

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

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Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas J. Schoenbaum

1985 August 23

SCHOENBAUM: This is August 23, 1985. The subject of the interview today, with Dean Rusk, is the fourth in our series of the role of Dean Rusk in the creation of the postwar world order. Today we'll begin with a question we left hanging last time. We were talking about Southeast Asia and the idea that some in government had, to form what was called at the time a Pacific Association, which was to be an alliance, a bulwark against communist expansion. And this idea was talked about in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Philip [Caryl] Jessup, in his memoir, says that although the staff, including Mr. Rusk, was opposed to such a conclusion of such a formal association, that John Foster Dulles, who was on the U.S. [United States] delegation to the U.N. [United Nations] at the time, though that such an association should be formed even at that time and wrote a memorandum in favor of the formation of such an association. Could you shed light on that, sir?

DEAN RUSK: Well there were several things that were involved in that issue. It was discussed pretty thoroughly at staff level, although I don't think the issue ever went directly to Secretary [Dean Gooderham] Acheson or to President Truman because the staff wasn't prepared to recommend it. But you see, during the Truman years in our alliances we stayed offshore in the Pacific. We had a treaty with Japan, with the Philippines, and with Australia and New Zealand. One reason was that with those offshore alliances we could bring American sea and air power into effect with maximum effectiveness. We talked about a NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] in the Pacific area to include Southeast Asia. But we on the staff, many of us, felt that it would be a mistake for the United States to ally itself with some nations in Southeast Asia and not all, and have the U.S. connection become a divisive element within Southeast Asia itself. We thought it would be much better if we waited until the entire region developed its own regional security consciousness. Then we could stand in powerful second-line support of the region as a whole. And so we didn't go down the trail in the Truman years of a NATO in the Pacific. Now that situation presumably changed--

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, if I can interject for a minute. Our experiences in Asia, and of any other colonial or Western or non-Asian power who tried to move into Asia with decisive effect must have played a role in our reluctance to get involved with treaties on the mainland in Asia.

DEAN RUSK: Well there are a good many military considerations which seemed to us to point against the idea of alliances involving the positions on the mainland. Remember that in this immediate postwar period we were relatively disarmed; we were very short of forces. And some of us felt that we must not bluff with a security treaty, that if you go into them, you must mean them and have some capability of making good on them. But I think there were military considerations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, for example, told us at one point during the Truman years that although they considered Taiwan of strategic importance, that they could not furnish any military forces for the defense of Taiwan, and turned to us in the State Department and said,

"You've got to defend it with diplomatic means." Well, you can't do that under those circumstances.

RICHARD RUSK: Was there a "never again" feeling among any of you back in those days? And this would have been before the Korean War, really. Let's talk about before Korea. Based on your CBI [China-Burma-India Theater] experiences, based upon the Japanese experience in China, the British experience in India, was there just a feeling that we couldn't act effectively and get involved effectively on the land mass of Asia with American forces?

DEAN RUSK: Well in one sense there was not a 'never again' sense because we came out of the war thinking that collective security was the key to the prevention of World War III. But on the other hand, those of us who had had some experience in Asia during the war knew that how formidable a military task it would be to try to take on hundreds of millions of people with American forces. If it had been politically possible, we might have mobilized several million men only to occupy a few coastal positions along the coast of China. There was no way that the United States could impose its will upon six or seven hundred million Chinese at that time. So we were aware of the formidable problems involved in using American military power on the mainland.

SCHOENBAUM: Specifically, there's an interesting memo of what looks to be a very important conversation, a discussion of far eastern affairs in preparation for conversations with Mr. [Ernest] Bevin. And this is in Foreign Relations, 1949, Volume 7, page 1204. And you were at a meeting with the Secretary, Secretary Acheson, held in the Secretary's office on September 13, 1949. And the factors discussed at that meeting were: number one, the central position of India and the far east; number 2, the Far Eastern Association or Pact; number 3, the Japanese Peace Treaty; and number 4, rapid implementation by the French of their agreements in Indochina. Those seem to be the main issues in the--So the Far Eastern Association Pact was turned down at the staff level. What about the other three branches of that policy? And did the discussions with Mr. Bevin include--did they take further the idea of a Pacific Association or was the idea dropped before Bevin?

DEAN RUSK: Well, the British seemed to want to be a part of any security arrangements in the Pacific even though they knew and we knew that their contribution would be very small. After all, they were soon to tell us they could no longer take responsibilities in Greece. The British were rather miffed when we could not agree to have them participate in the ANZUS [Australia-New Zealand-United States] Treaty with Australia and New Zealand. But we felt that unless we limited it to those two countries, then the problem of membership in such an arrangement would become very difficult. What about France? What about the Philippines? What about others, Thailand and so forth? And this seemed to us to be moving through the back door into the kind of Pacific pact that we didn't think very much about.

