

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection
Rusk SSSSS: Part 1 of 2
Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas W. Ganschow
1986 January 3

The complete interview also includes Rusk TTTTT: Part 2.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop I'd love to say something in this book about that Wake Island trip. Have you anything at all on that? Why was it set up?

DEAN RUSK: President Truman wanted [Douglas] MacArthur to come back to Washington for consultations. But MacArthur protested that he ought not to be away from the Korean battlefield for that amount of time and asked to be excused, whereupon Truman decided that he would go to Wake Island to meet MacArthur there so that MacArthur wouldn't have to be away from Japan and Korea for an excessive amount of time. I think that Truman felt that it would be well for the two of them to put their heads together and talk over some of these Korean issues. I think Truman sensed that the possibilities of major disagreement might be coming down the trail. In any event, he thought it would be a good idea to visit with Doug MacArthur. He had not met with him face to face at all. MacArthur had not been home since World War II. And so, we laid on the trip. I was among the staff that Truman took with him. Frank [C.] Pace [Jr.], then Secretary of the Army, was along; Philip [Caryl] Jessup was along, and others. It was a long flight because we had reciprocating engines in the planes in that time.

RICHARD RUSK: Spent fifty four hours in the air, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: Something like that. We stayed overnight in San Francisco and overnight in Hawaii before flying on to Wake. And it was a long flight. The Navy has positioned some destroyers in the ocean, one or two between the mainland and Hawaii, and two or three between Hawaii and Wake, in the event that they might be needed and in the event that there was any trouble with Truman's plane. But it was uneventful.

RICHARD RUSK: Flew right over top of these things I suppose.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, right.

RICHARD RUSK: What's that comment you make about moving presidents around is like trying to dock battleships without tugs?

DEAN RUSK: Well, when a president moves--this didn't become true in these later years--it is a major operation. In the first place, it's a question of prestige in Washington to go with a president on a trip. So everyone and his uncle wants to be a member of the party. And so there are literally hundreds of people who would like to be included. So there's a big decision that a president has to make before he even starts out: who will go and who will not go. And given all the pressures that are on the president, the group tends to expand and enlarge as the plans go forward. There is

usually an advance party, and then you have to make arrangements for a press corp to go along, usually on a separate plane, and all the staff. There are very few empty seats on the presidential plane when he travels.

RICHARD RUSK: What was that thing you say about president's travel?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, yes. I once remarked that arranging for a president's travel is a bit like docking a battleship without tugs. I mean it's a major operation. And then LBJ wanted his own bulletproof car. He wanted help of helicopters with him and he took along quite a tonnage of gifts to give to the distinguished people he'd be visiting on his trip. So, my two Presidents would, because of the costs of these trips, raid my own confidential (unintelligible) over the State Department to help pay for these trips. So I got it coming and going. But Truman landed at Wake Island. And, contrary to Merle Miller's book, when he landed, Douglas MacArthur was on the ground at the foot of the stairs leading down from the plane to greet President Truman. That story in Merle Miller's book that he apparently got from the faulty memory of an old man Harry Truman, that somehow MacArthur had circled Wake Island trying to force the President to land first, is just nonsense. MacArthur had come in the night before and was at the foot of the plane to greet Truman.

RICHARD RUSK: Did Truman upgrade MacArthur for meeting him with an old fatigue cap on and an open shirt?

DEAN RUSK: No, no.

RICHARD RUSK: That story is false too?

DEAN RUSK: That story is false. We were all ourselves dressed very informally. I'm not sure whether we were wearing some of these gaudy Hawaiian shirts that Truman used to pass out to his staff when he would travel. I forget that detail. Well anyhow, Truman--

RICHARD RUSK: Incidentally, you don't think I'm taking any more advantage of you than Merle Miller did of Harry Truman, do you?

DEAN RUSK: Although there are gaps in my memory, I don't think my memory has been distorted to that extent. As Truman got older, he enjoyed feisty comments. He let his feistiness, I think, distort his memory on certain points, and this was probably one example. But anyhow, we met at Wake Island in a sort of a remote shack there on the island. It had a large single room, but there was a little side room separated from the main room with shutter-type partitions in the door. It was not a solid door; it had shutters. There was a long table in this big room. Truman sat at the head of the table, MacArthur to his right, Frank Pace to Truman's left, and then I was sitting next to Frank Pace. We met about six o'clock one morning. Well, Truman had about a dozen items on his agenda that he had planned to take up with MacArthur. And it soon became apparent that Truman was rushing through this list and we were gonna get through in about half an hour. And so I became a little concerned about this because there had been some press speculation that this whole trip was a phony anyhow, done for domestic political reasons on Truman's part. So I scribbled a little note to Truman saying, "We've got to take more time on

these items or people will think this was a meeting without purpose," and passed it to Pace. And Pace passed it to Truman, and Truman scribbled on it, "Hell no. I want to get out of here before we get in trouble." (laughter) But in any event, I think there is available the memo of conversation of that meeting.

