

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection
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Dean Rusk interviewed by and Thomas J. Schoenbaum
circa 1985

SCHOENBAUM: You talked about, generally, the life at Oxford and the tutors and writing papers, sports and the Oxford life. Maybe we could talk about some of the details as to what life was like. For instance, the papers you wrote. You mentioned you benefitted greatly by the exercise in writing. Do you recall what topics you specifically wrote on? How you got the assignments to write on?

DEAN RUSK: First let me say, as I have probably said before, but to me Oxford was a very special experience because I had worked my way through both high school and college in this country and there was always great pressure of time. I was running from a job to a class, or down to the little bank and back again to class, and that sort of thing. And Oxford was the first experience I had with some of the leisure that goes with learning. The Rhodes scholarship took care of my bills, although just barely, and there was no such thing as working your way through Oxford. People just don't do it. And so there was time for a good deal of extra reading, bull sessions with fellow students, Sunday afternoons dropping in on professors' homes when they had Sunday afternoon at-homes and things like that. The mornings we usually spent in academic work. Then every afternoon was traditionally given over to some kind of sport. I played lacrosse for the University, and was on the second team in tennis, and horsed around a little bit with cricket and rugby. But there were so many extracurricular things of interest around Oxford. There was the famous Oxford Union which I attended regularly, although I did not participate in debates in the Oxford Union. I was in the Oxford Union on that famous occasion in 1933 when they debated the motion that "this house will not fight for King and Country." And there is a story connected with that. But the only compulsory academic appointment which you had at Oxford in those days was the weekly sessions with your tutors. Normally, in any given term, you would have maybe two tutors. In my case it would be either politics and economics or economics and philosophy. And in each one of those weekly tutorials--These were one-on-one meetings with your tutor--you would bring in a paper on a subject which you and he had agreed on in the previous tutorial session. And then we would take a little time to go over that paper, and criticize it, and shape it up, and improve it; and then we would agree on a subject for the next week's paper.

SCHOENBAUM: So you and your tutor picked the subjects that you would write on.

DEAN RUSK: That's right. Now as a matter of fact it turned out, although I wasn't that aware of it at the time, these weekly papers were in fact dry runs for the final exam. You see, at Oxford they say to you, "Now if you want this degree you pass that examination. You take that examination at the end of two years, three years, four years. We don't care." They don't have grades for each quarter or each term or anything like that. And that exam turns out to be an essay-type exam. They hand you a list of questions: at times there are compulsory questions, at times there are some choices. And these weekly tutorial papers were dry runs for the exam. And

since the criticism by the tutor included style and method as well as substance, it was very useful preparation for the final exams. As a matter of fact, this is what these tutorials were aimed at: to get you successfully through these final exams.

Then Oxford was very much a part of the world. Distinguished people from the continent would frequently come over and visit, sometimes to be at the Oxford Union, sometimes to be at a professor's home on a Sunday afternoon, kind of an open house of talk and discussion.

Then in my first year at Oxford, the Japanese seized Manchuria. I felt instinctively that something important had happened and I spent an enormous amount of time trying to follow all aspects of the Manchurian affair, not only the factual account but such futile measures as had been taken by the League of Nations to appoint commissions and things of that sort. And I became quite an expert on the Manchurian affair. In retrospect it might have been wasted time because this turned out to be only one of a series of incidents that produced World War II. Of course, three terms at Oxford total six months of the year, and you had six months of vacation. Well, the trick at Oxford in those days was to do your heavy cramming during vacations. You would take a box full of books off somewhere in the country or camp somewhere and do your sweating there so that during term time you could take advantage of Oxford life. So I spent some of those vacations in places like the lake district of England, Guernsey, and the Channel Islands; but also I spent most of them in Germany. And I was a student in Germany when Hitler seized power. And that was a very dramatic and impressive period.

SCHOENBAUM: You were in Berlin at that time.

DEAN RUSK: Yes.

SCHOENBAUM: What incidents did you witness? Did you witness some storm troopers on the streets?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I watched the Weimar Republic commit suicide, in effect, by extending to the Nazi Party all of the privileges of a Democratic Party political system even though the Nazi Party was committed to destroying the very constitutional system itself. And they took the streets and the public platforms by force away from the democratic parties of Germany

SCHOENBAUM: Literally by force?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, literally by force. The storm troopers would break up their meetings and would battle for the streets. I remember one evening in Hamburg things were pretty tense, and I went out one night and walked around the city, in effect looking for incidents. And I didn't see anything. Well, I waked up the next morning and read in the paper that 200 people had been killed about fourteen blocks from where I had been walking, in a clash between the Nazi Party and the Socialists.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you ever see Hitler? Hear him speak?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes, I heard him. I was in a crowd of a million people at the Tempelhof Airfield in Berlin once when Hitler spoke. And I still remember the phenomenon that the larger the crowd gets, the deeper its roar becomes in terms of tone: guttural roar of a million people was very impressive.