SCHOENBAUM: So the British did want a--so Bevin wanted a Pacific pact, at least in name?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. And the British later became a member of SEATO, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. And I think it was a matter of their prestige and position in the Pacific, their

standing in world affairs, and so forth. But they were not in a position to make any significant contribution to give effect to such pacts.

SCHOENBAUM: What about this rapid implementation by the French of their agreements in Indochina?

DEAN RUSK: These had to do with the political pressure that we had put upon France to work out a political solution with the three states of Indochina. I have talked about that on another tape. But we thought that simply the re imposition of French colonial rule in Indochina would not wash, that they had to acknowledge the sweep of decolonization going on in the world. And therefore we wanted them to move toward at least home rule and perhaps complete independence for Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. And we discussed that in connection with that memorandum.

SCHOENBAUM: That's interesting because this was late 1949.

DEAN RUSK: That's correct.

SCHOENBAUM: And you were still pushing the French toward either decolonization or home rule in Indochina.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Yes. Yes.

SCHOENBAUM: That's interesting. Maybe we can turn to another connected subject. Of course, in late 1949 China was about to fall to communists and this was an important development for U.S. policy. There's an interesting memorandum, also in 1949, of a meeting. Actually it's a transcript of a meeting held May 11, 1949 between General [Claire Lee] Chennault and Mr. Rusk, and Mr. [Philip D.] Sprouse. And General Chennault called specifically to discuss the question of aid to China. It was May 11, 1949. This is in *Foreign Affairs*, p. 519.

DEAN RUSK: Aid to the national government of China?

SCHOENBAUM: Aid to the national government of China.

RICHARD RUSK: What volume's that, Tom?

SCHOENBAUM: This is Volume 9, 1949, page 520. And Chennault is talking about the military situation in China. And just to read some of this: Rusk asks--Well, Chennault would like American military aid and economic aid on a crash basis, and Rusk asks, "What individuals could carry that plan at the top?" And Chennault says, "Only one man: Chiang Kai-shek. Maybe Li Sun-jen [Sun Li- jen]." And he mentions several other names. And Rusk says, "Does Li Sun-jen have the stature to do this?" And Chennault says, "He was very good during the war along the Huai River. We gave him full air support for the first time in the war." Rusk says, "How much time do we have in China?" Chennault, "There's no way to estimate how fast communists will spread south and southeast. A rough estimate is that we probably have six months to defend this western zone, three months to aid the defense of Kwangtung." And Rusk asks, "Could some of this be moved in?" Chennault, "If we send a military mission in, yes, and talk to Chiang Kai-

shek. He thinks he can hold the strong fortress he already has on Formosa. Communists will send in trained men and they will work on the native population, which is anti-Chinese." And it goes on and Dean Rusk is non-committal and asks Chennault to talk to some of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the issue. But, can you shed some light on what was--do you remember that conversation in May of 1949 and what our policy was?

DEAN RUSK: Well at that time the communists had already crossed the Yangtze River and pretty well established their position in eastern China along the coast. And we did give some thought to the possibility that a non-communist Chinese area might be formed out in the west: Hunan Province, places like that. Because after all, the nationalist government of China had survived out there with the Japanese occupation of most of eastern China. But it simply did not appear to be feasible. The problem of getting any kind of support--military, economic--into such areas would require you either to try to get through communist-held China or come in through Burma or someplace like that. And the Burmese would not play. And so, although we gave some thought to that, it just wasn't on. It's not practical and nothing was done about it.

SCHOENBAUM: How far did Chennault's request go? Did he talk to the Joint Chiefs?

DEAN RUSK: He might have. He might have. But, you see, Chennault was very much of a Chiang Kai-shek man. And he was a sort of a dreamer and he would come up with impractical ideas about how you could give support to the national government of China. As a matter of fact, it was only by the skin of their teeth that the national governments of China were [sic] able to take control in Taiwan and survive in that period when everything was in disarray. But Chennault also thought that Chiang Kai-shek and his forces could return to the mainland, which was, in my mind, just mythology.

SCHOENBAUM: Even at that time? May of '49? It's interesting, you never say no to him. You never tell him, "Look, you're out of your mind. You're a dreamer." You never say that.

DEAN RUSK: Well, one way to say no is to do nothing about it.

SCHOENBAUM: I see. Yeah. And did you discuss it with Acheson at the time? Did it end there or did you, uh--

DEAN RUSK: Ah, there might have been a few glancing remarks with Acheson, but it wasn't a sufficiently serious question to bother Acheson with.

RICHARD RUSK: So Chennault's inquiries have been it as far as American consideration about supporting Chiang? Did the Department actively look at it?

DEAN RUSK: Oh well, sure we looked at it: This idea of the possibility of a non-communist area in western China. You see, when you look at something like this box the compass of all possibilities. And when you box the compass, a good many ideas turn up which simply are not practical and do not go forward; but that doesn't mean that they're not thought about.