RICHARD RUSK: As taken by that secretary?

DEAN RUSK: Well, see, we had a marvelous secretary--Phil Jessup's secretary, a girl named Miss Anderson. And during the meeting we asked her to sit in this little side room with a lattice on the doors so she'd be ready to help us type out a communique and whatever was to be issued for the press.

GANSCHOW: Did MacArthur know that there was a secretary there?

DEAN RUSK: Probably not at the time but--

GANSCHOW: Wasn't that one of the issues later?

DEAN RUSK: Well, let me go ahead with this. We asked Miss Anderson to wait in that little room until we were ready for her. Well, she could hear every word that was spoken through this lattice door, and she knew that we would be wanting to prepare a memorandum of conversation: in effect, minutes of the meeting. So on her own initiatives, she simply started jotting down a shorthand record of what was being said. On the plane on the way home, when Pace and Jessup and I, and two or three others, sat down to prepare the record of the meeting, we were delighted that Miss Anderson's notes were available to us on what had been said, because that helped greatly in being sure that they were accurate. But we prepared these minutes and sent them to MacArthur for his approval or his corrections or emendations. And he raised no objections to these notes.

RICHARD RUSK: What's that word? "Emendations?"

DEAN RUSK: Amendments. But at the time of the MacArthur hearings before the Senate, some on the MacArthur side turned Miss Anderson into an eavesdropper, which was just a complete phony.

RICHARD RUSK: Was she under instructions from you fellows to take notes?

DEAN RUSK: No, no she did it on her own initiative.

RICHARD RUSK: She did it on her own, huh?

DEAN RUSK: Perfectly natural thing for a secretary to do under those circumstances, because she knew that we would be doing a memorandum of conversation of the whole meeting. And so there was quite a flare-up about that, and poor Miss Anderson got her ears boxed with some criticism for having done this job. But the point is that MacArthur had been given a copy of what we had prepared and had raised no objection to this. But it was an interesting conversation.

MacArthur could not have been more agreeable in terms of his relationship to his commander-in-chief. He was deferential; he was courteous. And on one point Truman asked him whether he, MacArthur, thought that the Chinese would come into the war. And MacArthur said he did not think so, but that if they did come in, it would result in one of the biggest slaughters in military history. He was very confident that he could smash the Chinese crossing the Yalu river. Now, I have to say that I also did not think the Chinese would come in. But I think MacArthur's strong view that they would not, did have some influence on President Truman. And I think also that this notion of MacArthur's that even if the Chinese came in they'd have the hell beaten out of them, probably was based upon MacArthur's own assumption that if the Chinese came in, we would open up general war against China. Whereas that was not in President Truman's mind then or later. But in any event--

RICHARD RUSK: Did we have sufficient power in Korea at that time to open up general war in China?

DEAN RUSK: Not in Korea. We would've had to remobilize millions of men, and indeed President Truman's own military biases--Joint Chiefs of Staff told him that the only targets in China which could affect the situation in Korea would be the mass destruction of Chinese cities with nuclear weapons. And Truman was not prepared to go down that trail at all. And those of us who'd had experience in China during World War II knew quite well that we could mobilize millions of men and do no more than occupy a few coastal positions.

RICHARD RUSK: Was this trip a phony? There had been a press speculation of that. Dean [Gooderham] Acheson thought it was a kind of a shady business. He thought that for the President, somebody who's high-level people fly all the way to Wake Island to meet MacArthur, was treating him like some sort of a monarch.

DEAN RUSK: Well it was a little bit like a summit meeting between the de facto emperor of Japan and the President of the United States. There was a little bit of that aspect to it, quite frankly. But I have no doubt that in Truman's mind there were some domestic political considerations involved, but there were perfectly valid reasons why the President would want to meet with MacArthur, not only about Korea, but also about the occupation of Japan. See, we were coming up a period when it became clear that the occupation of Japan had reached a point of diminishing returns, and the time was soon approaching when we ought to go ahead and work out a peace treaty with Japan and end the occupation. And MacArthur, that was MacArthur's view. It was our view back in Washington. The Senate was ready for it, and I think there was consensus that we ought to wind up the occupation. And we took that decision even in the middle of the Korean war, while the Korean war was still going on. I once lectured at the National War College on the anatomy of foreign policy decisions. And the decision that I used as an example was the decision to go for a Japanese peace treaty in the middle of the Korean war. Then I examined all of the secondary and tertiary questions that were involved in such a decision. You might want to get that from the National War College.