SCHOENBAUM: What year was that?

DEAN RUSK: That was in 1933. But I lived with a family in Neubabelsberg where there was a teenage boy. He was crazy about motorcycles. And because he was crazy about motorcycles he joined the Hitler S.S. [Secret Service] motorcycle brigade.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you remember his name?

DEAN RUSK: Herbert Kammerrer. He is still living.

SCHOENBAUM: Have you had any contact with him after you left Germany?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, he came to see us about two years ago. But he wasn't Nazi by persuasion; he was just interested in motorbikes. That sort of thing happened to a lot of German young people in those days. As a matter of fact, one of the tragedies of that period was that a good many students of my own age supported Adolf Hitler for what might be called idealistic reasons. They were trying to rebuild the morale of Germany after the bitter experience of the total inflation in the Weimar Republic and all the ills that Germany was having, and they just didn't believe what Hitler said in Mein Kampf, didn't discover until later the extent to which they had been betrayed.

I went to Berlin to study international law with Professor Bruns at the Hochschule fur Politik. And I remember on the first day of the seminar he took up with the seminar what kinds of subjects that we should deal with in the seminar. A couple of the brown-shirted Nazis said that there was only one subject to study and that was the illegality of the Treaty of Versailles. Well soon after that the Nazis--

SCHOENBAUM: What was his reaction?

DEAN RUSK: He started down that trail. But shortly after that the Nazi Party took over the Hochschule fur Politik and turned it into a leadership training school for party leaders. And so I moved across the street to the University of Berlin. But even there the Nazi impact was felt very strongly and very early. I remember attending a lecture by a quite well-known German historian, a lecture which he delivered quite seriously on how best to incorporate the Germans in the United States into the Third Reich: should they ask for territorial enclaves in places like Milwaukee and St. Louis; should they try to do it through party organization? He was very serious about this, even though what he was saying was just utter nonsense. But the impact of the Nazis on the universities there was almost complete--dreadful. Back in the thirties when I was teaching at Mills College in California we had a German exchange student, a young woman, who flunked my sophomore course in American government. Well, she went on home and I got a letter from her a year later saying that she had just received her doctorate from the University of

Germany--that was after Hitler had taken power. She had just received her doctorate for her thesis on the American government. It is just--the whole thing was just riddled with phony apparatus.

SCHOENBAUM: I find it interesting that you went to Germany instead of France. Most Americans, I think, in your position--[interrupted by visitor].

I was asking you about your trip to Germany and remarked that I think most Americans feel closer, at least more Francophile than Germanophile, and they would go to France in your position rather than Germany.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I had studied German at Davidson and my mother was half German, and so I went over there. And also very interesting things were happening in Germany. On my first vacation, I did go to Paris. I had grown up in this country in a very, very strict environment at home, high school, college. At Davidson College we, for example, were not permitted to play bridge; not a drop of alcohol, nothing of that sort. Well, on my first vacation I hightailed it for Paris. That was the glamorous spot in those days, and I lived on the West Bank and enjoyed getting around the city. I haven't told this story to many people. But I was walking around the Place de la Concord one evening--the moon was out--and a sleazy little fellow came up to me and said, "Do you want to buy some French postcards?" And I said, "How much?" He said, "Ten francs." So I said, "Okay." I gave him ten francs and he reached in his pocket, looking around as though he were looking for a policeman, and handed me a little packet and ran away. Well, when I got back to my hotel I found that I had a picture of the Arc de Triomphe, the Place de la Concorde, the Eiffel Tower. They were French postcards alright.

SCHOENBAUM: Paris hasn't changed much over the years. Do you remember where you lived at that time?

DEAN RUSK: No, it was a little place; I forget now the name of the little alley. It was a little hotel on the West Bank very close to Notre Dame and right in the middle of all those sidewalk bookshops. It was pretty interesting. The food was cheap; the room was cheap; so I got along all right.

SCHOENBAUM: That was in 1931?

DEAN RUSK: It would be '32.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you go there to study or was it just a short trip?