SCHOENBAUM: We know from your experiences in the China-Burma-India Theater, you knew Chiang Kai-shek well--

DEAN RUSK: I knew a lot about him.

SCHOENBAUM: and had met him personally. You'd had dinner with him in western China at that time. You knew the situation as well as Chennault, if not better. And Chennault must have been aware that you knew. You weren't just some bureaucrat in Washington; you had been out there. You had been all over that country. Did you have some other conversations with him on a more frank level?

DEAN RUSK: Well Chennault tended to look upon these things with rose-colored glasses. This was partly at the root of the big argument he had with General [Joseph W.] Stilwell during the war. Chennault wanted the tonnage over the hump to be concentrated on supporting his air forces. General Stilwell thought that if Chennault stepped up his air attacks against the Japanese that the Japanese would simply come in and take his air fields away from him. And that's exactly what happened. Stilwell thought that the Chinese ought to build up significant ground forces if they were to get anywhere, either during the war or just after the war. But Chennault had the gung-ho attitude toward the ability of air power to play a decisive role. Well that just isn't the case when you're talking about hundreds of millions of people.

SCHOENBAUM: And this was another scheme? And it's interesting that you knew so much about the area; you knew so much about Chennault. And you were able to deal with him on that basis.

DEAN RUSK: Well at least I knew enough about him and the situation out there so that I didn't roll over and play dead when he spoke. Some people in Congress thought he was the fountain of wisdom, but I was not one of those.

SCHOENBAUM: Did anyone ever reproach you or did he ever reproach you and say that, "If only they had taken my suggestion in May of 1949," that kind of thing?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, it's possible that happened somewhere. I don't recall that it happened, but it's entirely possible it happened somewhere.

SCHOENBAUM: And you knew and you were obviously prepared to accept the fact, even in May of 1949 if not before, that Chiang Kai-shek was out in China and there was no use going back in.

DEAN RUSK: As far as the mainland was concerned. The mandate of heaven had been transferred. (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, there was a great hullabaloo raised after the so-called fall of China in 1949. A lot of it came from Congress and people around the country. Before that actually happened, were there people other than Chennault who really felt strongly that we had to go in

and try to do something in an active way; and did they exert real pressure, either within the Congress or within government to do something?

DEAN RUSK: There were some of the military staff officers. I think Trevor [Nevitt] Dupuy was one of those at the time who thought that we ought to use American forces in China to prevent a communist takeover. But we didn't have the forces. And again, we could have mobilized millions of men and just made an imprint on the few places along the eastern coast of China. It just wasn't on.

RICHARD RUSK: Most of the pressure came after the fact?

DEAN RUSK: There was a big hullabaloo in this country about who lost China. Well that was a phony question because China was never ours to lose. If anybody lost China it was Chiang Kai-shek and the nationalist government. But even there we have to take into account the erosion of the very institutions of China during fifteen years of war, ten of which they waged fighting alone without any help from anybody else.

RICHARD RUSK: But the real pressure to do something about China came after the fact and not really while Chiang was still there? The degree of pressure is what I'm asking.

DEAN RUSK: We gave serious thought to what we could do to help Chiang Kai-shek, at least to hold the Yangtze River line for example, so that there might be a north China which was communist and a south China which was nationalist. But Chiang Kai-shek, in part because he mishandled his own forces, could not even hold the Yangtze River line, which was a very important physical obstacle. But the communists succeeded in crossing it and moving on from there.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you ever talk this over with John Paton Davies [Jr.] and [John Stewart] Service and those people at the time as well?

DEAN RUSK: John Davies. John Davies. We talked about it. He was in the State Department, the Policy Planning staff, and he and I talked about these things a good deal.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. Yeah. So that's interesting. It can be said, I think, that you helped to make sure that the United States would not become involved militarily in that situation and that's quite a [inaudible] role.

DEAN RUSK: Well there was no interest among the Joint Chiefs of Staff in becoming involved militarily on the mainland. They had a pretty good professional military appreciation of what the problem would have been. And indeed, the shortage of our own forces has to be emphasized. We were on very thin edges in providing forces just for the peaceful occupation of Japan and our zone in Germany. We were very short of forces.

SCHOENBAUM: Maybe we should do a separate tape on that. But of course, then on February 7, 1950 was [Joseph Raymond] McCarthy's famous speech from William, West Virginia. Do you remember a reaction to that at the time?

DEAN RUSK: Well at the beginning it made a bit of a ripple, what was now looked upon as a big deal. Here was this one senator making these outrageous remarks. And apparently McCarthy got into that more or less by accident. He was scheduled to make a speech; he didn't know what he was going to talk about. Some staff person handed him this bit and he decided to use it in this speech. And then he found there was such a response to it that he found that he had a good thing going and so he followed up on it. And that was the beginnings of McCarthyism.

