

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

Rusk UUU

Dean Rusk interviewed by Thomas W. Ganschow, Thomas J. Schoenbaum, and Richard Rusk
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GANSCHOW: --Students to be very careful to make the judgment of how poor do you have to judge people to be before you think they are desperate. Because we expect a lot in our society and I suspect that not many of us would go out and work very long without pretty hearty meals. But traditional Chinese lived a fairly happy life oftentimes. I mean, their literature, their poetry, their music tends to show that they were not somber people who were suffering in this world even though they lived rather meager lives.

RICHARD RUSK: Even in times of famine and hunger.

DEAN RUSK: They managed somehow to maintain an energy and to maintain high spirits under the most difficult circumstances.

RICHARD RUSK: Eskimos have that same characteristic in Alaska.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, they had that ability to survive famines and things of that sort. Quite extraordinary.

GANSCHOW: And I think there's some--that sense gives Americans and Chinese certain relationship. We appreciate the Chinese sense of humor; we appreciate the Chinese ability to work hard. And I think they appreciate that in us too.

DEAN RUSK: Sometimes that sense of humor can be a little macabre. One instance: you know that children's game we play where you go up to talk to some kid and one of your pals would go around and get down on all fours behind him and you push him over. Well, there was one incident where a Chinese went up to his pal on an airplane crossing the hump and the door of the plane was open; and this guy just pushed his friend over another pal right out of the door of the airplane. Everybody on the plane laughed like hell. They thought it was very funny.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you have any anecdotes, any special memories of the food and hunger of the Chinese.

DEAN RUSK: No. There were very severe food shortages in Western China during the war because they did not have access to the lush food-growing areas of China in the east because that was under Japanese control. When I would go over there, there were times when I would eat two eggs for breakfast, three eggs for lunch, and four eggs for dinner. There just wasn't anything else. So finding food for them was difficult. We couldn't really carry much food across the hump to them because that was very precious tonnage and there were too many of them to feed. They would just eat almost anything: the bark off of trees. They would eat mice and roaches and things of that--they'd just, you know, eat anything to survive.

GANSCHOW: I don't know if you've ever seen a film [*China: Century of Revolution*]; it's narrated by Theodore [Harold] White. When I show it to my class, I say it's the roots of revolution and what happened to China. In that film there's an old State Department Foreign Service person by the name of Ed Price. I think his name is Ed; it may not be, but Price is his last name. He was in China in the early 1900s. And when he got there, probably he got there, probably in the 1920s when he got there. On this film he's narrating about how his embassy, the ambassador told him how, "I want you people, these new people from Washington, to realize that you're going to see an awful lot of poverty out here. You're going to see an awful lot of people begging along the streets." They apparently had seen all kinds of kids coming up and begging. He says, "And I want you to not let this get to you because," he said, "If it gets to you now you'll never survive." He said, "It'll be all over and it'll be constant." And he said finally you learned to go through the streets and just buck up and pay no attention to it.

DEAN RUSK: Well I flew to Assam and took a light plane down into Northern Burma and from there went mule back to visit a Chinese division way down in the woods in Burma. I had lunch with the division commander and, to my amazement; he served sharks' fin soup. I said, "How in the world do you manage sharks' fin soup?" And he said, "Oh, ten days ago that shark's fin was in Shanghai." And I said, "But Shanghai is under Japanese control." And he smiled and said, "You Americans do not understand us Orientals."

RICHARD RUSK: This is Part 5 in the series of five interviews with Dean Rusk on China policy and Professor Tom Ganschow is doing the interviewing. This is May 1985. Tom, I think you probably recollect exactly where we left off.

GANSCHOW: Yes. We were discussing Secretary Rusk's time as Secretary of State and we were also discussing the relationship of China to the Vietnam War and our relationship to both of these countries. And I was going to ask Professor Rusk, during your time when the Vietnam War was going, did you--had you learned any lessons or the experiences that you had in the CBI [China-Burma-India] theatre during World War II? Did any of those things come back to you in terms of how you were guided in your actions during the Vietnam War? Is there something about, oh maybe, war in Asia or how you should deal with a war in Asia that may have--that the CBI theatre experience may have influenced you with respect to the Vietnam War?

DEAN RUSK: I think one of the principal points that came back to me was the notion that the villagers in Asia are survivors. They're not, most of them, all that much concerned about what is going on at the center in terms of national politics and things of that sort. They are more interested in whether the family was healthy, whether the rains were right, whether they were getting any reasonable crop production, and so forth. And most of them were more or less self-governing villages. The elders pretty much decided what would be done, and there was very little intrusion from the center. I found that rather compatible because, in a sense, that's the way we were in Cherokee County, Georgia, when I was a small boy. We didn't wake up every morning beating our breasts asking, "What can we do for Woodrow Wilson today?" The postman was the only representative of the federal government that was even welcome in the area. So that sturdy village self-containment, I think, was true in China in those days; it was true in Vietnam. So I think we probably attached too much reality to the notion of "winning the hearts and minds of

the people" because they were survivors. There were reports of some villages in Vietnam, for example, that would support the government by day and the Vietcong by night. They would come to terms with whoever had the control of the area and could affect their survival. So I think we exaggerated somewhat the interest of the villagers in the politics at the center and the international scene.