DEAN RUSK: I attended some lectures at the Sorbonne, but I wasn't there long enough to be fully registered or anything of that sort.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you remember any of the lectures you attended?

DEAN RUSK: No, not really. But then I first went to Germany, to Hanover, because I was told they speak the purest German in Hanover. And I went over to polish up my German. Then from

there I spent some time one summer in Hamburg; and then I went to Berlin and took one Oxford term off to remain in Germany and study events there and do some boning up on my exams at Oxford. It was there in Germany that I wrote the Cecil Peace Prize paper that won that prize. I was in Berlin and got a little telegram from my roommate at Oxford saying, "The deadline for the Cecil Peace Prize essay is next Monday morning. Don't come back to Oxford if you don't submit an essay." So I locked myself, in effect, in a hotel room for five days and did nothing but write. I got the thing off just before the deadline and the damn thing won the prize, which helped me get out of England solvent rather than being in a debtor's prison or something.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you still have that essay?

DEAN RUSK: No, I don't have a copy of it. Thank God. It was a paper on--sort of a comparative study of the British Commonwealth of Nations and the League of Nations, the Commonwealth being much more of an organized group in those days than it is now.

SCHOENBAUM: You had research materials that you put into it?

DEAN RUSK: No, there wasn't a footnote in the whole paper. It was just a so-called think piece. But one thing that I did work on pretty hard at Oxford was the development of the British Commonwealth. You see, the Statute of Westminster had come in 1931, I think it was. The status of Canada had become a kind of template for the other dominions and that was the critical move in giving complete self-government to dominions like Australia, New Zealand, Canada, at that time, South Africa. And I studied that very hard. I was later to spend a lot of time in studying the appeals to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on overseas courts, and I was doing that while I was at Mills College and doing a book on it. My research assistant, in those days, was Virginia Foisie who later became my wife. I studied every appeal to the Judicial Committee over a period of about 150 years and was fascinated by the enormous variety of law considered by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. But that had started while I was at Oxford while I was studying the British Commonwealth system.

SCHOENBAUM: So you were interested in Britain primarily? Your intellectual interests at Oxford were in the British political system?

DEAN RUSK: And in the international field. I remember once though my politics tutor at St. John's, W.C. Costin, in one of our tutorials made some slighting remark about the political origins of American judges, particularly the Supreme Court. Well I took time off to do a thumbnail biography of the law lords over a period of about 200 years. Ninety percent of them had come through the political track. They had been things like law officers for the Cabinet and things of that sort. And when I presented this material to him, he was utterly flabbergasted--pretty much set back because it was sort of generally assumed that their judges are not political in origin, whereas ours are. Costin was sort of dean of the college. Mike [Lester Bowles] Pearson of Canada and Michael Stewart of Britain, Prime Minister of Britain for a while, and I were all St. John's college men. And all three of us at different time had W.C. Costin as our politics tutor. So years later he wrote an article about the three of us as undergraduates at Oxford and read back into our undergraduate days a good many things that happened there.

SCHOENBAUM: Where was that published?

DEAN RUSK: I forget where it was published. Maybe we could get it at St. John's College.

SCHOENBAUM: Who were some of your other professors or tutors at the time?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I had John Mabbit in philosophy.

[Telephone call interruption]

DEAN RUSK: --Berlin. And, of course, the Nazis were clearly in a dominant position there. But the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum continued open. I still remember feeling that the bust of Nefertiti was the most beautiful single art object I had ever seen in my life. It was in the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum I think.

SCHOENBAUM: Was it a beautiful city?

DEAN RUSK: In a very stern, forbidding kind of way. Of course Neubabelsberg was out in the comfortable suburbs on the lakes around Potsdam. And I had a canoe and spent a good deal of time on the water. The family I lived with had a small motorboat, sort of cabin boat, and on Saturdays and Sundays we would typically go out for a cruise around the waters. And we would take our own food along, and stop off at the little cafe somewhere and order coffee or tea or hot chocolate, and eat our food there because it was a rather modest family in terms of means.

SCHOENBAUM: What did he do for a living, Mr. Kammerrer?

DEAN RUSK: He was a bookbinder, and he survived the Nazi period. The family was not Jewish. I belonged to a little tennis club there in Neubabelsberg and at one point--this was during the Hitler period--at one point the tennis club's lease on the courts ran out. And so they met, and they decided that they had a tennis court easily available to them, that Mr. So-and-So's estate there had a tennis court on it. He happened to be a Jew, so they just confiscated his tennis court: took it away from him. At that point I resigned from the club.