SCHOENBAUM: I had never heard that story before. Did he--

RICHARD RUSK: He was shopping for an issue upon which to run. He needed a campaign issue and he grabbed onto that one and then he built on it.

SCHOENBAUM: And the speech was written by a staff member?

DEAN RUSK: Well the idea: the material. The charges were put into his hands by some staff member, apparently. And he got a lot of attention out of it and decided that he had something and decided to follow up on it.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you ever meet McCarthy?

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall that I did; it's possible that I did but I don't remember.

SCHOENBAUM: You knew [Millard E.] Tydings pretty well?

DEAN RUSK: But after McCarthy's death a reporter was interviewing his wife, Mrs. [Jean Kerr] McCarthy. They talked for quite a while and then the reporter said, "Well, at least he was sincere." And his widow said, "Don't you ever say that Joseph McCarthy was sincere. You can say anything else you want to, but don't say that." This whole thing was a kind of a phony.

SCHOENBAUM: What was it to Tydings, though? Tydings was the one who was tried to call the committee together and investigate. Was he--

DEAN RUSK: Well, this got to be a very serious matter for somebody in the Senate to charge that the executive branch was filled with communists conspiring against the United States and things of that sort. But it was fairly rough going there for some of the senators who tried to oppose McCarthy because then they were subject to being blasted as pro-communist and things of that sort. And some of them lost their reelections over this issue.

SCHOENBAUM: We'll do a separate tape on that I think.

DEAN RUSK: By the way, I might just say here that Joe McCarthy left me alone, and I was somewhat curious about that because I had been heavily involved in the China bit, you see? But he didn't pick me up in his net. Well I was told later that a number of Republican senators had gone to McCarthy and told him to leave me alone.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you know which ones? Was it [Miller E.] Tydings?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I know that John Foster Dulles played some hand in this. But I was never--

RICHARD RUSK: How did you know that?

DEAN RUSK: I think Dulles himself told me that once. But the--I was never personally caught up in the McCarthy business.

SCHOENBAUM: That's interesting. Foster Dulles made no attempt to go to bat for Davies, Service, Owen [I.] Lattimore?

DEAN RUSK: No he didn't know them, had not worked with them. Also bear in mind that on these China issues many Republicans felt that they had a good issue going. And so they weren't going to turn it down. They were going to make the most of it. And so some of them played it for all it was worth, more than it was worth.

RICHARD RUSK: The fact that you weren't tagged by McCarthy, Arthur [Meier] Schlesinger [Jr.] used against you in your [sic] book. You weren't on that list and so--

SCHOENBAUM: [David] Halberstam did too. That's kind of ridiculous.

RICHARD RUSK: They developed a thesis around that along the lines that you were, you know, sort of noncommittal in government and careful and cagey about the things you did and about the things you would say.

DEAN RUSK: Well, no. I think there's more to it than that. Because even in the Truman Administration when I dealt with senators, I dealt with them on a bipartisan basis. And I did not try to find or to make partisan issues out of foreign policy. And I had a good many friends among the Republican senators: people like [Howard] Alexander Smith in New Jersey who was extreme in support of Chiang Kai-shek, or people like Bill [William Fife] Knowland. After all, when I was at Mills College we used to invite young Bill Knowland, as a member of the state legislature, to come to our Mills College forums; and we'd known each other before he went to the Senate. And Bourke [B.] Hickenlooper and George [David] Aiken; and I had a good many friends among the Republican senators.

SCHOENBAUM: How did you make those friends? We know that you weren't a party-goer on the cocktail circuit. How did you make those friends?

DEAN RUSK: Well I, of course, would see a number of them in committee meetings. But also I would call on them individually in their own offices or include some of them in luncheons we gave at the State Department for distinguished foreign visitors and things of that sort. There are a number of ways you can do that. Of course I saw those who served on our delegation to the United Nations, and I worked very closely with them because I was sort of chief-of-staff at the U.N. General Assembly, [tape interruption] One more remark about Schlesinger's criticism of

my not taking sides, or that sort of thing. I was one of the few people who was a close friend of both Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles--

RICHARD RUSK: That was probably hard to do.

DEAN RUSK: who had very serious differences with each other except for their close cooperation on the Japanese Peace Treaty. Well, I suppose that maybe Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles both felt that maybe this was a lack of character on my part that I was a friend to both of them. But I had learned from George [Catlett] Marshall that you should not reduce policy issues to personalities; that you should keep personalities out of public policy issues as much as possible. And so I found no difficulty in being friends to both of them, even though they did not like each other very much. So I always tried to keep myself at a distance from personality difficulties. There's just no future in that. And it distorts thinking about public policy issues. Now whether whatever--

