But you see, you couldn't be Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs and do that negotiating job at the same time. My deputy would have had to take over the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs because both of them were more than a full-time job. But also, John Foster Dulles was known by the leaders of many governments because he had worked on our delegation to the United Nations, he was there at San Francisco for the U.N. Conference, and he was looked upon as Dewey's putative Secretary of State at the time of the election of 1948. So he appeared to be the kind of person who could do that job successfully, and indeed he did. He did a brilliant job.

Well now, the third personnel action we took in the spring of 1950. One was my moving to the Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs job. Second was bringing in John Foster Dulles. The third, we called back Philip [C.] Jessup, to serve as a kind of roving ambassador and we used him for more or less spot problems. He was a very able fellow and had a lot of experience in international affairs, so he came in as kind of consultant.

SCHOENBAUM: He was a professor? From the academic world?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. He had been one of the great international lawyers, had been on the faculty of Columbia Law School for many years.

SCHOENBAUM: That is an interesting mix. So, you three, John Foster Dulles, yourself and Phil Jessup, under Dean Acheson at that time.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, that was a pretty strong team on Far Eastern matters. In any event, that's when and how I came to be Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs.

SCHOENBAUM: What was the style of work between the three of you and Acheson? Did Acheson pretty much delegate everything to the three of you and then you three would work it out?

DEAN RUSK: Acheson delegated extensively on the day-to-day details. But he understood fully that delegation was not abdication on his part; so important questions had to come to him so that he could decide which of them had to go to the President and--

SCHOENBAUM: So you were in and out of his office every day?

DEAN RUSK: Just about every day and sometimes several times a day. And then I saw a good deal of President Truman during that period because Acheson would take me over with him to the White House on a number of occasions.

SCHOENBAUM: So there wasn't any conflict? The White House didn't have its own foreign policy team?

DEAN RUSK: No.

SCHOENBAUM: Truman, as a President, would be relying on a National Security Adviser today?

DEAN RUSK: Well, to begin with, he inherited Ed [Edward R.] Stettinius as Secretary of State. But he soon decided that that wasn't the right man in the right job so he asked Jimmy [James Francis] Byrnes to be his Secretary of State. Well, Jimmy Byrnes was pretty grumpy because he thought he ought to have been [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt's Vice President and that he really ought to have been President instead of Truman, and Jimmy Byrnes never fully understood between the two of them which one was the President. So that came to a breach and Jimmy Byrnes later wrote a book about it to get that off of his chest. Dean Acheson once remarked that in the relations between a President and Secretary of State, it was of the greatest importance that both of them understand at all times which is President. Well now, Jimmy Byrnes forgot that and Harry Truman was the wrong President to be forgetful with on that point. So, Harry Truman then invited Secretary of State Marshall to take on the job. Harry Truman thought that George Marshall was the greatest living American. There are many of us who agreed with him on that point. So he delegated very extensively to George Marshall. George Marshall, with a strong sense of constitutional responsibility, kept Truman in touch with what was going on and took important questions to him. But there was a lot of simply delegated authority in George Marshall. Well that made it possible, in turn, for George Marshall to delegate downward to his own people. You see, during the war he, Marshall, as Chief of Staff of the Army, had delegated very heavily to his theater commanders and to the key parts of the General Staff and things of that sort, so he was accustomed to this notion of delegation. He felt that unless you could delegate then you had better get somebody in there to whom you could delegate. So George Marshall relied very heavily upon those officers of the Department in whom he had personal confidence. For example, when I was Assistant Secretary for United Nations Affairs under George Marshall I had an enormous amount of responsibility and authority compared to some of the later occupants of that office because George Marshall delegated to me a good deal of the authority that had been delegated to him by President Truman.