SCHOENBAUM: This was in--

DEAN RUSK: In Berlin: in north Neubabelsberg.

SCHOENBAUM: So you could see what was going to happen?

DEAN RUSK: The discrimination began to move very quickly after Hitler took power in all sorts of little ways as well as in big ways. But I had left there, I think, before Kristallnacht, when it became systematic and far-reaching.

SCHOENBAUM: This obviously made a big impression on you--the events in Germany. Did you realize at the time what was--Did it scare you? Did you realize at the time that this was going to be something that would shake the world?

DEAN RUSK: Well I had somewhat of a wait-and-see attitude, more or less on the ground--well several grounds. One is that sometimes when people come to power they are more moderate than they are in their campaigning. Also, a lot of the business community supported Hitler, and they thought they were going to be able to steer his policy in a reasonable direction. They were wrong in that, but they thought so at the time. So, at the beginning I had a little bit of a wait-and-see feeling about it, although I had been appalled by a good many of the things I had seen and experienced. I remember at that affair at Templehof Airfield where I was a part of a crowd of a million people. I was sitting in the stands there, and at one point in the ceremony--it was a memorial ceremony--they had a bugle corps play some military memorial music. But the instruments were rather strange. I mean, I wasn't familiar with the sound. And at one point I turned to my friend and said, "They sound like a bunch of geese." Well, it just turns out that the word goose is an insult in both French and German and somebody sitting in front of me turned around and felt that I had insulted Germany, and the Fuhrer, and everybody else. And he called the brown shirt usher over and reported me, and this fellow took me off and questioned me. Then an Indian friend came to see me while I was in Berlin, a classmate of mine at Oxford; and I thought I would show him the sights of the city. So I took him to one of these Hitler rallies at the Sports Palas there in Berlin. When we got up to the door, the brown shirt fellow turned to him, who was rather swarthy in color, and said, "Sorry, only Aryans are admitted here." And in my youthful brashness, I said to this fellow, "But this is the purest Aryan in all of Berlin." And this fellow took me to his sergeant or to his captain and I was held for about three hours because I had insulted the Fuhrer. Well, they finally let me go as simply a crazy American who didn't know any better.

SCHOENBAUM: Didn't that scare you?

DEAN RUSK: Well, of course it bothered me a good deal that things had gotten to be so insane.

SCHOENBAUM: You were obviously speaking German all this time.

DEAN RUSK: I got to be pretty fluent in German.

SCHOENBAUM: And you were going to lectures in German?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, everything was in German. Later when I was Secretary of State, I would listen to French or to German when my French or German colleague would be speaking, and I did not need an interpreter for listening purposes. But I did not try to speak French and German when I was Secretary of State because I wanted to be sure that if I made a mistake, it was on purpose and not through my own inadequacy.

SCHOENBAUM: Interesting faux pas that have been made in languages. Were you interested in the art? Did you become interested in the art museums and in the Louvre?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I visited a good many of the museums and so forth. But I must confess that in my earlier years, art was a neglected field as far as I was concerned. Davidson College in those days was a very good liberal arts college except they had almost nothing in the way of arts.

They had a glee club and an orchestra and a ROTC band, and that was about it. In terms of the pictorial arts there was nothing. No art appreciation courses or anything of that sort. They've remedied that now, and they have a good arts program there, but not in my day. So my interest in art developed considerably later and really made some headway when I became president of the Rockefeller Foundation. We moved into the field when I was president of the Rockefeller Foundation. But I did visit the Louvre and other major museums. Of course I visited Stratford and the Shakespeare country pretty thoroughly.

SCHOENBAUM: Another thing I wanted to ask you is--maybe we have time for just one more. Obviously you went from--this is a tremendous shift in milieu in terms of values, obviously the going from your boyhood and Davidson College in the values there and particularly the strictness of the moral or so-called moral, rules.