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SCHOENBAUM: I was just going to make a comment that I think that's an example of really the falsest kind of criticism that one can make, that someone who is a conciliator, who gets the two sides together, is in favor of bipartisanship, and that's somehow a flaw. But on to Korea: there are some interesting documents on Korea. This is not the Korean War. We've already done some tapes on that. But in 1948 when [W. Walton] Butterworth was head of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, and I guess this was the time you were Deputy Undersecretary. There are some policy issues dealt with in connection with the United Nations and the United Nations resolution on Korea, the early one on November 14, 1947. Butterworth apparently calls the United States position in Korea untenable in one memorandum. I can't find it here right away. But he calls the U.S. position in Korea untenable and the--oh yeah, here it is. On page 820, Volume 6, 1947 of the *Foreign Relations* series in the discussion: "Ultimately the U.S. position in Korea is untenable, even with the expenditure of considerable U.S. money and effort. The U.S., however, cannot scuttle and run from Korea without considerable loss of prestige." But at one point, one of these memoranda for planning purposes, September 15--this is 1948 apparently--is designated as the date on which the actual withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea is to begin. This is a memorandum by Butterworth. Can you comment on the idea that the United States almost withdrew from Korea in 1948?

DEAN RUSK: Well in 1947 there was a Joint Chiefs of Staff paper on the strategic importance of Korea. And in that paper the Joint Chiefs said that, "Since in the event of a general war we would not wish to put American forces on the Korean peninsula, we should withdraw such American forces as we have there now." The paper was addressed to the situation of a general war.

RICHARD RUSK: General world war.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. And did not address itself to the question as to what would happen if Korea itself became the central issue of aggression. But when the Joint Chiefs came out with that paper, it was the position of the Defense Department that we should get our forces out of Korea. The State Department opposed that and was able at least to postpone the withdrawal of remaining U.S. forces until 1949 actually, although this paper was September '48 I believe. But then President Truman finally agreed, due to the paucity of American forces at that time, to take our last regimental combat team out of Korea. That happened in 1949. The North Koreans attacked--

RICHARD RUSK: He also excluded Korea as being within our defense perimeter.

DEAN RUSK: Well that was a speech of Dean Acheson's.

RICHARD RUSK: That was Acheson's?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, at the Press Club there in Washington. I'm not sure I've described that speech. But we on the staff had taken about three different drafts to Dean Acheson for that speech.

RICHARD RUSK: We've got this. Yeah, we've got this.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, okay. Alright. But he made that speech from notes, so we didn't have the chance to vet the fine print for possible misunderstandings. And he referred to our defense perimeter to those locations where, in fact, we had American forces: Japan, Philippines, and so forth. And the interpretation put upon his speech was more important than the speech itself because he seemed to have excluded Korea. And indeed, many years later after the Korean thing was all over, the story is told of an American businessman sitting next to Mr. [Andrei Yanuarievich] Vyshinsky of the Soviet Union at a dinner in New York; and the American businessman said to him at one point, "Mr. Vyshinsky, why do you people pretend to think that the United States is going to attack the Soviet Union? You know very well the American people have no interest in attacking the Soviet Union." And Vyshinsky replied, "Well we don't know what to think about you Americans on something like that." He said, "Look at Korea. You did everything you could to tell us you were not interested in Korea and when the North Koreans went in there you put your troops in." He said, "We can't trust you Americans." So I think it's possible that we contributed ourselves to the outbreak of the Korean War by two or three things which might have led the other side to decide that we would not intervene if they came in.

SCHOENBAUM: Maybe we have this, but were you working on that speech?

DEAN RUSK: I was with Acheson when he met with three or four of us on the staff to go over possibilities for the speech. And he finally said, with some impatience, "Well, I don't like any of these. I'll tell you, let's just stop all this and I'll go home tonight and jot down some notes and go up there tomorrow and make a speech."

SCHOENBAUM: He ad libbed it?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. He spoke just from a few notes. And it's one of those examples where there was no chance to flyspeck the exact language and take a look at what implications would be drawn by others from such language.

RICHARD RUSK: You said there were two or three other things that made--

DEAN RUSK: Well, the withdrawal of our last regimental combat team, Dean Acheson's speech, the state of our armed forces; several things might have led--I feel myself that the intrusion of American forces in Korea came as a surprise to North Korea, to Moscow, Peking. Because as soon as the first Americans landed on the battlefield the North Koreans stopped for a period of about ten days. I think I put that in other tapes. Had they just kept coming, there was no way in which we could have maintained a toehold on the Korean peninsula.

RICHARD RUSK: After Acheson's speech, it was obvious then to commentators and analysts that that omission had been made and it did become a public issue at that time. Is that right?

DEAN RUSK: There was some debate about it, yes. In his speech, Acheson had said, "Beyond this line, reliance is placed in the United Nations and thus far the United Nations has not proved to be a weak reed." He had not intended just to brush aside everything outside of his so-called perimeter. But it was taken as doing that.

RICHARD RUSK: What was the American response to this possible misinterpretation that went out in the aftermath of Truman's speech? Did you and others get involved in trying to buttress up our position?