GANSCHOW: That's an interesting point and it seems to me that the more I study China's history, especially the modern history, the more you understand that--call it communism, call it democracy, call it capitalism--as long as it allows me to plow my fields, to sell my food, and to have enough food on the table and raise my family, because family was very important to those people, you can call it anything you want to. But just let me--

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Most of these concepts have very little meaning to the villagers. They were very much down to earth, part of the earth, and concentrated on those things that were closest to them. Now one could detect changes: their interest in public health, their interest in education, their interest in modern medicine, and things of that sort. But the changes were very slow. Very slow.

GANSCHOW: In fact, somebody's even mentioned in some study I've read, I can't remember which, that as Chiang Kai-shek became more concerned with controlling the local countryside because he needed soldiers, he needed taxes, he needed to be sure if people there were loyal to his government. The more the government got involved with the local situation, the more the local people who never used to expect much from the central government, began to expect more. And once they began to expect more and Chiang couldn't deliver, then he really did lose the support of the local people.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. I remember being in Kunming once during the war. I was out on a nearby road looking at something and I saw a line of Chinese men coming along all tied together with ropes, along single file. And I turned to my Chinese friend and said, "Who are those men?" He said, "Oh, they are volunteers for the army." They'd just been dragged in there. Also there's a kind of a primitive--At the beginning there was a primitive level of technical consciousness or experience. They were very adept at their own tools, their own methods. But when we tried to train Chinese soldiers as truck drivers, the first day of instruction consisted of our demonstrating to them that there's a connection between what you do with this thing we call the steering wheel and the direction in which the truck would move. Now you don't have to teach any of our own people that connection because they just take it for granted; they grew up with it. But you've got to explain that to them because they came from a different level of technical experience.

GANSCHOW: Let me give you another example of this. In Taiwan when I was there--now this was in Taiwan in the late sixties--people on the streets would walk into the taxi cab as we were going along. They would just walk against the taxi cab. It was like this taxi cab was maybe a water buffalo that you could, you know, walk up to and hit and it would move, kind of push it out of the way. They would get hit by taxi cabs.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I have a painful memory of a taxi cab. Vehicular traffic in the old China during the war--the right of way in Chungking apparently depended upon the judgment of the

drivers as to whose passenger was more important. That created certain excitement in driving around Chungking.

GANSCHOW: In fact--I know this is going back a little bit--but I've read that Chungking--now Chiang, you see, was forced to surrender the forces. He was forced to surrender all the rich farmlands. He was forced back into the mountains of the Yangtze gorges, you know, to Chungking. Somebody once described Chungking as a kind of ancient city, you know, serving as a capitol to a modern nation fighting a modern war. And that the government, and the soldiers, and many of his followers were kind of swallowed up in this ancient city. You know, and there was this kind of contradiction.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, and they had large caves in the Chungking area where they fled when Japanese bombers would come in occasionally. No, it was really an extraordinary job that the Chinese did in responding to the Japanese attack by moving back, taking many of their factories with them, on coolie back, and reestablishing those factories out in the west. It was a remarkable job, really. And they were doing this all alone. None of us was helping them. Indeed, during those years of the thirties when the Japanese were attacking China, we continued to send them the scrap iron and the oil and the other implements of war that they were using against the Japanese; and we did so in the name of neutrality.

RICHARD RUSK: Did the Chinese conduct a scorched earth policy the same way that the Soviets did?

DEAN RUSK: No. They had a great respect for physical things. We had to train our own soldiers: Never try to take anything away from a Chinese soldier, whatever it was--pot, pan, anything--because the Chinese would kill him. We could never get Chinese Forces in Burma to agree that if they would leave all their equipment at point A and make a rapid advance down to point B where we would bring their equipment to them by air. They'd never leave their equipment because they didn't really believe they'd get it back.

GANSCHOW: What's in the hands you hold onto!

DEAN RUSK: There were one or two occasions where General Stilwell wanted a reluctant Chinese unit to move forward and he would say, "Well now, your rations and ammunition for tomorrow will be dropped to you at such and such a point down the road. If you want them go down there and get them." And then he'd get them to move forward.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall other ways in which you instructed American soldiers how they should conduct themselves with the Chinese?

DEAN RUSK: Well, not to be resentful of this extraordinary amount of curiosity that the Chinese soldiers had--if I put a little tin mirror up on a limb of a tree and started shaving, almost always there would be a Chinese soldier who'd come up in front of me within six or eight inches of my face and just look very carefully at every little move I made while I was shaving. Well, if you tried to kick him out of the way, he'd probably kill you. So you've got to accommodate yourself to this extraordinary curiosity on their part toward these funny white people.

GANSCHOW: And it's very interesting that they still use--there's an expression that the Chinese use--yangguizi, which means foreign devil, ocean foreign devil. The last time I was in mainland China I was in (Chiang-Shean) and I was walking through the city of Chiang and I saw the little game going on. So I went over. And in China you squat down, so I squatted down and I started speaking Chinese. Oh, they liked that. So we talked a little. And a guy came up from the outside and he walked up and he looked at me and said, "Yangguizi [foreign devil] has come." And this other fellow in the group got very angry at him and said, "Don't you call him a foreign devil. He can speak Chinese." But they still have that sense too.

GANSCHOW: Did the Chinese offer any assistance at all in trying to mediate the end of the Vietnam War, Professor Rusk?