DEAN RUSK: Well, before I left Oxford I had not been any further away from home than North Carolina where I went to college. And so I had a god deal of learning to do in all sorts of things: customs, and language, and things of that sort--even in England. I remember getting on the ocean liner in New York to sail to England and we were all on deck as we passed the Statue of Liberty, waving good-bye to her. And a deck steward came up to me and said, "Would you like a ham sandwich?" And I said, "Oh yes indeed." And I took the ham sandwich, and took a bit of it and threw it away--

END OF SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

DEAN RUSK: Let me reflect a little bit on my involvement with Far Eastern matters related to this question of China-Burma-India theatre [CBI]. The year in which I graduated from college the Japanese seized Manchuria. So when I went to Oxford I spent an enormous amount of time following the Manchurian incident in great detail, including studies of the League of Nations, commission reports, and that sort of thing. Then after I left Oxford I joined the faculty of Mills College in California and studied law at the University of California. And during that period out there; there was very considerable interest in Asia and Pacific matters. The Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, the West Coast branch of the Institute of Pacific Relations--organizations like that were very active. But I had had no direct involvement with Asia up until the war.

Well then while I was in the Third Infantry Division on the West Coast I was ordered back to the Pentagon to the War Department to organize a new section of G-2 [military intelligence] on British areas in Asia. When I got back there I tried to find out why I had been selected for that assignment and discovered that they had put a big stack of cards into a sorting machine and my card fell out because I had been in England for three years, not that I knew anything about Asia. But my job was to organize a section--a new section--in G-2 to keep track of the entire British-Asian situation, including Afghanistan, the India subcontinent, Burma, Malaya, Australia and New Zealand, and the British Pacific islands.

SCHOENBAUM: If I can interrupt you. What is G-2?

DEAN RUSK: G-2 is the section of the General Staff responsible for military intelligence. You see, you have G-1 for personnel, G-2 for intelligence, G-3 for operations and G-4 for logistics.

SCHOENBAUM: Is that how it still works?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, they have different names for them now, but the General Staff is organized pretty much on that basis. When I arrived to organize this new section, I asked to see the files on this vast part of the world. And an old lady about seventy years old took me over to some file drawers and opened one drawer which had been marked "British- Asia." And in that I found one copy of a tourist handbook on Indian Ceylon, which had been stamped "confidential" because it was the only copy in town and that was the only way you could keep it. I found one 1925 military attached report from London on the British army in India and about a half drawer full of clippings that this old lady had clipped out of the New York Times between World War I and World War II. And that was it.

SCHOENBAUM: And this was at the Pentagon?

DEAN RUSK: This was in the War Department, not yet in the Pentagon. It was those temporary buildings on Constitution Avenue. But that was the total accumulation of information that G-2 had on this vast part of the world. So I had to start from scratch. Fortunately, I passed my first test with flying colors. On about my third day there a colonel from the Great War plans division of the General Staff called me and said, "Rusk, I can't remember, is Indochina in north China or south China?" And I straightened him out on where Indochina was and he must have hung up the phone saying, "Boy, we get good support from those fellows down there." But you see, overnight, the moment my feet were under that desk, I became the expert on this vast part of the world. So we had to scurry all over the place, to tap all possible sources of information: missionaries, tramps, steamer captains, and anything we could find. We found one man in the United States, John Christian, who was something of an expert on Burma, he had written a book on Burma. One of my jobs was to look to the possibility of starting a Burmese language program for the army. So we asked the Census Bureau for a list of people living in this country who had been born in Burma. They sent us back about a dozen names, and on it were names like McConihayan and Gilihan: children of British military who had been born out in Burma. But there was one genuine Burman on the list. Well, we looked him up and found that he was in a mental institution. But we fished him out and made a Burmese language instructor out of him. But the ignorance of the government on that vast part of the world was just astonishing in those days.

SCHOENBAUM: How many staff people did you have?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I had about four people under me. One of them turned out to be Bob [Robert Francis] Goheen, who came to me as a green second lieutenant right out of Officer Candidate School. And he went from G-2 out to the Pacific during the war, had a brilliant war record, and became president of Princeton a few years later. But then because of my work in G-

2, I was sent, after a couple of years, to become one of the ninety-day wonders at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, and I was set aside for a key assignment in an overseas theatre. So that led to my assignment to General Joseph [W.] Stilwell as an assistant G-3 for operations in his headquarters.

SCHOENBAUM: Backing up a little bit: who did you work for or directly under at G-2?

DEAN RUSK: Colonel James Compton.

SCHOENBAUM: But he was obviously not an Asian expert.

DEAN RUSK: No. I was the Asian expert.

SCHOENBAUM: And then you spent ninety days at Fort Leavenworth?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, and that was in the spring of 1943.

SCHOENBAUM: And what was the course like there?

DEAN RUSK: Well, that was a course primarily for regimental commanders and division staff officers. It was sort of a higher-level Fort Benning. Just short of the National War College.