RICHARD RUSK: What year would that been, Pop? After you left office?

DEAN RUSK: No, I'm not sure it was after I left. It might have been. But I can write the president of the National Defense University and ask him if he can have somebody dig that out and send us a copy because that is not a matter of public record yet. But, to me it was an interesting exposition of the complexity of foreign policy decisions.

RICHARD RUSK: That would be a great aspect to write on: Take one single foreign policy decision and just see what went into it.

DEAN RUSK: See, there are all sorts of political, military, economic questions, attitudes of all the governments, attitudes of our own people here at home, and so forth. It was a much more complex decision than it looks like at first glance, and so it lent itself to that lecture at the National War College. Remind Ann [S. Dunn] and I'll write the National Defense University for a copy.

RICHARD RUSK: Okay. Anything more on MacArthur's trip or your trip to Wake I s land?

GANSCHOW: I have a couple questions. Professor Rusk, you said that you also did not think that China would come into the war.

DEAN RUSK: Right.

GANSCHOW: Was that based on experience in China or was it based on intelligence reports? I'm also wondering whether you--in some ways you've indicated this, that MacArthur's view-- Was that just a kind of bold, a soldier's statement, or were there intelligence reports behind your-

DEAN RUSK: Well, let's say that there was an absence of intelligence reports. In other words, we did not have detailed information about the movement of Chinese armies to the north and their mobilization near Korea to start with. Then also we thought that the communists in China--after all, they had consolidated their position on the mainland only in 1949, and we thought they still had a lot of digestion to go through in asserting their control over several hundred million people and getting themselves well set up in China. But also when Mr. Ambassador [K.M.] Panikkar, the Indian ambassador in Peking, relayed the message from Peking that they would not stand still if we moved into North Korea, he himself expressed some doubt about the authenticity or the reality of such a threat. So we tended to discount that message more than we should have. But we simply made a mistake. MacArthur was one of them; I was one of them; there were others who simply did not think the Chinese would come in. This has ramifications. For example, I've always been intrigued by the question as to what role the Chinese communists played in the origins of the Korean struggle, I think I've already put on tape.

GANSCHOW: That we have. Yeah, your story about the prisoners?

DEAN RUSK: About the prisoners, that they had moved a good many Chinese, members of the Chinese army of Korean nationality or descent, from China into North Korea prior to the attack. We did not know that that was happening. And so, I think it's very probable that Peking joined Moscow in giving the North Koreans the green light to make this move, and that the Chinese felt

that having approved it they had some responsibility to try to back it up. But in any event, that's still, I think, largely a mystery for you Chinese scholars to work out some time. (laughter)

GANSCHOW: As far as the significance of Wake Island then, from my reading of the record, had it not already been decided that American troops would cross the 38th parallel before the Wake Island meeting?

DEAN RUSK: I think so, yeah. You see, again, that possibly was a mistake, but after the Inchon landing and the pell-mell flight of the North Koreans back into North Korea, when we got back to the 38th parallel we knew that the North Koreans were back up there refitting, reorganizing, getting ready to renew the attack. And from a military point of view, it was not very attractive just to sit there and let them get all set again to push, to renew the fighting. And then we also had in mind that--It was the concept during the war--at the end of the war that Korea would emerge from the war as a unified independent country. That matter had been taken to the United Nations and there was overwhelming support in the United Nations for the idea of a unified Korea. The U.N. General Assembly had appointed a commission to go out there to work on the unification of Korea: a commission which operated only in South Korea because the North Koreans would not let it function at all in North Korea. And so we were tempted by the possibility that at long last we could achieve a fundamental purpose which had been approved by the United Nations by an overwhelming vote to unify Korea. So this combination of political and military considerations led us to cross the 38th parallel. Now there was some caution used, or that we thought we were using, in that expedition. For example, I think it was the South Koreans who initially crossed the 38th parallel, and they were followed by the U.S. forces. But when MacArthur advanced to the north, he made what was probably his principal tactical mistake.

RICHARD RUSK: Talking about the declinement of his forces?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, right.