SCHOENBAUM: But he only did that after getting to know you and having confidence in you? He wouldn't do that to everyone?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, he would work out in his own mind those to whom he was prepared to delegate. To illustrate this delegation matter, I remember--you see. Bob [Robert Abercrombie] Lovett was Marshall's Undersecretary. And I remember one morning Undersecretary Lovett asked me to come to see him. I went up there. This was when I was Assistant Secretary for United Nations Affairs. Lovett had in his hand an outgoing telegram that I had sent out the night before. And Lovett said to me, "Now Dean, I debated with myself a good deal about whether I should speak to you about this, but I decided that I owed it to you to do so. I ought to say to you that if I had been sending out this telegram I would have handled this particular paragraph somewhat differently." Then he went on to say how he would have handled it. He said, "I think I ought to tell you this but for God's sake don't stop sending out telegrams." (laughter) I don't recall the substance.

SCHOENBAUM: In other words he wanted you to continue taking the ball and running with it.

DEAN RUSK: George Marshall had some personal traits we all admired. For example, he remained at arm's length with those who were above him and with those who were below him because he had a very strong feeling that personal relationships should not intrude into the consideration of the merits of public policy issues. He always called us by our last name; I might have said that earlier. He very rarely complimented anybody who was working under him. Now when that relationship no longer existed he could be warm and generous and appreciative as one could imagine.

SCHOENBAUM: Can you give a specific instance of that?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. When Marshall headed our delegation to the United Nations in Paris in 1948, the Palestine issue was very active at that point. I was waked up about three o'clock one morning by the code room at the Embassy telling me that there was a "Flash--eyes only" message for Secretary Marshall from President Truman and that it appeared to call for an immediate answer. So I got on my clothes and went over to the code room and got the message and indeed it did need an immediate answer. So I took a few moments to sketch out a proposed reply and then called Secretary Marshall in his quarters. By that time it was about 3:45. I told him about this message and that I would have to see him for a few minutes, so he said, "Come on over." So I went over to his hotel suite; he was there in his bathrobe; and I showed him the incoming message and then showed him my proposed reply to it. He looked over my reply and made two or three more or less minor changes and then I left to go back to the code room and send this answer back. As I was leaving the room, Marshall said to me, "Rusk, there are times when I think you earn you pay." I mean, that is about as close to a compliment as he ever paid me while I was working under him. Now, when he retired and I visited with him he was very generous indeed, but he had a clear view about--

SCHOENBAUM: Do you remember what general subject matter it had to do with?

DEAN RUSK: It had to do with Palestine.

SCHOENBAUM: And in what hotel it was? (laughter)

DEAN RUSK: Hotel Crillon, just across the street from the Embassy. I suppose he never had a closer friend in government than Robert Lovett, but he always called him Lovett.

SCHOENBAUM: And Truman always--

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DEAN RUSK: Truman would either call him "General" or "Mr. Secretary." They told the story that on one occasion during the war Franklin Roosevelt called Marshall "George" and Marshall said, "It's General Marshall, Mr. President."

SCHOENBAUM: What did Truman call you?

DEAN RUSK: Truman called me "Dean."

SCHOENBAUM: How was he addressed? He was always addressed as "Mr. President?"

DEAN RUSK: Always as "Mr. President." That is true of all Presidents. Anybody who thinks he ought to call the President by his first name is missing a point.