DEAN RUSK: No. Quite the contrary. Quite the contrary. At least during the Mao period. Mao Tse-tung joined Hanoi in strongly opposing any attempt by the United Nations to get into this matter. And that strong opposition on their part led many delegates to the U.N. and U Thant, the Secretary General, to decide that the United Nations would not take this matter up. There were two or three times when we wanted to have this matter discussed in the Security Council and we found by a nose count ahead of time that we did not even have the votes to put the question on the agenda. So when they rejected the U.N. we then tried to use the Geneva machinery: the machinery of the Geneva Conferences, of which the British and the Soviets were co-chairmen. But the Chinese refused that. They simply, during the Mao period, they simply were not interested in a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem. There were times when Hanoi became a little resentful of the pressure they were having from Peking to continue the fighting and not undertake any kind of negotiation. So, I'd have to say that I never saw any sign that the Chinese in Peking were interested in a peaceful settlement of the--now, I think their view now might be different because from the Chinese point of view they've got a problem on their hands in Vietnam and its attitude toward Cambodia and perhaps other problems. But I never saw any interest on the part of the Chinese. They were very harsh and adamant against a peaceful settlement in Vietnam.

GANSCHOW: You remember the Cultural Revolution, the terrible situation of the Cultural Revolution. I must say that as a scholar of China at the time I at times got caught up in the, oh, what one might call a kind of liberal attitude towards it. It was against bureaucracy; it was--you know there were the student movements in our country and so somehow you connected some of the better things or the idealistic things of the Cultural Revolution with the student movements. But in fact, as we look back now and as people in China have told us, there was incredible suffering, intense incredible suffering during the Cultural Revolution. Now in addition to that, China, as you know, pulled out all of its ambassadors, I think, except one. I think somewhere in the Middle East somewhere they kept an ambassador. I mean all of its ambassadors.

RICHARD RUSK: Withdrew them from their consulates?

GANSCHOW: Pulled them out.

DEAN RUSK: Well the Cultural Revolution almost amounted to a decapitation of their

professional classes and their educated people. I think it was a serious setback for China, whatever its ideology was to be. But fortunately a good many people, intelligent, educated people, survived it in some fashion: maybe by working out on the farms in the rural areas for a while. And many of them have now been restored and they are now making a contribution to the national life. But I think the Cultural Revolution might have come also from some concern that younger people coming along were not accepting automatically the ideology of Mao Tse-tung. And we've all experienced that: the Soviets, we in this country, and so forth. And this was, I think, partly Mao Tse-tung's attempt to guarantee the ideological purity of the younger generation. But they paid a terrible price for it.

GANSCHOW: It must have been just an absolute mess, though, to try to make any sort of contact, if you could during those years, or have any sort of relationship at all between the United States and China.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Well during the--I've already told you about my shaking hands with Chen Yi at the Laos Conference. I made discrete inquiries as to whether he would wish to sit down in a private meeting with me just to talk about various things, but he showed no willingness to do so, so that didn't come to anything.

GANSCHOW: Was that an interest that you had developed on your own, Professor Rusk, or had that been kind of batted around before you went to--?

DEAN RUSK: Well, let me say that I did not ask anybody's permission in Washington to make that particular contact. I thought as Secretary of State if I wanted to do it that was my prerogative, so I didn't clear it with anybody.

GANSCHOW: But Chen Yi didn't respond?

DEAN RUSK: He didn't respond.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you know of other examples or instances of that type of thing where you personally, as American Secretary of State, not necessarily under instructions from Washington, attempted a unilateral initiative?

DEAN RUSK: Not during the sixties, no.

RICHARD RUSK: I see. This would have been the time, then, that it happened?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Right.

GANSCHOW: It's often said that if we would have had relations--Of course that's one of those if questions. If we would have had relations with China, official relations with China, during the time of Vietnam it would have made it easier to get China involved in trying to help negotiate an end to that war.

DEAN RUSK: Well, remember we had communications with the Chinese in those talks we had

in Europe. First in Czechoslovakia in Prague and then in Warsaw. And so we were not out of communication with each other. The problem was that neither side liked what it heard from the other in those talks. So we always had a channel of communication somewhere somehow with Peking, but it didn't produce anything.

GANSCHOW: This is a question, and I ask it trying to get your response to the difference between what you would see: Some people refer to certain people as hard-liners. Other people, you know, in another way. As a Secretary of State, as you look back at your, in your position as Secretary of State, do you, are you opposed to those kind of labels? Do you think they're useful at all or do you think they, in fact, mislabeled?

DEAN RUSK: I think the labels can be very misleading, partly because when you try to dig into people's motivations, you find yourself in a jungle. Motivations are very complex. And I think any attempt to simplify motivations is likely to lead to serious mistakes. But also people can be hardline on one subject and very moderate or even soft-line on another subject involving the same country. So it's always a mixed bag. I think that the--I personally think that these labels don't contribute very much.

GANSCHOW: Because as I've talked to you, over the years now that I've known you and over what I've read about you, there's no doubt in my mind--I'm talking to Richard here. There's no doubt in my mind that your father had not only an understanding of China, but also a deep sympathy for a lot of the things that the Chinese were trying to do: to modernize, to improve their country. Yet there's a difference between that and, you know, a person like trying to deal with Mao, let's say, during the Cultural Revolution in which he just simply was impossible apparently to deal with.

DEAN RUSK: After the war I was reminiscing with General Stilwell about our wartime years in China. And at one point he said, "You know, I've finally decided that the things we don't like about the Chinese are their American characteristics." I don't know whether you remember seeing that extraordinary photographic collection called The Family of Man?

GANSCHOW: Yes.