RICHARD RUSK: Now that debate on as to whether or not to go north of the 38th parallel was in fact pretty vigorously debated in Washington, was it not? (unintelligible) George [Frost] Kennan--

DEAN RUSK: Well, there was some dissent but not very much. See George Kennan's dissent on a matter of that sort was not considered to be very important. George was a great one to grow ulcers during the discussion period. He could see the disadvantages of anything you did, and so by that time he and Dean Acheson were sort of at odds with each other and his views were not taken all that seriously.

RICHARD RUSK: Your personal view was that we should go north of the 38th parallel.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. I participated in that mistake, if you want to call it a mistake. We did put to MacArthur more than once the idea of being very cautious about his move and not to rush pell-mell to the Chinese border along the Yalu River, but to let South Koreans take the initiative there along the border. But he was pretty stubborn about it and he had American forces dabbing their toes in the Yalu River, and just before the Chinese volunteers arrived on the scene. But, in any

event, for a period there of some weeks our war aims were changed to include the unification of Korea. But after the Chinese volunteers came in, the war aims were reduced back to the original war aim of driving the North Koreans north of the 38th parallel.

RICHARD RUSK: You chaired the committee of ambassadors for the fifteen countries that had forces in Korea through the United Nations. Now, were all the rest of these countries in agreement with this redefinition of war aims?

DEAN RUSK: They did not object. They were nervous, but they did not object.

RICHARD RUSK: You consulted all of them?

DEAN RUSK: Because they too had been strongly in support of a unified Korea in the United Nations. And the United Nations itself passed a resolution approving the attempt to unify Korea. As a matter of fact, it was that point when the United Nations General Assembly called the Chinese and the North Koreans aggressors. I think it's the only time in the history of the United Nations that they've branded anybody as an aggressor. And today the Chinese communists still resent that resolution, and at one point insisted that it be repealed, but I don't think it ever has been repealed. But you can get some of those that documents on that out of the Foreign Relations of the United States series.

GANSCHOW: But at the time of the Wake Island meeting, Professor Rusk, were we not under the United Nations directive to push the North Koreans north of the 38th parallel. In other words, to make a decision to go north, which we had done before the Wake Island meeting was, in a sense, a violation of that United Nations directive wasn't it?

DEAN RUSK: No, I think you'll find that just at the time of the movement across the 38th parallel there was a new U.N. General Assembly resolution.

GANSCHOW: You might want to check on the chronology of that, Richard.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Okay. Pop, you guys issued a communique from Wake Island, made in that quote--I think this is in Truman's words--"It is perfectly clear that there is complete unity in the aims and conduct of our foreign policy." Was that the feeling you had leaving that meeting from Douglas MacArthur?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I'll have to repeat that at that meeting, General MacArthur was very respectful of the President. There was no indication that there were basic differences of view on the policy involved. And Truman left Wake Island thinking that he and MacArthur were on the same wave length. And, of course, when MacArthur wanted to, he could charm the whiskers off a billy goat, (laughter) And he had his charm going full steam there in that meeting with President Truman. But, no, I think that although there was some mistake in judgments, such as the entry of the Chinese at Wake Island, that in terms of the relationship between a President and a general, the Wake Island visit should be called a successful visit.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you think MacArthur was being candid when he told the President he didn't want to go all the way back to Washington because of the needs of command in Korea, or do you think he just didn't want to be upstaged, perhaps in his own eye?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I don't know what was in his mind. I've always been rather careful about trying to dig into somebody else's mind. But had he come back, that would have been his first trip back home since World War II. And there would have been tremendous pressures on him to go through all sorts of ceremonial things like parades and ticker tape parades down Fifth Avenue and things like that. And I suspect he realized that a visit by him to Washington would take at least a week or ten days out of his duties in Japan and Korea, so I can understand why he might have been reluctant to come back. (laughter)

GANSCHOW: Was there any directive made on Truman's part to the intelligence community to develop a better intelligence understanding of China and what's going on in China? I mean, after all, the decision was made now to move north of the 38th parallel and there was a certain confidence that China would come in, but certainly there must have been some nervousness about that.

DEAN RUSK: Well you see, our intelligence resources were rather weak at that point. So, on the one hand, we had a good deal of misinformation coming from the Nationalist Chinese on Taiwan, who were foretelling almost every day that there'd be a collapse of the communist regime on the mainland and so forth. And also, this was before satellite photography. I think it was also before U-2 flights.

GANSCHOW: That's right.

DEAN RUSK: And intelligence people had not had enough time to prepare and infiltrate ordinary agents into China at that time, so soon after the collapse on the mainland. So our intelligence resources were rather scanty. I doubt that communications intelligence produced very much in that period because I don't think we were reading the Chinese mail at that time.