SCHOENBAUM: So you were in the Oval Office a lot. Is that where Truman worked? Did he tend to work in the Oval Office? Did he use it as a hideaway?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Truman was quite a fellow. I remember on one occasion--and this is something which cost me a good deal of money over the years for a safe deposit box. But I took over to him a long message which he, Truman, had just received from Prime Minister [Jawaharlal] Nehru. And from Truman's point of view this was a very disagreeable kind of message and Truman didn't like it very much. Well, I went over there with a proposed reply and Truman picked up his own copy of the incoming message from Nehru and he had made all sorts of marginal notations on it, very scathing and very naughty, some of them. Then he went over my reply and made a few changes. Well, as I was leaving he said, "Is there anything else I can do for you?" And I sort of grinned at him and when I got back to the Department he wrote me a little note: "Dear Dean, If you will send over your copy of Mr. Nehru's message, I will be glad to make the same notations on it that I have on mine." Well, I thought this was quite indiscreet because this could have been a time bomb if these marginal notations had ever gotten out, you see. I mean for example, on one of his marginal notes, I remember, "What does he want me to do, consult Mousie Dung? ['Mousie,'M-o-u-s-i-e,'Dung,'D-u-n-g!]" (laughter) So he sent me this little note, and since it was indiscreet, I just ignored it. Well, about two weeks later, another little note came from Harry Truman. "Dear Dean, damn it, I told you to send over your copy of Mr. Nehru's message." And so I did and he put in his notations and sent it back to me and said that he just wanted me to have it in my memorabilia--misspelling memorabilia. So I had to keep that darned thing in a safe deposit box. I have got it here at the office still. But that would have been a time bomb if that thing had gotten out. But he was that kind of fellow.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you suppose the Truman Library has a copy of that one?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I've got one here! (laughter) But, Truman had a pretty dry wit at times. I happened to be the senior officer in town once for a Cabinet meeting and I went over to sit in on a Cabinet meeting. Mr. Truman got the meeting started. Vice President [Alben William] Barkley came in late, and he took his seat across the table from the President and looked across and said, "Mr. President, I am very sorry that I am late but I was detained in the Senate. And how are you today?" And with a wicked little gleam in his eye, Truman said, "I am sorry to have to tell you Mr. Vice President that I feel just fine." (laughter)

SCHOENBAUM: Was Truman's banter a lot like [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy's was, or different?

DEAN RUSK: A little bit, a little bit, depending on his mood. But Truman was a no-nonsense kind of fellow. I remember when he was meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on one occasion. And some potential problem came up for some discussion and one of the Chiefs said, "Well that will, of course, mean using nuclear weapons." President Truman came right up out of his chair and said, "Who told you that?" And this General said, "Well, that is the basis of our war plans." And Truman said, "Well, you go back and get yourself some more war plans because you are not going to put me in a position of either doing nothing or going to a nuclear war."

SCHOENBAUM: Do you remember what that was about?

DEAN RUSK: No, no I don't.

SCHOENBAUM: So Truman was not--he obviously used nuclear weapons once but he was not--well, he was very cautious about--

DEAN RUSK: Well, he understood what these things could do. On his decision to use nuclear weapons against Japan, I myself was not in on that, my section of Operations Division. But what we were doing at that time in the General Staff was making full plans for the occupation of the main island of Japan at the end of 1945 or early 1946, and we knew that this would be a frightful operation. In the first place, millions of Japanese would be killed in the sustained preliminary bombing of Japan which we would have laid on before we tried to go ashore.

SCHOENBAUM: Would have been firebombing?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. I mean, even so we killed more people in a fire bombing raid on Tokyo than we did at Hiroshima. But, we were looking toward hundreds of thousands of American casualties and millions of Japanese casualties. Those who try to pretend that somehow Truman used the atomic bomb just to impress the Russians are just way off base because Truman felt that this was saving millions of lives by bringing the war to an end. He was hoping that the use of the atomic bomb would bring the war to an end. TS - That was his--and it came true too.

DEAN RUSK: Well, that was his central motivation for using the nuclear weapons. Those who claim that he did it because the Japanese were non-white, that's crazy! We almost certainly would have used a nuclear bomb on [Adolf] Hitler if we had had it at the time.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you know why he picked Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

DEAN RUSK: No, no.

SCHOENBAUM: And people say, "Why two strikes rather than one?" He thought he had to make a demonstration of wider--

DEAN RUSK: Well you see, there was, in my judgment, a mistake made in the Manhattan Project from the very beginning. When we set up the Manhattan Project we should have built into it from the very beginning a political task force to give careful thought to all the ramifications of this thing if it proved possible to produce such a weapon. Because those people who knew about the Manhattan Project and who had any political savvy were people like Franklin Roosevelt, Secretary of War [Henry Lewis] Stimson, a few people like that, who had so many other things to think about that they simply didn't focus on it. Now, I don't know whether such a task force would have made any difference about the firing of the bomb or what they might have done with it, but at least we could have boxed the compass of all the possibilities and all the ramifications. You see, by dropping the bomb on Hiroshima, we gave away ninety-five percent of the secret right then and there because we demonstrated that it could be done. But anyhow I think that point--

SCHOENBAUM: These were plans that Truman inherited though.