SCHOENBAUM: And you did maneuvers as well as--

DEAN RUSK: and field exercises and map problems and all sorts of things. When I was called to active duty a year after the war in Europe had broken out and a year before Pearl Harbor, we only had about 275,000 officers and men in our army even at that fairly late stage. And so the whole military establishment was having to build up almost literally from nothing.

SCHOENBAUM: Beginning of '41 that would be?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. In December 1940 I was called to active duty.

SCHOENBAUM: And at that time you were in the reserves. Did they let you finish the semester teaching at Mills College?

DEAN RUSK: No, I left just toward the end of a semester at Mills College.

SCHOENBAUM: So did you give your final exams?

DEAN RUSK: I forget what I did there. I think I left a colleague to finish up the tail end of the course.

SCHOENBAUM: And you were married at that time too?

DEAN RUSK: I was married in '37 while I was teaching at Mills. But I got out to India and things looked pretty grim out there. The Japanese had seized Burma; had cut any land lines from China. So our number one mission out there in practical terms was to try to reopen a land route to China; because we didn't know whether we were going to be able to keep China in the war or not, and they at least were pinning down large numbers of Japanese forces on the mainland of China. But General Stilwell, after his famous retreat from Burma, was sent there to accomplish an impossible mission. His mission from the American point of view was to try to get the Chinese forces and the British-Indian forces to fight the Japanese as soon and as hard as possible without any significant American combat forces at his own command. He was in the position of saying, "I'll hold your coat and you get out there and fight." But it became quite clear that Chiang Kai-shek was not going to commit such forces as he had against the Japanese in any serious way because he was looking over his shoulder at the Chinese communist forces at the end of the war. And he could begin at the time to see [Douglas] MacArthur and [Chester William] Nimitz advancing across the Pacific. It was equally clear that Winston [Leonard Spencer] Churchill was not going to commit the British army in India seriously against the Japanese until the defeat of Hitler because that was the only Imperial reserve he had. You see British-Indian forces had been key elements in holding on to the Middle East at the early stages of the war. And so, General Stilwell's mission was simply frustrated by the attitudes of the Chinese and the British, particularly Mr. Churchill. And that led to a fair amount of bickering and ranker and so forth.

SCHOENBAUM: There was a controversy between Clair Chennault and Stilwell wasn't there. Clair Chennault thought that it was not important to open the road and he thought China could be supplied by air--

DEAN RUSK: Well, General Chennault wanted such small tonnages as we were sending over the hump from Assam into China to be committed to his air effort; and in that he was fully backed by Chiang Kai-shek, because that would mean that Chiang Kai-shek wouldn't have to do anything with his ground forces. But Stilwell was strongly of the opinion that if we concentrated on Chennault's air effort that the Japanese would simply move ahead and take his airfields away from him, which in fact they did to a considerable extent. But that was an internal battle in which a good deal of bickering went back and forth between Chiang Kai-shek, Chennault, underhandedly, and Franklin [Delano] Roosevelt, particularly, in Washington, and the Joint Chiefs. General [George Catlett] Marshall always strongly backed General Stilwell, but there was a lot of lobbying going on in Washington. Madame Chiang Kai-shek [Mei-ling Soong], for example, Joseph [Wright] Alsop, who was a First Lieutenant on General Chennault's team and who had some distant relationship to the White House and therefore had access to it. But there was that lively internal conflict between Chennault and Joseph Stilwell.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you have any personal memories of experiencing the conflict or the result of the conflict, or participating in the cables, or anything like that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I wrote a good many cables about this argument for General Stilwell and was an active participant, although my rank was such that I was not one of the major figures that any of the historians will ever notice.

SCHOENBAUM: You were a major at that time?