RICHARD RUSK: Did not Chou En-lai, in a public radio broadcast, warn that if the American and U.N. forces came north of the 38th parallel, then China would enter the war?

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall that.

GANSCHOW: I don't know if he said it in a public broadcast, Rich. I think it was it was being indicated--

RICHARD RUSK: The private session with its Indian ambassador.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, it was through the Indian ambassador.

GANSCHOW: I think there were others also, were there not? That may have been a little later though. Maybe Panikkar was the only one, but there seemed to be later a couple of other

ambassadors from different nations. Let me ask one more question on this Rich. Could there have been a feeling at that time, Professor Rusk, "So what if China comes in?" I mean, "Okay, the guess is that maybe China will come in. She has enough problems at home. She just established this new nation or new government. She may not. But so what if she comes in? Maybe this is the time to face up to it." Wasn't there a kind of time here when it's time to stand up to communism; it's time to free the Chinese people; it's time for us to make a stand against this aggressive sort of ideology?

DEAN RUSK: Well, there might have been some in Washington who had such a view. I remember there was one Lieutenant Colonel in the army who thought that we ought to go out to the used American divisions to prevent--

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BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

DEAN RUSK: MacArthur expressed that view at Wake Island. But also there was another element that undoubtedly had an unconscious effect. One of General MacArthur's principal staff officers--I think it was General [Charles Andrew] Willoughby--was reported to have said, "These Chinese cannot stand up to American and British regulars." You see, we had had a good deal of experience with Chinese troops during World War II, and we knew a good deal about their ineffectiveness in combat. Our experience had been with the Nationalist forces. The Chinese army that General Stilwell finally put together in Burma was the only effective fighting unit in the whole Chinese army. So I think there was an underestimation of the military capabilities of the Chinese if they did come in. Well they paid a terrific price for their entry into China. They suffered many heavy casualties through that exercise. And some years later, I remember there was a remark from a top Chinese Communist source that they did not want to repeat the experience in Korea. Their losses had been very heavy.

RICHARD RUSK: Can you identify that source, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: No, I simply forget it.

RICHARD RUSK: Anything else with respect to Wake Island?

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: Was General Willoughby one of MacArthur's aides or staffers?

DEAN RUSK: Well, he was one of those staff people around MacArthur who simply worshipped MacArthur, and everything turned around MacArthur and his position. And sometimes I think that distorted his own professional judgment as an intelligence officer and as a soldier. You see, MacArthur was genuinely a brilliant man. His handling of the occupation of

Japan was almost flawless. And he was a man of extraordinary abilities, but he had certain personal traits that should have been kept under control. But his own staff tended to exaggerate those personal traits of vanity and arrogance and things that ought to have been kept under some control. And so his staff, I think, badly served General MacArthur at times. Just as some of General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell's staff encouraged General Stilwell to make these sniping and caddy remarks about other people like Chiang Kai-shek. So I think MacArthur had a staff that was too devoted to him in a personal sense to serve him well in keeping things more in more balance.

RICHARD RUSK: In a conversation with General [George Catlett] Marshall, Douglas MacArthur referred to his "staff," and Marshall told him, "General, you don't have a staff, you have a court." (laughter)

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I think that is a very good way to put it.

RICHARD RUSK: Any other remark about his--What was Eisenhower's remark?

DEAN RUSK: About his service with General MacArthur in the Philippines before World War II, he said, "Yes, I had a four-year course in dramatics." (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: Is that what Eisenhower said?

DEAN RUSK: (laughter) Did I tell you about the officer who took the terms of surrender out to battleship Missouri?

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah, we have that one.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: I remember that I felt that my job was to go out there and come back with the minimum damage, so the meeting was fairly brief.

RICHARD RUSK: That was a meeting you had with MacArthur in the fifties?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, it had to do with the Japanese peace treaty. We were on the same ground, same wave length on that, and so and that meeting was of no significance.

GANSCHOW: The Wake Island meeting, I think, sometimes can be misinterpreted as a meeting in which there is a parting of the ways between MacArthur and Truman and maybe the State Department, when in fact, if I'm reading Professor Rusk right, it was a tide in which probably unity was most evident.

DEAN RUSK: Well, you could not derive from Wake Island any sense that Truman and MacArthur were going to go off in different directions or that MacArthur felt that somehow he had enemies in the State Department. That just didn't appear. It was not until he came home and faced the Senate committee that ideas like that took root.

GANSCHOW: Was there any statement made during the meetings with MacArthur that would've clarified to MacArthur that "We're not engaged here in a war with China, we're engaged in a war with North Korea"? I mean, so that he didn't go away thinking, "Well, so what if the Chinese come in. That's what we intend. We want to defeat communism."