DEAN RUSK: Well, the Manhattan Project was in full steam when he became President. He had not known about it when he was Vice President.

SCHOENBAUM: That was within, what, three months? That was three months after he became President?

DEAN RUSK: Right. So it was up to Truman to bring the war against Germany to an end and to bring the war against Japan to an end. As a matter of fact, Japan was in a much weaker position, say in July 1945, than we realized. It might well have been that some sustained conventional bombing of Japan might have brought about surrender but perhaps not as quickly. The atomic bomb gave the Emperor and others in Tokyo an opportunity to bring their own military leadership under control and to bring the war to an end. It fundamentally changed the political position of the war parties in Japan.

SCHOENBAUM: They could see that they had no choice.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, that Japan could be utterly destroyed if they didn't surrender.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you surprised that Truman was basically right? You had these occupation plans that you were ready to go forward on in 1945-46. You were obviously relieved. Were you surprised that the Japanese did in fact surrender?

DEAN RUSK: No, although I must say the surrender of Japan came somewhat sooner than we in the bureaucracy had supposed, and so all of the detailed preparation for the surrender of Japan had not been put together. We had to work literally twenty-four hours a day for quite a few days on end to get the terms of surrender completed, to get those around to other allies, to work out the arrangements for the occupation, and so forth. And so there was a lot of midnight work there for a period of ten days.

SCHOENBAUM: Was this the end of August of 1945?

DEAN RUSK: Middle of August.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you remember when you heard about the bomb?

DEAN RUSK: I was at my desk in the Operations Division of the General Staff and the flash from Hiroshima was the first I heard about it. I remember, when that flash came in an Air Force Colonel sitting at the next desk exclaimed, "This means that war has turned upon itself and is devouring its own tail. From this time forward it will make no sense for governments to try to settle their disputes by war." Well, we haven't fully brought that instinctive insight of his into reality but I have always remembered his remark.

SCHOENBAUM: It must have been an awesome thing even though you knew that obviously this was the best thing to do.

DEAN RUSK: Well, it was an awesome thing. These are awesome weapons. Truman had hinted to Joseph Stalin at Potsdam that such a weapon was on the way.

SCHOENBAUM: Was there a rumor?

DEAN RUSK: I don't think there were public rumors.

SCHOENBAUM: But you had heard some rumors. Did even the high policymakers have an idea of the magnitude of the atomic blast?

DEAN RUSK: Well, they had an idea but it really didn't come home until they could see the effect on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And the same was true of the pilots who flew the planes and dropped the bombs. It was just an astonishing thing.

SCHOENBAUM: Is there anything about Truman's reactions? Of course he has his memoirs, but of course it was a personally anguishing decision for Truman.

DEAN RUSK: Well, Truman didn't anguish very much over the tough decisions. He went home and slept. He didn't look back. He had a tremendous knack for making decisions and living with the results. But we were very busy there for a period of about ten days. We got a little insight on General Douglas MacArthur. We had to work right through, day and night, for two or three days getting the terms of surrender drafted and agreed to with principal allies and then getting them embossed for signature. And we finally got all that done and put a colonel on a special plane to fly straight to Tokyo Bay, stopping only where he had to for fuel. And this fellow made this long trip, got into a little motor launch, and went out to the *Missouri* with these documents. A member of General MacArthur's staff met him at the foot of the stairs going up on board to *Missouri*, took the document from him and said, "General MacArthur says you will not be needed on board." (laughter) Here this poor damn colonel who had made this long flight out there wasn't even allowed to go on deck to watch it. (laughter)

I remember before that we had sent a colonel out to MacArthur to, I think he was then in the Philippines, to talk some things over with him. And this colonel came back after about a week

with nothing to report, and we said to him, "Didn't you have a high level conversation with General MacArthur?" He said, "Yes, I had one high level conversation with him. I went out to get into the elevator in his headquarters and General MacArthur came along, stepped in the elevator, and turned around and looked at me and said, 'You will take the next elevator, I presume.'" He said, "That was my high level conversation with General MacArthur."