DEAN RUSK: Well now if you look at something like that it brings out rather dramatically the fact that most people in most countries, most members of the human race, are very much alike in their interests, their concerns, their hopes, and that much of our controversy occurs on the roof of this house in which the human race lives, where the governments play games with each other. But that if you really looked for the common factors at the grass roots, you'd find a lot of them, despite cultural, linguistic, traditional differences and things of that sort. So I've been greatly impressed with a common humanity of man around the world as I've seen it in operation.

GANSCHOW: I think that makes you more concerned also with where we're going in nuclear weapons and that sort of thing, as you have expressed yourself.

DEAN RUSK: Oh, yes.

GANSCHOW: In 1968 you finished your years as Secretary--Wasn't it in '68?

DEAN RUSK: January '69.

GANSCHOW: You finished your years as Secretary of State. Did you take a moment to think, maybe, ten years from then--1978--and try to speculate where China was going to be? And did you ever reflect right at the end of your tenure with respect to what our relationship was going to be with China ten years from now?

RICHARD RUSK: He did once in James [Barrett] Reston's presence and he got nailed.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. I was asked about that at a press conference once and I referred to three points that I thought were just simple matters of fact. One, that there would soon be a billion Chinese, as there are now. That the Chinese would be armed with nuclear weapons. And that we don't know what the attitude of Peking will be to the rest of the world twenty years from then. Well, Scottie Reston and Senator Eugene McCarthy picked up that remark and accused me of raising the 'shadow of the yellow peril' in the old racial terms. Well, a few weeks later, Scottie Reston, in the middle of a column, got in a half-apology for this remark. But it wasn't racial. It was simply a statement of simple fact. No, I thought a lot about it because--was it Napoleon who said, "Let China sleep, for when she awakes the world will tremble"? World history is going to be greatly influenced by these billion Chinese. That is a very, very important factor which has to be taken into account in anybody's thoughts about the future. Now, despite the great support I had given to the Republic of China on Taiwan within the executive branch of the government, I supported Mr. Nixon's visit to Peking and Mr. Carter's final normalization of relations with the People's Republic. Because during all those years when we were supporting the Republic of China on Taiwan they imposed upon our diplomacy an impossible burden: their myth that they were the government of all China; that they would go back to the mainland and in going back to the mainland they would have strong U.S. support. Well, that was a myth which apparently they had to hold onto to explain the organization of their own government in Taiwan. But it was purely fanciful. No forces on the mainland that might take control away from the communist regime would then turn over that control to Chiang Kai-shek and his government on Taiwan. And so we lost ally after ally on this issue. There was too much of a gap between the myth and the reality. So I thought the time had come to finally to get our theory in line with the real situation.

GANSCHOW: Did President Nixon or Secretary of State at that time--

DEAN RUSK: [William Pierce] Rogers.

GANSCHOW: Did they call upon you or ask your advice when they were contemplating that?

DEAN RUSK: No. As a matter of fact it was held so secretly that, I think, William Rogers, the Secretary, was the only one in the State Department, except for one staff officer who went along with Henry [Alfred] Kissinger, who even knew about Kissinger's secret trip to Peking.

RICHARD RUSK: What form did your support take, Pop? Just in your public statements when

interviewed?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. When I was asked about it and when people would try to get me to join them in opposing this move I refused to do it: that kind of thing. But I thought the time had come to get our official relations more in line with the real situation in the real world.

GANSCHOW: Did you have any adverse reaction from Taiwan on this, you know, in your more recent--

DEAN RUSK: No. I was not besieged by the China-lobby kind of people or the representatives of the Taiwan government on this point. I must confess I think that people on Taiwan have handled themselves with considerable dignity in a very adverse situation and have come out of it pretty well. They could have been completely upset by this, but they took it in stride, kept their economy going, established relations on whatever basis they could--not only with us but with many other countries--maintained their international trade levels. No, they did a pretty good job of absorbing this theoretical blow to that myth that they had entertained for so long.

RICHARD RUSK: Speaking of good jobs, Tom let me interject with a question you might have later. But it seems to me that China has made enormous progress under their communist system of government. Whether or not it's because of communism or in spite of communism, nevertheless I think we can say that such things as feeding their people, education, probably public health, in some important areas they really have made remarkable progress, especially when contrasted with other countries--India, for example--in that part of the world whose systems are set up along different lines. Do you agree with that? And number two, what does that suggest for China, for communism for instance, that there is a better way than what they have adopted in that part of the world?

DEAN RUSK: I'm not sure that that results from ideology as such. After all, it would be normal for China to pull itself together and come back from the destruction of World War II.

RICHARD RUSK: Whatever their ideology?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. And there would have been progress almost under any regime. Now it's a matter of judgment as to whether they might have come forward more rapidly had they had another kind of system. But they are very pragmatic people. My guess is that they will continue to borrow certain kinds of things from the free enterprise system, particularly the effort to build upon the attachment that so many Chinese have toward 'my own little bit of property, "my ownership of things.' I just don't believe that communism rooted that out of the long Chinese tradition and that we will find that the regime in China, whatever they call themselves, will probably build upon that and thereby help to galvanize even more of the energies of their own people. That's for the future, but I have no doubt that things have greatly improved in China in many ways: public health, for example, education, transportation. And they have been able to mobilize a great deal of just plain manpower to do a great many very impressive public works schemes and things of that sort. So a lot of that is Chinese, not necessarily communist.