DEAN RUSK: Well, there was no indication at Wake Island that, for example, that President Truman was itching for a war with China. We already had in Korea a larger war than we wanted. We didn't start the damn thing. And this came at a time when we were largely demobilized. So we weren't looking for a war. We certainly were not looking for a larger war with China, certainly not on the part of any of us who'd had any experience in China. So, I think it would have been a misinterpretation of the Wake Island meeting if MacArthur had gone away thinking that that was in President Truman's mind.

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, could you summarize for us the Korean experience itself? Was it a success for American foreign policy? What about the idea of limited war? That was quite controversial at the time. Was it a valid concept? Did we achieve our objectives and more or less go off that trail?

DEAN RUSK: Bear in mind that Korea represented the first aggression by organized armies following World War II. And this hit a generation who had very fresh in their memories the sad story of the 1930s with the Japanese seizure of Manchuria and a decade of war against China, Mussolini's seizure of Ethiopia, Hitler's adventures that introduced World War II. All that was very fresh in our minds. And here was the first instance of major armies launching an aggression, and it was looked upon more or less as a test case of the idea of collective security. And it came in an area for which we Americans felt a special responsibility. After all, we had received the surrender of Japanese forces in South Korea. We had been in occupation there for a period. We had ushered in the new government of South Korea. And here was an armed aggression aimed at seizing South Korea. Now, the prospect of giving any vitality or reality to the notion of collective security was very strong in our minds. And at the time that President Truman decided to intervene, there was a sense of exhilaration around the United Nations and also in this country that we were not going to repeat the sad story of the 1930s. Those considerations are very strong in our minds. You see, I've said before that my generation of students was led down the path into the catastrophe of a World War II which could have been prevented. And a lot of us in World War II were pretty burned up that World War II had even occurred, although we did our duty when the war came. And so these things were very real to us. More than fifty million people lost their lives in World War II and we did not think we should let that kind of adventurism get started. That had to be met at the very onset and that thinking was very heavy to those of us who had experienced the tragedies of World War II. Now I think that if you look at it from the other end, from the hindsight, we did indeed achieve the purpose for which we originally went into the war. That was to prevent North Korea from seizing South Korea. There was that temporary period when we had an appetite for unifying Korea, but that was soon readjusted back to the original war aim. And one would have to take note of the fact that, despite the fact that the North Koreans pressed South Korean and Allied forces into that tiny perimeter around Pusan at the

southern tip of the Korean peninsula, the Republic of Korea has done an extraordinary job of bouncing back from the devastation of that war and creating a pretty impressive and strong society there, whatever its domestic political problems may be. Its economic recovery is a demonstration to Third World countries that there's a lot that they can do with what they have to improve their situation. It's been a very impressive performance there. So I would say in retrospect that our policy was successful overall. Now, limited war--

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, let me just ask one question. You do feel that it was successful despite the fact that we still have forces in South Korea and we're required to keep forces in South Korea. Korea remains a divided country. There's a continuing tension along the border. In light of these continuing developments, you still say it's a success rather than say a stalemated situation where our objectives were (unintelligible)--

DEAN RUSK: Yes. The continuing presence of a fairly limited American force in Korea is a tangible representation of our commitment to Korea under our security treaty. And it also is a standing warning to North Korea that if they attack South Korea, they can anticipate American action in regard to it. Now, there's been a kind of a longstanding difference between the State Department and the Armed Forces on the role of token forces. The Armed Forces don't like to see token forces engaged in a situation because, as they put it, they "don't like to send a boy to do a man's job." Whereas in the State Department point of view, the use of forces to represent the presence of the United States is a very important tangible evidence to other nations that our commitments are serious. Now for example, we have only a token force in West Berlin. The Russian-East German divisions surrounding Berlin could probably seize that city in twenty-four hours. But those forces there represent the presence of the United States. On one occasion Mr. [Andrei Andreevich] Gromyko, in the Vienna Summit of June 1961, remarked to me about the vulnerability of West Berlin. And I remember saying to him, "Mr. Gromyko, West Berlin is not vulnerable because the United States is there. Get that idea out of your minds. The United States is there." Now, we had had token forces in Trieste; we've had token forces in other places. And bear in mind that when President Truman finally, in 1949, decided to withdraw the last American regimental combat team from Korea, that was clearly taken by the Russians, North Koreans, to mean that we were no longer interested in Korea, and if the Koreans move there would be no American response. I don't know whether they would've made that judgment had we left that last regimental combat team in there as a symbol of the presence of the United States.