DEAN RUSK: No, not really. Because usually when something like that happens the best thing to do is just let it blow over and not make a--

RICHARD RUSK: Clarification of the Secretary's remarks?

DEAN RUSK: And not just build it up into a greater and greater problem.

SCHOENBAUM: What about the withdrawal decision? You were in opposition. It looks like Butterworth was in favor of withdrawal, though. You said the State Department was opposed to withdrawal, but Butterworth seemed to be in favor of it. Was it primarily you, as Deputy Undersecretary, that kind of held the line on that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, after all--yes, I opposed the withdrawal until the decision was made. And then I--

SCHOENBAUM: So you were kind of overruling Butterworth?

DEAN RUSK: I adjusted to the inevitable. But I think, actually, my view has always been that diplomacy is committed to a degree of optimism. You must always proceed on the basis that

something constructive can be done. Walton Butterworth tended to be a pessimist, and that led to some differences between the two of us during those years. You see, I'd seen things going to hell in a hatrack at the beginning of World War II, so I was somewhat immunized against excessive pessimism. Because in March '42, in terms of all the objective evidence at that time, we should have just folded up.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. Yeah. Truman is the one who made the decision to withdraw, then?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: What was Acheson's position? How did Acheson advise Truman?

DEAN RUSK: I don't really know. Because Acheson was not all that interested in Korea. He was a North Atlantic man.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. I see. So in a way Truman's withdrawal decision was made without at least intense involvement of the Secretary?

DEAN RUSK: I'm not sure that that's so. I just don't know what conversations went on between Acheson and Truman about Korea.

SCHOENBAUM: But you didn't have a direct conversation with Mr. Truman?

DEAN RUSK: No. No.

SCHOENBAUM: About withdrawal? Yeah. Yeah. You had a good deal of faith in the prospects for United Nations involvement in Korea, and this is, again, 1948. There's an interesting memo that you wrote to [Robert Abercrombie] Lovett, September 10, 1948, page 1299, volume 6, giving point-by-point the position the U.S. delegation to the General Assembly in Paris should take. And just briefly to run down those points: 1) advocate acceptance of our view that the Republic of Korea is entitled to be regarded as the government of Korea as envisioned by the General Assembly resolution; 2) to support a request of the delegation of Republic of Korea for a hearing but not to support its taking part in the debate--they weren't member at this time obviously; 3) not to oppose a statement by the delegation from Northern Korea if such a delegation so requests; 4) to support early withdrawal of all occupation forces; and 5) then, by an appropriate resolution, reconstitution of the present commission on Korea or appointment by the Assembly of a representative for Korea. This was obviously a reflection of your view that the United Nations could play and was playing a useful role in Korea. Were there some that opposed the United Nations?

DEAN RUSK: There might have been. But bear in mind that at the beginning of the United Nations we had seen some productive results of considerations of issues in the United Nations. For example, on the Azerbaijan question, the first case before the U.N. Security Council, Joseph [Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili] Stalin finally came to the view that he would take his forces out of Azerbaijan. You see, we were building up majorities in the U.N. in those days of forty-six to five and things like that. And we had seen the impact of U.N. discussion on the Berlin

blockade and certain other issues, and so we thought that large U.N. majorities in support of a unified and democratic Korea just might turn the trick. And so we put it there and, I think, did get very strong international support. Of course we couldn't arrange for the admission of South Korea as a member of the U.N. because there was a Russian veto in the Security Council.

SCHOENBAUM: It is interesting at this time you put primary focus on the General Assembly, not the Security Council. This was 1948.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Because the Security Council would have been paralyzed by Soviet veto and the General Assembly was a much better forum for demonstrating the mobilization of world public opinion and the support of government's right around the world for the Koreans.

SCHOENBAUM: To ask you to be self-serving for a minute was it your idea to put this--You were the strongest force pushing this toward the United Nations, were you not?

DEAN RUSK: I was one of the strong forces.

SCHOENBAUM: Now I'd like to turn to some of the mechanics of government: what's called the SANAC [the State Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee] and the National Security Council. Dean Rusk was nominated on January 31, 1949 to be a member of SANAC. By March 15, 1949, Dean Rusk was chairman of SANAC; and on June 30, 1949, SANAC was dissolved with Dean Rusk in currence, the record shows. What role did SANAC play?