GANSCHOW: Let me also point out, Richard, that China oftentimes in this last three decades

has made more progress when it's been less ideologically committed. It was during the times when Mao was so ideologically committed that China almost fell apart, that many of the accomplishments that they made in that early decade when they mixed--you know, when there was still a mixed Marxist/capitalist system. Those years of progress were almost destroyed when Mao tried to promote communism too far. In other words, the less ideologically it's been committed, the more progress it (unintelligible). And look in the past five to ten years. It's moved more and more away from--you know, Deng Xiaoping's famous saying, "Whether a cat's white or black doesn't matter, just so it catches mice." You know, it doesn't matter. You can call me communist, you can call me whatever, but just so we make some progress in this country.

DEAN RUSK: Before and during World War II the governmental structure of China was closely related to the position of what we used to call the warlords, eventually governors or other people, based upon regional alliances and loyalties and so forth. After Mao Tse-tung took over in China we kept looking for any signs of warlordism: regional separatism within a communist regime. But I must say my impression was that they handled that very well because they kept rotating these people who might become warlords. They themselves must have remembered their own history and wanted to insure that that kind of thing did not arise. So on the whole the central government in Peking has been able to exercise a considerable degree of control over a very large and diverse Chinese population. And warlordism has not really revived within a communist regime. I mean, we might have been prepared, had we seen any warlordism, to find ways to encourage it, but we didn't find anything to work with.

GANSCHOW: If you think back to the years that you've been involved in China, as Secretary of State, were there certain persons--I'd like to mention some persons, some individual leaders of China and maybe you could respond. Either have you met these people or at least what are your reactions. Mao himself. Mao Tse-tung.

DEAN RUSK: I never met Mao Tse-tung or Chou En-lai. I just didn't have any access to them during the period that I was in office.

GANSCHOW: Chou En-lai certainly in some ways was a rather impressive person.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Undoubtedly. He was sophisticated. He was a man of the world. He knew what was going on in the world. He had a very broad outlook. He was very intelligent. And perhaps we might have been able to work something out with him better than we did, particularly during the fifties.

GANSCHOW: How about Deng Xiaoping? You met him, now, did you not?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. I met him when he'd made his visit here and came to Atlanta.

RICHARD RUSK: Didn't he ask specifically to see you?

DEAN RUSK: For some reason he asked me to call on him and I was glad to go over and visit with him in his hotel suite: just he and I and his interpreter. Early in the conversation I said to him, "Now Mr. Vice Premier, I know that your colleagues have in Peking a file on me that is six

inches thick showing what a terrible person I am. I just want you to know that I'm much more interested in the next thirty years than I am in the past thirty years." And very gently he said, "Oh, Mr. Rusk, we do not have a file on you." And then he laughed like hell and invited me to visit him in Peking. I asked him at one point in that conversation what he really wanted from the United States. He said, "The answer is very simple. We want your science and technology." But I have the impression that the Chinese, perhaps because of their billion people, are much more relaxed in their relationship with the outside world now than they were under the Mao regime. For example, I don't get much impression that they are worried about any of their thousands of students studying abroad defecting. I suppose when you have a billion people you don't mind whether you lose a few, whereas the Soviets are very sensitive on that point when they have people studying.

GANSCHOW: I think it has become a problem with our State Department though.

DEAN RUSK: Uh, huh.

GANSCHOW: I've heard that there's about a thousand to two thousand who have applied for political asylum.

DEAN RUSK: Oh.

RICHARD RUSK: Chinese, huh?

GANSCHOW: Yeah. And we don't quite know--

RICHARD RUSK: Over what period of time?

GANSCHOW: --how to respond to it.

RICHARD RUSK: Over what period of time on that?

GANSCHOW: Since, oh let's say, five years ago.

RICHARD RUSK: About five years?

GANSCHOW: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: Well we have more than that from Taiwan who want to stay here.

GANSCHOW: Oh yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Any idea why this fellow wanted to see you, Pop? You didn't have any official contacts with the Chinese.

DEAN RUSK: No. I suppose that he was briefed on the fact that when he came to Georgia that I was one of the people in Georgia that had had some kind of government responsibility. But

anyhow he decided he would ask me to call on him and I did. Maybe one or two of his local Atlanta hosts had suggested that he might want to see me. I just don't know where that idea might have come from. He didn't tell me.

GANSCHOW: Were you surprised how small Deng Xiaoping is? He really is short isn't he?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, he is pretty small. I've been used to some small Chinese. Of course they can be large too, you know?

GANSCHOW: I don't even know if he's five feet.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, he's a tiny little man; very intelligent.

GANSCHOW: How about Chiang Kai-shek?

DEAN RUSK: Well I met him on several occasions, both during and after the war and during my tour as Secretary of State. He was a formidable figure in the sense that he was rather remote. You never had any feeling that you were getting to be close to him in any real way. He was a thoughtful host if you went to see him there in his own capitol. I don't think he ever came to the United States on a visit. He sent Madam Chiang Kai-shek [Mei-ling Soong] for such purposes. She was quite a representative. But Chiang Kai-shek had some central ideas, but many of them illusory, about his own position, the position of the government on Taiwan, about what was really going on on the mainland. He seemed to expect almost every year that a revolution would occur on the mainland and somehow he would be restored to power. He was living pretty much in the past. And it was not easy to do business personally with him, directly on a realistic basis. You really had to do your business mostly with cabinet officers who were responsible for the things that you were interested in.