RICHARD RUSK: Yep. Pretty good, Pop. I'll get you to say some words on behalf of the concept of limited war. Do you want a little break or a drink of water or something? Some coffee?

DEAN RUSK: That's all right. Well, in this postwar period--By the way, there have been other instances of limited war in our history. This goes back to a remark that Tom earlier made. For example, the Barbary pirates, [Thomas] Woodrow Wilson's expedition in Mexico after [Francisco] Pancho Villa.

RICHARD RUSK: What about our expedition in the Soviet Union in 1917? 1919?

DEAN RUSK: Well that was less than a token. I mean, the forces we had in the Soviet Union could not have handled the traffic in St. Petersburg at that time. (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah, it was just enough of a token to piss off the Communist party. (laughter)

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, well we landed a handful of troops in Vladivostok, trying to give some assistance to a Czech brigade that was working its way across Siberia at the time of the Russian revolution. But that was nothing but a token of encouragement to the government that the Bolsheviks overturned. And it didn't amount to the snap of a finger as far as any military capability was concerned. But, in this postwar period we, and at times our western--

RICHARD RUSK: Pardon me, Pop. You did say there were other instances of limited war in our situation?

DEAN RUSK: Well I mentioned Barbary pirates, the expedition into Mexico, and I think you'll find there have been a good many others. After all, a President has used the armed forces of the United States over two hundred times without a declaration of war. But I think there's a special relevance to this idea of limited war in this post-World War II period. We have tried to use the amount of force which seemed to be required to defend against aggression without allowing such enterprises to slide down the shoot-the-shoot into a general war. After all, these situations, whether it was in pressures on Iran or the pressures on Turkey, or the guerrillas in Greece, or the blockade of Berlin, or Korea, or later Vietnam, we didn't start any of those. So we didn't even want a war the size that had. But we certainly did not want any of those to simply go down the trail into another general war. You remember that foolish men and several governments of Europe allowed the assassination of an archduke to move step-by-step into the horrors of World War I. And so we've tried not to let these individual situations creep into a general war that nobody could possibly want. Now we gave General MacArthur, I think, seven divisions, and then we told him, "That's all you're going to get." And he filled them out with South Koreans and we had some allies in there with more or less token forces in Korea.

RICHARD RUSK: Was that your recommendation as well? Did you push for that limitation on forces?

DEAN RUSK: No, it was not so much that, as simply the situation we were in. We had demobilized after World War II. And it would've required major remobilization almost immediately following the drive to get the American soldiers home after World War II as quickly and as completely as possible. So we were in no mood for remobilization and going into another general war. But I do point out that limited war is very difficult. It's tough on the men and women who are carrying the battle because they are being asked to risk everything. For them it's a total war. They are being asked to make the extreme sacrifices in a situation where the nation as a whole is not doing the same thing. So it's tough on those who are carrying the battle. And it's tough on the home front because it's much easier, from the point of view of the home front, to be in an all-out situation. The idea of a limited war is sort of difficult to handle from a domestic political point of view.

RICHARD RUSK: There's an element of it that's almost cold-blooded in a sense. I wouldn't say callous, that's too strong. I wouldn't infer that decision makers in Washington to pursue that concept that way. But you can see how the general public might tend to think that, you know, it's been a very controversial concept and very unpopular. You're right.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, but the alternative would not turn out to be more popular, because if you were to go in for the maximum use of force and find yourself in another general war, then a lot of people would say, "Well, gee, this is not what we had in mind." And in a nuclear world, this notion of limited war becomes even more important. I do point out that this is a matter on which we need to have a lot of thinking, a lot of discussion, because if our experiences in Korea and Vietnam mean, in fact, that we've got to use maximum power at the very beginning of such a conflict, try to get it over with, then that means that the nuclear threshold is lowered. You more quickly come into a nuclear decision. So, we really don't know whether the American people are really prepared to accept the notion of limited war. But we also, I think, have reason to believe that the American people have no interest in a general nuclear war. So it's a tough question. It's a tough situation to explain.

GANSCHOW: I think that's a key point. It's not easy for our government to explain limited war to a society that's used to winning, getting things done quickly, using all the resources of a nation to do what we have to do and get out. The examples that Professor Rusk gave, the expedition into Mexico--well, that even was not as satisfactory as it could have been. I mean, Wilson got burned somewhat there and there were some later repercussions, for example, with China. Wilson did not want to get very much involved with Sun Yat-sen in China because he had gotten burned somewhat in Mexico. But the point is that still we were at least somewhat under control of these situations. We could do what we wanted, get out. But it seems to me, with Korea the nation got the feeling that we weren't controlling the limited war, that, in a sense, China or the Soviet Union or the North Koreans were in some way manipulating us.