DEAN RUSK: Well, you remember that during World War II we had the State War Navy Coordinating Committee called SWNCC, and that played an extraordinarily useful role in coordinating diplomatic and military thinking on a great many issues. SANAC was a kind of an interim make-peace arrangement until the National Security Council came into full operation. And I think that with the establishment of the National Security Council, it was obvious that SANAC would disappear. So this was just a temporary arrangement that was not really very important except as a stopgap between SWNCC on the one side and the National Security Council on the other.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you involved in these organizational reforms, in the creation of these new groups? Did you plug the idea that we needed a National Security Council or a SWNCC?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I was sort of on the edges of that. I was not in the center of it. But on one point, I remember taking a position that I would now regret. At the end of the war during the period when I was a special assistant to Secretary of War Robert [Porter] Patterson, he had the idea that we ought to have a single intelligence service for the entire government: a unified single intelligence service. This was resisted by everybody else: the State Department, Army, Navy, CIA, and so forth. Well later on I came to the view that he had been wrong on that and we ought to have some diversity within the intelligence community so that we don't get frozen into particular attitudes or frames of mind and that there should be a certain competitiveness within the government between CIA, the states' Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Navy intelligence, Army intelligence, and so forth. But I was not centrally involved in the creation of the NSC.

RICHARD RUSK: Or any of the organizational initiatives of that period? We know your experience in the sixties, but how about during the forties and fifties with Truman? Were you responsible for any organizational initiative or reform?

DEAN RUSK: Well I was very much involved, for example, in the management of our participation in the Far Eastern Commission, which was a commission of about fifteen members who were supposed to oversee the occupation of Japan, and I attended many of those meetings representing the American point of view. So I was heavily involved in that. There might have been others.

SCHOENBAUM: We'll cover that in a separate interview on Japan, I think. What was the origin of the NSC then? I think most people think that it is an [Dwight David] Eisenhower creation, but it was--

DEAN RUSK: No. It was established by law during the Truman Administration. Well this was a sort of a natural organization because the statutory members were the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of Central Intelligence. Then the President was free to add anyone for particular purposes or meetings that he wished to, depending upon subject matters to be taken up. But those were the people who normally and naturally should have put their heads together anyhow to work out an actual policy. Now, during the Eisenhower period, he developed the NSC machinery into a very complex set of groups and subgroups and working groups and things of that sort. Robert [R.] Bowie, who was in the Eisenhower Administration, was the State Department's liaison to the National Security Council, and he once told me that he had only one afternoon per week which was not taken up with meetings of the various parts of the NSC machinery. When [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy came in he swept away most of that machinery and we started all over again. But it got to be a very complex structure under Eisenhower. But it started out very simply as the President and Secretaries of State and Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and so forth, putting their heads together.

SCHOENBAUM: And this was really a successor to SWNCC, was it not? Wasn't there a direct line from SWNCC--

DEAN RUSK: Basically, Yes, I think one could probably call it a--except that in SWNCC each department had its own delegate there. For example, John J. McCloy was the Army's, the War Department's representative on SWNCC, whereas the NSC involved the principals. I mean, that was the President, Secretaries of State and Defense, and so forth.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. But the record shows that in 1949 Dean Rusk was appointed the NSC consultant, or liaison with State. You were a stand-in for Acheson?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. That was probably while I was Deputy under Secretary.

SCHOENBAUM: Yes.

RICHARD RUSK: We're talking about NSC '68 and Dean Rusk's participation.

DEAN RUSK: No, we're not now, are we?

SCHOENBAUM: This is a meeting that was preliminary to NSC '68 that must have been an incredible scene. Oh, here it is. This is a meeting on March 22, 1950. And there's a memorandum of this meeting. I forget where the memorandum is. But there's a memorandum of this meeting in the *Foreign Relations* series of the United States. It's entitled a Memorandum of Conversation. Dean Acheson also talks about this meeting in his memoirs. There's a meeting on March 22, 1950. The Secretary of State Acheson and Secretary of Defense [Louis Arthur] Johnson were both present. Dean Rusk was present as well. And Paul [H.] Nitze was present. The meeting took place in Paul Nitze's office. This was preliminary. These were apparently the first discussions, at least high-level discussions, preparatory to the formulation of NSC 68, a new definition of foreign policy for the United States, especially reacting, I think principally--correct me if I'm wrong--reacting to the possession of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Union. And at this meeting, apparently Nitze started the presentation and Secretary of Defense Johnson reacted physically and emotionally and lunged forward in his chair and stomped his feet and pounded the table. Acheson says he was scared out of his wits: He, Acheson, was physically afraid. And Secretary of Defense Johnson was outraged at the fact that the meeting would take place. And he gathered Omar [Nelson] Bradley and walked out. General [James H.] Burns sat and cried in his hands. Do you remember that? What was going on there?

DEAN RUSK: I remember the general scene at the time, but not that particular meeting.

RICHARD RUSK: My dad was at that meeting?

SCHOENBAUM: Yes. Yes. In this record, Dean Rusk attended that meeting.

RICHARD RUSK: Surely you would have remembered that.

SCHOENBAUM: Only about ten people.