GANSCHOW: Did he give the impression--

DEAN RUSK: He was somewhat of a remote figure like [Francisco] Franco in Spain came to be, like [Antonio de Oliveira] Salazar in Portugal came to be. This is putting it too strongly, but he was almost a ghostly figure from that point of view. You didn't have the impression that he was really directly in touch with the real problems of the real world, at least in his later years. Of course during the war we had some problems with him. General Joseph Stilwell had the mission of trying to get Chinese forces to fight the Japanese as soon and as hard as possible. But it soon became evident that Chiang Kai-shek was not going to commit such forces as he had against the Japanese because he was looking over his shoulders at the communists in his own country and he could see [Douglas] MacArthur and [Chester William] Nimitz beginning to cross the Pacific. So he resisted the commitment of any of his ground forces against the Japanese. Now maybe he was wise in that in the sense that they probably would have been rather ineffective because those he had in China were not well-trained or well-led. The Chinese forces in Burma did a good job because General Stilwell trained them and saw to it that they were well-supplied and well-fed and taken care of medically. But that led to a good deal of frustration on General Stilwell's part because General Stilwell had, himself, a great love for the Chinese people at the grass roots. He could become very angry about what he saw the government doing to these people in all sorts of

ways: the corruption and the abuse and the arbitrary power and things of that sort. Stilwell was not all that sympathetic to the erosive effect of ten years of war against the Japanese fighting all alone and how that had led to the deterioration and even disintegration of the Chinese government.

GANSCHOW: It must have given you some satisfaction though to see how successfully Taiwan did use American aid to the point where--was it 1967 or '68 where Taiwan was able to stop receiving general type of aid? I think they still received military aid.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, they were one of the early graduates of our aid program, economic aid program, because they had done a pretty spectacular job there on that island of Taiwan with its somewhat limited resources. They did it through the traditional energy and savvy and know-how of the Chinese people. And it's really been one of the miracles of modern times to see what has happened in Taiwan and in South Korea from an economic point of view.

GANSCHOW: As you look back to your long relationship with China, you know, as a student, as a member of Stilwell's staff, as Assistant Secretary of State, as Secretary of State, what gives you the most satisfaction with respect to your relationship with China? The most satisfaction?

DEAN RUSK: Well, of course, one has to begin with the fact that despite the most serious and far-reaching political differences we've had with the regime in Peking since 1949 that we and they have never had a war with each other. I think that is of fundamental importance because, from our side, if we tried to fight such a war with conventional weapons we would bleed ourselves to death. And no one wants to get into the business of destroying millions of Chinese with nuclear weapons. And I mean tens of millions. So I think that's the starting point and then you can go on from there. I think it may be that these years of estrangement have contributed to some fresh opportunities we now have with the reestablishment of relations and exchanges of students and trade and things of that sort. I think that reconciliation may have turned out to be more productive than it might have been had we not had that period of estrangement ahead of time.

RICHARD RUSK: Interesting. Are you surprised at how successfully we and the Chinese were able to resume a normal relationship? I can remember China being right up there with the Soviet Union in terms of our own fears and our own security.

DEAN RUSK: Well we had some problems with China during the normalization bit. For example, they didn't particularly like the legislation which established the basis for our new relations with the people on Taiwan; and they have objected occasionally to our selling arms to Taiwan, even the spare parts for the weapons which we had earlier supplied to Taiwan. But those things will work itself out. I got the impression from Deng Xiaoping that as far as the issue of Taiwan is concerned that they were in no great hurry about that; that they could take time. Of course the Chinese do have a different sense of time than we have in that in my inclination and advice to Washington has been for the United States to stay out of that problem. When Deng Xiaoping was here he said to one American audience, "You must always remember that China remains the middle kingdom. There are the Chinese and there are the barbarians. And you," he said, "are among the barbarians." Now this strong sense of Chineseness among the Chinese

people is something we ought to take into account. If we just stay out of it, sometime, in their own Chinese way, the Chinese on the mainland and on Taiwan will work things out in some sort of fashion. We may not even understand it at the time. It will probably happen without our knowledge. But they'll work it out in some kind of Chinese pragmatic fashion--maybe in stages over a period of time; maybe along the pattern of the agreement with respect to Hong Kong. So I just don't think we Americans should get too fidgety about that and try to come up with inventions of our own because we'd just be skidding on the rooftop while they themselves are dealing with these matters in the basement. We know that these two regimes are in touch with each other, not just through trade; they trade with each other rather considerably through Hong Kong. And you have people like Anna [Chan] Chennault and others who visit both Peking and Taiwan and I just can't believe that these two regimes are not in fairly regular contact with each other in one fashion or another. So someday they'll work it out. We should not, ourselves, develop an American plan for a solution to that problem. We ought to leave it alone.

GANSCHOW: The other side of that question in terms of satisfaction that you received from dealing with China, what has given you perhaps the most regret or anguish as you look back?

DEAN RUSK: Well the cause of most regret, I think, is not something I think we could have done very much about. That is, Mao Tse-tung came to power with America as enemy number one. And he set to work in a very diligent fashion to try to erase any traces of the long-standing friendship between the American people at the grass roots and the Chinese people. And that led to a period of active hostility toward the United States and everything we stood for, all of our relations with China, which made the normalization of relations very difficult. Now I find it hard to believe that the attempt to preach hostility toward the United States sank in very deeply in China. One doesn't detect that kind of attitude toward these Chinese students who've come here to study and other contacts we have had with them. It certainly was not apparent in my long talk with Deng Xiaoping. But I think that that decision to pick us out as enemy number one did set us back twenty years in our mutual relationship.

GANSCHOW: Do you also--I think we've talked about this, but--Is there any regret that somehow that Korean War thing got to the point where China came into the war? And, of course that just really fixed an enmity between us.