DEAN RUSK: Well, the aggressor is usually in that position,

GANSCHOW: Yeah, that's right. And the longer it dragged on, the more the American people got the feeling that if we could have gone in, done what we had to do, gotten out, the concept of limited war would have been more clear to the American public perhaps. But as it dragged on, it became protracted war from the other side. In other words, it became Mao's [Tse-tung] idea that the war drag over a long period of time. The American people will then become, or the enemy will then become dissatisfied. There will be uprisings in her country, inflation--

DEAN RUSK: Well, also in a turbulent democratic society, we tend to get a little confused about something. The Korean War came to be known as Truman's war. It wasn't Truman's war; it was Kim Il-Sing's war. Then later, Vietnam became LBJ's war. It wasn't LBJ's war; it was Ho Chi Minh's war. But in a democratic society, those things get turned around and slogans get reversed and things of that sort happen. Now, on this limited war business, I would.

RICHARD RUSK: Incidentally Pop, this a--

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: We face the possibility of letting a course of aggression build and build and build until general war becomes inevitable. Now, if we're going to have to, hopefully, join with others in opposing such acts of aggression, we'd better damn well hope that those are limited wars, because the human race cannot tolerate a general war in a nuclear age. And so, politically we can be sophisticated enough to understand that either doing nothing or doing everything can lead to the destruction of the human race. Then the case for limited war becomes apparent.

RICHARD RUSK: It becomes compelling.

DEAN RUSK: It becomes overriding. But it's tough. It's tough.

GANSCHOW: Were there not two other problems connected with limited war in Korea, and then in Vietnam particularly, too? And that is this: that, one, even though this was supposed to have been a collective security in Korea, it was apparent to many people, whether it was true or not, but at least they perceived that we were putting the most into it and losing the most.

RICHARD RUSK: With Korea as well as Vietnam.

GANSCHOW: Yeah. Secondly, in today's highly sophisticated communications system, propaganda can be used from both sides so that the Chinese became very adept at using propaganda in Korea. That--

DEAN RUSK: Outside of Korea.

GANSCHOW: That's right, outside of Korea, that's right. And this got into our newspapers, into our magazines, so that people truly, some people at least, truly became confused to what are we doing?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think it's true that our news media do make and give their facilities to the other side, liberally. And there are times when we lionize the opposition. I mean when [Nikita Sergeevich] Khrushchev made his famous visit to this country in 1959, the news media lionized him, and he had a tremendous platform for anything he wanted to say.

RICHARD RUSK: He must have been very good from the reporter's point of view.

DEAN RUSK: Oh, he was a great newsmaker. (laughter) But also, I think it's correct to say that--God bless 'em--the American people are very impatient about war. In World War II, we at least could see the lines advancing. We could see that we were headed toward winning the war. And at different times this seemed to be apparent in Korea. In Vietnam we didn't have that situation. And the casualty figures continued to come in month after month, year after year. And that's tough for the American people to take. We didn't have the psychology that the British had in their great imperial days when casualties occurred in India, Afghanistan, places like the Crimean War, not to the same extent, because the British had more or less become accustomed to casualties in distant parts of the world. American people are not like that. Remember--

RICHARD RUSK: That's an interesting point.

GANSCHOW: It is.

DEAN RUSK: Remember the story I told about when Secretary Marshall explained to me why we insisted upon going in through Normandy rather than through the soft underbelly of Europe? We had to get the war over with as quickly as possible. Throughout the 19th century, young Britains grew up in the idea of an empire, of Britain's position in the world, her service overseas. And they more or less took it for granted. We have not been in that mood here in the United States. Our position as a world power was more or less thrust upon us. We did not reach out and actively seek it. We became a world power largely as a result of World War II. And what we did during World War II and after the war was not a matter of traditional instinct of the people. It was a direct act of will that cut across our longstanding tradition. If you scratch the skin of any American, you find an isolationist. Americans would much rather be at home having a malted milk with their girlfriend than be off somewhere in the world fighting a war. And so, this has been an extraordinary expression of will that was contrary to our longstanding instincts about what should happen in the world. I must say that I think the American people on the whole have responded very well to an entirely new situation.

GANSCHOW: Isn't there another problem that has developed over the limited war concept and that is: Even though we tend to succeed, or we did at least in Korea, succeed in pushing the North Koreans back behind the 38th parallel, somehow--

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