DEAN RUSK: Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson had a real hang-up about the State Department. He, when he became Secretary of Defense, he insisted that every communication between the Defense Department and the State Department go through his office and there should be no other kinds of communications. As a matter of fact, I was sitting in my office one day and there was a knock on the door and a distinguished looking general said, "Are you Dean Rusk?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "I'm General Burns. May I see you a minute?" I invited him in. He said, "I've just been given a new job by the Secretary of Defense." "Oh, what's that?" He said, "Secretary Johnson has told me to protect the Pentagon against that fellow Dean Rusk over in the State Department, (laughter). So I thought I ought to come over and get acquainted." And he and I, over a period of time, got to be pretty good friends. But, you see, it was Dean Acheson who led the move toward a refurbishing of our defense forces, against the strong opposition of Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson. I remember another occasion when General Burns came to my office and he said, "I need a drink." So I said, "Okay, pull up a chair. I'll see if I can find one." He said, "I'm in trouble because,"--It might have been after this meeting--"After a meeting I was driving back to the Pentagon with Secretary Johnson and I said, Mr. Secretary, it appears to

me that the Secretary of State is acting as the Secretary of Defense." (laughter) But there was bad blood between Acheson and Johnson, not only on personal grounds but on policy issues. Louis Johnson was strongly opposed to the rebuilding of our armed forces at a time when we had been through a period of disaster in this immediate postwar period through our own weakness.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he ever explain his position?

DEAN RUSK: No, he got fired by Truman when it got to a point where it simply wasn't workable any more.

RICHARD RUSK: Can you comment on what that acrimony between Acheson and Louis Johnson did in terms of American foreign policy? What were the practical effects of these two gentlemen not being able to work with each other?

DEAN RUSK: Well actually the practical effect was not all that great because Harry Truman backed Dean Acheson. I shouldn't speak ill of the dead. But Louis Johnson was present at that meeting in Blair House immediately following the North Korean attack. Acheson was there; the chairman of the Joint Chiefs was there; and others were there; I was there. And Truman went right around the table asking each person for his views as to whether we should do anything about the North Korean attack. Everybody there thought that we had to do something about it. Well some years later Louis Johnson tried to claim that he was not in favor of putting out troops in Korea. Well that was just a phony because at that meeting he was. And so he was a very difficult and unpleasant kind of a fellow to try to deal with. There was a meeting over at the White House, I think in the Cabinet room, and for some reason I was the senior State Department representative available so I was at this meeting representing the State Department. Louis Johnson was there. And as soon as the meeting got started he said, "I refuse to attend this meeting with Dean Rusk representing the State Department." And he walked out. A matter of rank and prestige.

RICHARD RUSK: Really? That was it?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Isn't that something? Why would he have sent General Burns over, assign him to keep an eye on Dean Rusk and protect the Department?

DEAN RUSK: Well he knew that I had served in the Pentagon, I knew a lot of people in the Pentagon, that I was in favor of maximum communication between our two buildings, and that sort of thing, you see. And he just didn't like that. He wanted to be sure that he, Louis Johnson, was in personal control of the Pentagon and particularly of its relations with the Department of State.

SCHOENBAUM: This emotional reaction: It seems incredible that he would have this physical emotional reaction. He was not the type to argue his position? I mean, he could have rationally argued--

DEAN RUSK: Oh, he was full of a good deal of bluster. That was not untypical of him. I don't want to insult the American Legion, but he had been national commander of the American Legion; he'd been strong in politics. As a matter of fact, I was with General Marshall in Paris with our delegation to the U.N. at the time of the 1948 election and the first thing that George Marshall said when the returns came in was, "This means that Louis Johnson will be Secretary of Defense, (laughter)

SCHOENBAUM: Because of politics?

DEAN RUSK: Because of Louis Johnson's mobilization of money and other effort in behalf of Truman in the election of '48.

SCHOENBAUM: Was Marshall surprised that Truman was reelected?

DEAN RUSK: No. As a matter of fact everybody in Paris, including most of the members of the U.S. delegation, was absolutely convinced that [Thomas Edmund] Dewey would win that election and that John Foster Dulles would be the next Secretary of State, except for two people in our delegation. One was one of the junior secretaries, a young woman who went around betting anybody in the delegation fifty cents, who wanted to take a bet, that Truman would win. The other was George Marshall. He said, "You haven't heard from the people yet."

RICHARD RUSK: That was probably Marshall's secretary.

DEAN RUSK: "You haven't heard from the people yet."

SCHOENBAUM: I want to put on tape that I was--I remember '48 distinctly and I knew Truman was going to win.

RICHARD RUSK: You did, huh?

SCHOENBAUM: I was eight years old.

DEAN RUSK: Actually the Philippine delegation in Paris at that time did something rather naughty. They laid on a big dinner honoring John Foster Dulles for the day after election. But everybody thought he was going to be the next Secretary of State, you see? Well then when the returns came in the Philippine delegation sent word around to the invited guests, "Please don't bring flowers." But I'll have to say that John Foster Dulles went to that dinner; he carried it off without blinking, without missing a step, with great aplomb and just did very well under the circumstances.

RICHARD RUSK: Any anecdotes? Any personal reflections on that election for you, Pop?

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