But General MacArthur could be a captivating man when he wanted to be. We would send John [J.] McCloy, Assistant Secretary of War, out to see him, somebody else, out to see him to try to get him straightened out on certain points. And they would all come back strong MacArthur men; he just took them into camp. During the occupation of Japan, he was supposed to be under the general direction of the Far Eastern Commission made up of about fifteen nations, headquartered there in Washington. They got to be pretty grumpy about something MacArthur was doing and so they all went out to see him. They all came back applauding. He just took them into camp. He could be the most persuasive--

SCHOENBAUM: The Japanese loved MacArthur apparently.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, within limits. I remember years later some of the Japanese recall that MacArthur had fought the battle for Japan while he was in charge of the occupation, and he did. He did a great job in terms of long-range interest of Japan. So they laid on a public subscription campaign to raise money to build a statue of General MacArthur. I think they raised something like \$600. And I was talking to a Japanese official who was telling me about this and I said, "Does that mean that the Japanese don't really understand how much MacArthur had really done for them?" And he said, "What does that have to do with the price of coking coal?" You know, there is not very much of that kind of sentimentality. They did the same kind of thing down in Indonesia. They were going to erect a statue to a very large, almost, well fat, American ambassador who had played a major role in achieving independence for Indonesia, but the finance minister objected because this ambassador was so fat it would cost too much bronze to make a statue for him. (laughter)

SCHOENBAUM: There is another story that Dean Acheson has in his book that is very intriguing and that is during--Jumping to Korea; we're jumping all over. But he mentions you very favorably in the context of when the Chinese entered the Korean War. And this has to do with MacArthur too. Apparently the Chinese were obviously overrunning the American troops and MacArthur had the brilliant idea of landing up near the Inchon. Now the American forces were in full retreat and apparently MacArthur was ready to pull out. And you were the one who more or less saved the day on that.

DEAN RUSK: Well you see, there had been the practice during World War II to delegate heavy responsibilities to theatre commanders, and Washington did not tinker with theatre commanders very much during the war. So the same thing tended to apply to MacArthur. But when he came up with the idea of the Inchon landing, the Joint Chiefs in Washington were very skeptical about this. They just didn't think it could work. And MacArthur went ahead with it and it was a brilliant success, so the Joint Chiefs felt that their fingers had been burned. So when MacArthur moved northward, instead of moving his forces northward as a single mass where the various elements could support each other, he broke them up into separated fingers. The Joint Chiefs

were concerned about that tactical deployment, but they were very reluctant to take on MacArthur on that because of their experience with the Inchon landing. But finally they did raise some questions with him about his deployment. By then it was too late because they were already far north, and when the Chinese came in they were able to hit MacArthur's forces piecemeal. I mean, had he moved north with a single, consolidated force, we might still be at the narrow neck of North Korea today. But that retreat to the south was quite a startling thing for MacArthur to deal with. And he, in effect, said that unless you open up general war against China we should withdraw from the Korean peninsula. I remember one cable spoke of the loss of morale of his own troops, and so he was in pretty low state of mind there. Well, in a meeting with President Truman, Dean Acheson very quietly, on this matter of whether we should withdraw from the Korean peninsula, said to the President, "Mr. President, they must not do that to the United States." And that turned the thing around. Now Dean Acheson attributes that to me.

SCHOENBAUM: Dean Acheson said that you were the one who cited England and World War II and--

DEAN RUSK: Well, as I remember it, he was the one who actually did the speaking in the meeting with Truman. But anyhow we sent General Matthew [B.] Ridgway out there to take command of the forces in Korea. And without any additional forces, Matt Ridgway got out there in the field with his grenade strapped over his shoulders and visited the troops in the front line, and with the same troops turned the thing around and started north again. I remember Matt Ridgway was then head of operations for the Army. And at that meeting or one nearby he very quietly made the observation, "Mr. President, when an American general loses confidence in the morale of his own troops, the problem of morale is with the general."