DEAN RUSK: Well one never knows what might have been, but when General MacArthur moved north of the 38th parallel, he split up his forces in a way that did not leave them any mutually supporting position. They were on separate tracks. And they were almost in a race for the Yalu. If he had moved north with his forces all together and had reached the narrow neck of North Korea, which would have been seventy-five or a hundred miles south of the border, and then had stopped there for a while, it's possible the Chinese might not have come in. It's also possible that we might be sitting at the narrow neck of Korea today. But, you see, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had had great reservations about the Inchon landing, which turned out to be a brilliant success. So when the Joint Chiefs saw his deployment as he moved to the north across the 38th parallel, they were very much concerned about it because these forces were not in the position to support each other if the Chinese came in. But because of the Inchon landing the Joint Chiefs are very timid about raising this issue with MacArthur. They finally did about three days before the Chinese attack, but by then it was too late. Incidentally, I forget now just where I

picked it up, but I have the impression that their losses in the Korean War made a deep impression upon the people in Peking and that they were not all that itchy to, say, get into Southeast Asia during the Vietnam affair.

RICHARD RUSK: Where'd you get that impression from?

DEAN RUSK: I forget now where it came from, but I think there may be something in that.

RICHARD RUSK: The Chinese really took a beating.

DEAN RUSK: They took a lot of casualties in the Korean War.

GANSCHOW: In fact there was a split in leadership of how to handle the military from then on. Peng Dehuai said, "We have to get better weapons; we have to get better equipment; we have to professionalize our army." Mao Tse-tung said, "No, you can continue to use masses of men to fight wars." Well masses of men ended up being killed.

DEAN RUSK: Tom, I don't know whether I mentioned this before, but on the question as to whether the Chinese were part of the decision for the North Koreans to invade South Korea, there is one little element that I think bears upon that problem. That is, we learned from prisoner interrogations and other sources of information during the Korean affair that for several months before the North Koreans attacked they combed the Chinese armies in North China to find people of Korean ancestry or nationality and move those over into North Korea. And so that would suggest that somehow China was much more involved with the decision to attack South Korea than many people have supposed.

GANSCHOW: Would you have done anything--And of course this is one of those ifs. But would you have done anything different if you had a chance, specifically with our relationship with China, over those years that you had some influence, some power? Do you wish now that you'd done something differently?

DEAN RUSK: Well to do something differently in any major way would mean that you'd have to be President and not Secretary of State. I think it's possible that if we could have defied the China lobby, both in and outside the Congress, and had established an earlier and more effective communications with the Chinese communists, we just might have found some basis for a more normal relationship. But I must say that any thinking in that direction was delivered a very serious setback when hundreds of thousands of Chinese came into Korea during the Korean affair. So I don't know. You know, it takes two to tango, Tom. Whether Mao Tse-tung or Chou En-lai might have done things differently, one doesn't know.

RICHARD RUSK: Barbara Tuchman raises the point about Mao's request to come visit Washington back in the mid-forties, and that's her famous what-if story about China and the Chinese.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

GANSCHOW: Finally, I'd like to ask: It's always been my experiences with the scholar-diplomat program in the State Department, and I've been involved a couple of times with that, in which they've invited me to come to the State Department and I've been able to sit down and see how it works and see how the China desk works. It's been my impression that we need, yes we need those people who can make quick decisions and immediate responses, because after all that may be necessary at times. But we also need people who have a better historical cultural background on these (unintelligible) countries. I am wondering if you may respond to that. I get the sense that we have a lot of good political scientists, in a sense, in the State Department, but maybe we need some historians. I may be tooting our own horn.

DEAN RUSK: Well there's something to that Tom. I think the more you understand the background of an entire nation the better off you are. When I was at the Rockefeller Foundation in the 1950s we invested a fair amount of money in Chinese studies. One specific program we launched, which has paid dividends, has been to begin to help training American lawyers in Chinese law. And that has yielded considerable dividends. But I must confess at the risk of offending your profession, Tom, that when the great issues come up, the great issues of war and peace, I think these cultural differences are not all that important. I'm very skeptical about the attitude of the, about the inscrutable oriental, because when you peel the peeling off the banana, they are pretty much like other people when you get down to it. And you still have the issues of organized peace, of aggression, of international law, of things of that sort where these cultural differences play a very minor role. Sure you're better off the more you know about a nation's history and background, but those things are not necessarily critical to the most important decisions.

GANSCHOW: I'm terribly concerned--And this will be my last question. I'm terribly concerned with the possibility that the United States might think in terms of rearming China or modernizing the military. And I've heard arguments from people in the Defense Department who say, "Now this is a way in which we can pull China under our defense umbrella and they will become more dependent upon our military system and our military--"

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BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

--that's just the wrong approach to take in our future relationships.