DEAN RUSK: I went out there as a major and soon became a full colonel.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you have any memories? You flew to Delhi. Was this striking? This was the first time you had been in India. Do you have any vivid memories as to what it was like to live there?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I was deeply impressed by the sheer mass of the teeming mass of the Indian population, and also by the relative misery in which they lived, and the apathy that that seemed to breed among them. I was always struck by the contrast in flying from India over the hump into China. On the Indian side you would find these sad-sack kind of people, but when you got over into China you found these Chinese, even the peasants, who were full of energy. They were very energetic people and could get the most out of the least, even in terms of food stuffs. And I developed a very high regard for the capacity of the Chinese to show energy in things that they wanted to do. I had two problems to work out with the Indian Nationalists, a good many of whose leaders were in jail at that time. We were completely dependent upon the Indians at the grass roots out there. They were the ones who ran the trains, who carried our water, and hauled our food, who worked on the Burma Road and things like that. And had [Mohandas Karamchand] Gandhi just passed the word around not to cooperate with the American forces, we simply would have been driven out of there. We couldn't have survived without the Indians. But he didn't do that. But they did put to us a couple of questions that were a little tricky for us. One question was, "When are you going to start marrying our daughters?" And the other question was, "When are you going to stop killing our cattle?" Now, on the first question there was a general rule in those days that soldiers who are in theatres of operation overseas are not given permission to marry local women. Well, we worked out a compromise on that under which we agreed that if a soldier were under orders to go home and was within thirty days of an embarkation on a plane or a ship, that we then would give them permission to marry. Well, that satisfied the element of principle as far as the Indian side was concerned. The practical effect was that when soldiers were within thirty days of the girl back home, they don't have much interest in getting married. On the matter of killing cattle, we were utterly dependent upon the country for our daily needs, including food. We had a many-thousand-mile line of communication back to the states, and the oceans were infested with submarines. We might have five ships sent out to us and three of them would get sunk by submarines on the way. So this matter of killing cattle was very important for us. We finally worked it out that we would not kill any cattle that were less than twelve years old, and we would do so in remote areas where the people would not be exposed to the process. Well, that meant that we ate a lot of hamburger because cattle that are above 12 years old are pretty tough. But we worked that out with them. Another element of some interest out there: Every American in the CBI Theatre wore the same shoulder patch. It was a shoulder patch of the Star of India, the Sun of China, and red and white stripes for the United States. We adopted that specifically because of the insistence of President [Franklin] Roosevelt that we make it very clear to everybody, including the Indians, that we were in this solely to fight the Japanese and that we were not there to assure the restoration of British power at the end of the war. Now that led to some frictions with the British in our psychological warfare programs and things of that sort, but that theatre patch was a political invention and on the whole I think it worked.

SCHOENBAUM: What was it like to work for Stilwell? Did you see Stilwell daily and was he easy to work for?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I was based in what was called the rear echelon in New Delhi, although there were months when I would spend more time away from Delhi than in Delhi. General Stilwell shifted back and forth between Delhi and his advance headquarters in Chungking in China. Then he was in Assam a great deal in connection with the Burma Road and eventually the movement of [Frank D.] Merrill's Marauders and other forces, Chinese forces, down into northern Burma. General Stilwell was--In the first place his sobriquet "Vinegar Joe" is somewhat misleading because he could have the mannerisms of "Vinegar Joe," but actually he was pretty tenderhearted to the point that he would tolerate some incompetence around him longer than he should have. He was not a severe disciplinarian as far as demanding excellent performance by everybody on his staff. He would have been a superb division commander, but he was not particularly interested in or talented in the command where the relationships are at least 50 percent political and 50 percent military. But he had spent many years in China. He also had a very deep respect and even affection for the grass roots Chinese people. And he was just furious over what was being done to the Chinese people by the government, and by the Chinese military, and others of that sort.

SCHOENBAUM: He didn't have much regard for Chiang Kai-shek did he?

DEAN RUSK: Not really. But I think he underestimated the erosion which ten years of single-handed war with the Japanese had brought about in Chinese political institutions. To me, it was sort of a miracle that China even pretended to stay in the war for all those ten years when they were getting no perceptible help from anybody. We were all sitting on our hands watching it go on while sending scrap iron and oil to Japan during all those years. But General Stilwell was very impatient about the inabilities and the failures of the Chinese authorities to get on with it. Corruption was very rife in China at that point. When the Japanese closed the Burma Road, there was a considerable stock of rubber tires in the Yunnan Province. Well the governor of Yunnan Province simply required that all wheeled vehicles drive on rubber tires and he sold these things off at an enormous profit to himself. That is just typical. You would send a convoy of twelve trucks driven by Chinese troops from one point to another and during the journey about seven of these trucks would simply disappear into the countryside. But the Chinese are expert in things like that.

But General Stilwell did believe that Chinese soldiers, if properly trained, equipped, and led, would be good fighting soldiers. And he, I think, proved that because he put together a Chinese army which was trained in India after his escape from Burma, and he put together a force that reentered Burma from the north and gave a very good account of itself.

SCHOENBAUM: Then were you traveling with him? Or how was your relationship with him?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I traveled with him a good deal within the theatre, but I did not go to Cairo with him, for example, for the big summit conference there. I wasn't senior enough. I am not sure, but I think his Chief of Staff Frank Merrill went with him.