SCHOENBAUM: You are very modest about your own role. Did you have some conversations with Acheson? Acheson very obviously attributed that to you in an emotional passage in his book.

DEAN RUSK: Oh sure, we talked about it. When there would be a meeting at the White House, he and I would talk things over before he went to the meeting and often I would go to the meeting with him. I saw a lot of Acheson in those days.

SCHOENBAUM: But also, you opposed extending the bombing--

DEAN RUSK: I was opposed to the opening up of a general war against China because Harry Truman's own military advisers had told him that the only targets in China which could affect the situation in Korea would be the mass destruction of Chinese cities with nuclear weapons. And Truman was not prepared to go down that trail.

SCHOENBAUM: Was that what MacArthur basically wanted? Did he want another Hiroshima in China?

DEAN RUSK: I think there was one thing we did which, in retrospect, I would have liked to see us do differently. We did restrict our own pilots in Korea to the Yalu River. We did not give

them hot pursuit rights across the border. These were planes that were coming in over Korea to shoot at our fellows. I think we should have allowed them hot pursuit across the Yalu River.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you mention that at the time?

DEAN RUSK: I forget now whether I did or not. But in retrospect I think that was something we could have done.

SCHOENBAUM: And we didn't do any bombing even across the Yalu River?

DEAN RUSK: No. There was a dam on the Yalu River and there was a good deal of thought about bombing out that dam. But one of our top Air Force generals in Washington went out there and himself flew a plane with our biggest conventional bomb on it and dropped that bomb on that dam and it only made a little scar on the outside surface. It didn't do a thing to the dam. And so they came back and said the only way to knock out that dam would be with a nuclear bomb. By the way, going back to Harry Truman's use of the bomb. During the sixties I went to Japan several times, and on each occasion I had a press conference. And at each press conference I would get a question from some Japanese reporter: "Do you regret the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima?" And I would always say, "I regret every casualty of that war on both sides, beginning with Pearl Harbor and ending with the surrender in Tokyo Bay." I was not going to go out there and apologize to the Japanese for bringing the war to an end. That remains my view.

There were a lot of things that were unnecessarily controversial during that period. I am not sure that I have ever put some of this in any public record, but the issue came up about using Chinese Nationalist forces in Korea. MacArthur, without authorization, had visited Chiang Kai-shek, and so this question had come up. Well, to me this whole idea was a phony because the Chinese on Taiwan told us at that time that they had earmarked two divisions for service in Korea. But of course these divisions, they said, would have to be fully equipped from shoes on up and would have to go through a period of intensive training for not less than two years before they would be available and ready to be used in Korea. So from the operational point of view this was nothing. Well, then some years later I met with the man who had been the foreign minister in Taiwan at that time and this matter came up. And he laughed and said, "You know, I was the one who made that proposal to Chiang Kai-shek to offer Chinese forces for Korea." And he said that everyone in the government, including Chiang Kai-shek, was adamantly opposed to the idea, but he had finally prevailed when he gave them categorical assurances that the offer would be rejected.

Now, on our side we simply did not want to have the issues in Korea mixed up with the issues between Chiang Kai-shek and the mainland, and I, myself, had no particular respect for the military capabilities of these Chinese forces. I had a good many military friends who had been with those forces, and helping to train them and so forth, and we didn't attribute very much capability to those forces.

I remember on another occasion I talked to a high Taiwanese official about their idea of going back to the mainland. And I said--I think he was Vice President at the time. You must be careful how you use this because I would have to get some names. I don't want to get anybody into

trouble who is still alive. I said, "What about your soldiers, do they want to go back to the mainland?" And he smiled and said, "Yes, they want to go back. But as soon as they get ashore they will soon disappear and all go back to their own villages." So there is a lot of unreality in that storming debate about Chinese affairs back in that period. And people in the administration had to try to keep their feet on realistic grounds, and that exposed them to very sharp attacks from, particularly from some Republicans who were trying to lay China on the Democrats.

END OF SIDE 2