DEAN RUSK: I fully agree with you and I strongly object to any idea of our trying to play games with the Chinese or play the China card in our relations with the Soviet Union. They are much too intelligent both in Moscow and in Peking to let us get away with any childish game like that. And the Chinese are not going to, in any way, subordinate themselves to our policies any more than they were willing to with the Russians. So I just think that there's no future down that trail. I would hope that we could, over a period of time, steadily improve our relations, both with the Soviet Union and with the People's Republic of China, and hope very much that they do

not get into a war with each other. I, myself, do not believe that there is any benefit to the United States in a war between the Soviet Union and China. In the first place it would be a nuclear war and we'd catch a hell of a lot of fallout from such a war. And the last thing that I would think we should think about, even as a contingency would be our taking any part in such a war. Just as we rejected any indirect suggestion that might have come out of Moscow about the possibility of a preemptive strike against Chinese nuclear facilities, we shouldn't go down that trail. I think in time we can--If I were Jimmy the Greek [James G. Snyder], I would bet on the pragmatism of the Chinese people over the centuries and try to find ways to build upon that down-to-earth sense as to what is in their interests and what are the needs of their people and not try to play games. And I would hope that we would be intelligent enough in Washington not to let either of those capitols manipulate us in this triangular relationship. I think we should just not work out any illusions on that subject. As far as selling arms to China is concerned, I would be rather cautious about that. You see, a billion Chinese present the Soviet Union with the kind of problem that » the Soviet Union presented to Napoleon and to Adolf Hitler. The Soviets haven't got the capability of conquering a billion Chinese. Now they could put tens of millions of people in there and still be gobbled up by the sheer mass of the Chinese people.

GANSCHOW: Look at the problems they're having with Afghanistan, a small country, what would they do with a huge one?

DEAN RUSK: Sure. Sure. So I just don't think that kind of a war is on if there's any common sense whatever in Moscow and Peking. So I'm relatively optimistic about this triangular relationship, Moscow, Peking, and Washington, if we just keep our heads about us and don't get silly.

RICHARD RUSK: You said the Soviets at one time had dropped a few hints about the possibility of preemptive nuclear strike against China?

DEAN RUSK: Well that came up at a time when I was not in office so I don't have the details on that.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you hear about it since?

DEAN RUSK: But it has been reported that there was some contact between Moscow and Washington on that subject and that Washington turned it down.

RICHARD RUSK: You weren't there for this, but did you have any--

DEAN RUSK: I didn't go back and look up the record on that.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you hear about it since?

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DEAN RUSK: I didn't go back and look up the record on that.

RICHARD RUSK: You would have picked up on it just through media sources?

DEAN RUSK: Well, gossip, rumor.

RICHARD RUSK: Is this public record? This hints of--

GANSCHOW: Yes. And it may have been in the Kissinger period. It seems to me it may have been.

DEAN RUSK: Well you see, there were a few people in this country--nobody in a high position--who talked about a preemptive strike against the Soviet Union when they exploded their first nuclear bomb. That kind of thing just doesn't make any sense.

GANSCHOW: I want to thank you very much, Professor Rusk, for giving me the pleasure of talking with you.

DEAN RUSK: Well, Tom, we're indebted to you for--

RICHARD RUSK: Tom this has been the best series of interviews we've had, and we've had lots of people doing interviews.

[break in recording]

GANSCHOW: --few Secretaries of State have had and that should be on the record. Not just simply this label of hard-liner. You see what I'm saying.

DEAN RUSK: Well the species Homo sapiens is about the only species I know of which is capable of setting out deliberately to destroy itself. And we have to think about that. I think that comes out of--that does not come out of the grass roots of ordinary people. It comes out of ambitious people. People get caught up in ideologies, in myths. It goes back to Mrs. Gromyko's remark that, "These men are playing such childish and dangerous games." And somehow the male of the species is given to playing such games. And we ought to look at and think more about the advice of those who have been keepers of the cave and the igloo and the teepee and the cabin and the home--the pragmatic womenfolk. And listen to them at times when their peasant hausfrau wisdom comes along.

GANSCHOW: They are also the ones that have to suffer when they get word that the men have been killed.

DEAN RUSK: That's right. That's right.

GANSCHOW: Well, thank you Mr. Rusk.

DEAN RUSK: Mr. Gromyko and I once agreed that we would solve more of our problems if we turn them over to our two wives.

GANSCHOW: Before I leave, however--and Richard you may be a help on this end. Professor Rusk you might help. Did I ask you to recount the story of the time for that, I think it was Johnson sent you to Taiwan to talk Chiang Kai-shek and he mentioned the possibility of the United States helping him get--

DEAN RUSK: Yes. That was my final talk with Chiang Kai-shek and on this occasion he, once again, gave me a rather long story about being the governor of all China and having to go back to the mainland and needing a great deal of American support. When he got through I said to him, "Mr. President, there are only 200 million of us Americans back there and there are 800 million people over there on the mainland. I can assure you that we're not going to bleed ourselves white in fighting a conventional war against the Chinese." And he turned upon me with considerable passion and he said, "You must never, never, never give any thought whatever to the possibility of dropping nuclear weapons on the Chinese." All of a sudden his being Chinese was more important to him than being Chiang Kai-shek. And I then had to say to him, "Well then, Mr. President, you have your answer." But I was very much interested in his response to that. Again an illustration of what I've referred to as the Chineseness of the Chinese people. I mean, when Peking exploded its first nuclear weapon, people on the streets in Taipei were going around smiling at each other and saying, "Oh, have you heard, we exploded a nuclear bomb."

RICHARD RUSK: That's funny.

DEAN RUSK: Really. There was great pride among the Chinese almost everywhere that the Chinese had exploded a nuclear bomb.

RICHARD RUSK: Really?

DEAN RUSK: So I think that's something we need to take into account. One has to be hesitant about attributing specific characteristics to an entire race of people, but I've come awfully close to a deep and abiding respect for this sense of Chineseness among the Chinese.

GANSCHOW: I think that's all I've wanted to ask.

RICHARD RUSK: You did a good job, Pop. This has really been a good interview.

END OF SIDE 2