SCHOENBAUM: His Chief of Staff was Frank Merrill?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, until Merrill left to become commander of Merrill's Marauders.

SCHOENBAUM: So, were you working for Merrill?

DEAN RUSK: I was deputy to Merrill.

SCHOENBAUM: Merrill must have been quite a figure.

DEAN RUSK: Very able fellow, a very good person to work for. But while he was commanding the Marauders over in Burma he had a heart attack, and died fairly early after the war from heart trouble. But we had a pretty dedicated group of officers there on the General's staff. We knew that we were the lowest priority theater over against Europe, the Pacific. I mean the fact that we were the lowest priority theater is illustrated by the fact that they let a young college professor become Deputy Chief of Staff for War Plans for the entire theatre.

SCHOENBAUM: You were called Deputy Chief of War Plans?

DEAN RUSK: Yes.

SCHOENBAUM: And Merrill was Chief of Staff for War Plans?

DEAN RUSK: He was Chief of Staff for the whole thing.

SCHOENBAUM: So you were Deputy Chief, but you were in charge of War Plans.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, forward planning for the theater. And that had some interesting features. I remember that the chief signal officer, or the chief quartermaster, or the chief ordinance officer would come in to see me and say, "Rusk, we've got a long line of communication back there to the United States. We've got to know how long we expect to be out here. What do you think?" And I would look at them very solemnly and say, "April 1946." And they would go away very happy. But one day one of them turned about at the door and said, "How do you know that?" And I said, "I don't know that, but I am paid to give you an answer."

SCHOENBAUM: What was your daily work like? Did you have sort of regular hours when you were in Delhi: at least get up in the morning and come to work?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, we would usually be there in the office about 7:30 or 8:00 and then you stayed with it until you thought you could afford to go home.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you have a lot of meetings or a lot of memo writing?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we didn't have a large number of large staff meetings. In the first place the staff was not that large, and secondly we did a lot of that kind of staff work simply one-on-one up and down the corridors. We were close: the G-2, G-3, G-1, G-4 were all so close to each other

that we didn't need a lot of meetings. We had a lot of relations of course with the British and the British command in New Delhi. Fortunately, there was a very fine British officer, a major J.S. Saunders, who married a lovely American girl from Detroit--from Michigan anyhow; and he had been named as the British liaison to our headquarters; and he was deeply committed to effective cooperation and working relationships between the British and the American side so he was extraordinarily helpful in helping us to understand the British arrangements and with whom to deal and what kinds of things could be done and so forth.

And I was involved in both lend-lease and reverse lend-lease. We called upon resources in India for a considerable number of things on reverse lend-lease basis. Of course, we were trying to get some help out to the British forces there in India, but that was limited because of the high priority to the European theater and to the Pacific theater for a lot of things. Then when Lord Louis [Francis Albert Victor Nicholas] Mountbatten came out there at the end of 1943 to organize the British Southeast Asia command, then I had a lot of working relationships with him and his staff. He put his headquarters down in Ceylon because he wanted to get away from the atmosphere of the army command in New Delhi. So I spent a lot of time going to Ceylon and up to Assam, which was the western base of the hump flights and to Calcutta, which was a major [L.O.C.?] port, so that I had probably more time outside of Delhi than I did in Delhi.

SCHOENBAUM: You must have had some harrowing plane rides. Apparently that hump route was very dangerous.

DEAN RUSK: Well, when a pilot was sent out there to perform the prescribed number of missions on that hump flight, he had a 40 percent chance of surviving it. You see, we were using DC-3s in those days, the old C-47s, and they could not attain an altitude as high as the mountains that we had to cross. They had to weave their way through the mountain passes. Well, when that monsoon weather roared up out of the Indian Ocean and struck those mountains, it just created a turbulence that is unbelievable. So the weather in the hump flying was incredibly bad and there were times when the old saying was that you wish you could die and you were afraid you couldn't. You would drop 3,000 feet at one time and you would be blown up--

SCHOENBAUM: Did you have those experiences?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, sure.

SCHOENBAUM: How many flights did you have?

DEAN RUSK: I suppose about a dozen. But the building of the Burma Road was an extraordinarily difficult physical job because of the rains and the terrain and that kind of thing, and by super human effort they finally managed to cut it through. But it was somewhat like the Al-Can Highway because when we got it, we didn't use it. We had had prepared back in the states about 5,000 big truck trailer combinations to be used on the Burma Road.

END OF SIDE 2