

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

Rusk X

Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas J. Schoenbaum

circa 1985

RICHARD RUSK: --Dean Rusk about his years as a Deputy Chief of War Plans for General [Joseph Warren] Stilwell and the CBI [China-Burma-India] theatre. Pop, General Stilwell wore about five different hats over there: commanding general of the U.S. Army and CBI; commanding general of the U.S. Air Force; and all the related outfits that went with the air effort--supply army and engineers' ordinance, medical, etc. He was in charge of lend-lease to China as the commanding general of the Chinese army in India; Deputy Supreme Allied Commander to Lord Louis [Francis Albert Victor Nicholas] Mountbatten; and Chiang Kai-shek's Chief of Staff at one point. How many of those roles would you have been involved with as Deputy Chief of his--

DEAN RUSK: Let me begin by saying that I was in the G-3 section of the general staff, and my specialty was war plans. General Stilwell had two American headquarters: his rear echelon in New Delhi where most of his staff worked; and then he had a general staff in Chungking, on the Chinese side. Frank [Dow] Merrill was Chief of Staff on the India side and [Frank] Pinky Doren was Chief of Staff on the China side.

RICHARD RUSK: Frank Doren?

DEAN RUSK: Frank Doren. Yes. But I was involved in the basic operational planning for Stilwell's principal mission out there, which was to establish communication with China, to keep China in the war, and to build up Chinese forces that could be of assistance in case we had to fight the Japanese forces on the mainland at a later time in the war. As a part of that, the building of the Burma Road was a major effort. That road ran from Assam through the jungles down through northern Burma, and into China. But, some of the key positions at that time, at the beginning were still held by Japanese forces, around places like Myitkyina. So, I had to work pretty closely with G-2 intelligence and G-4 supply, and the principal technical services offices out there, like the chief medical officer, the chief ordnance officer, the chief quartermaster, and so forth, because much of what we could do, from a military point of view, turned upon what we could supply.

RICHARD RUSK: So a lot of these functions of necessity overlap, as they would in just about any kind of combat?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. And then on the India-Burma side, operationally, we were under the command of Lord Louis Mountbatten down in Ceylon, whose headquarters were down there. And on the China side, theoretically, we were under the command of Chiang Kai-shek. So I had to maintain very close touch with Lord Louis Mountbatten's headquarters and with the British forces who were there in eastern India. But, the limitations of supply were critical because we had to get material over the hump into China, and the allocation of that tonnage got to be a very

touchy thing.

RICHARD RUSK: You talked in those other tapes about the disputes that Stilwell had with [Claire Lee] Chennault and their operations.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Right. And I had also to keep the Pentagon informed of how things looked and what we were going to be needing down the line. Did I talk about the airlifted locomotives?

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. We got all that.

DEAN RUSK: Did I talk about the pigeon company?

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: But I did a lot of traveling while I was out there. I was in Assam frequently on the India side of the airlift into China and the India side of the building of the Burma Road. I was down in Ceylon quite frequently. I was in Calcutta from time to time. So there were times when I spent almost as much time in the air as I did on the ground. I traveled in piston planes that were much slower than the jets are these days. I also was pretty well responsible for liaison with the British forces whose headquarters were in India. And that was a considerable bureaucracy and under commanders who had no particular interest in getting on with the war, as far as they were concerned. So we had some troubles with them. I was involved in a number of political issues. I think I mentioned that Franklin Roosevelt wanted us to make it clear that we were in India solely to fight the Japanese, that we were not connected in way with the British desire to return to India at the end of the war. That complicated some of our public relations, our psychological warfare joint efforts with the British, in that theatre. Then, we had some problems with the Indian nationalists. They questioned us about when we were going to stop killing their cows. Did I talk about that?

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. We got all that.

DEAN RUSK: Also, the Americans marrying Indian girls?

RICHARD RUSK: We got that. Now I've run into quite a bit of reference about Stilwell's staff. You, yourself, have said that so-called Vinegar Joe was that in name only as far as his staff people were concerned. He wasn't too hard or demanding on his staff. I've seen some other reports that Stilwell's staff wasn't thought too highly of, or didn't do that good a job, with the exception of G-3, which was operations, the one you were involved with. Do you care to comment on what might have happened with the other sections of intelligence, of Stilwell's staff work and to perhaps what extent did you have to get into these other areas and cover and do work that wasn't being done by G-1, G-2, and G-4? Why wasn't the rest of that staff performing up to snuff?

DEAN RUSK: Their environment, from the point of view of the war as a whole, the CBI theater was practically the bottom priority.

RICHARD RUSK: That would include quality staff, too.

DEAN RUSK: That had some bearing on the kind of people they would give General Stilwell for many of his jobs. And so--I don't want to name names--but, there were some people around that might be called "fuddy-duddies" who just were serving out their time and weren't particularly interested in getting on with things. Did I tell you my story about answering staff questions about how long we were going to be in that.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. I got that one.

DEAN RUSK: I had a good deal to do with the cable exchanges between General Stilwell and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington on these disputes with the Chinese on one side and Chennault and the British. And so, I kept busy. One has to be careful about drawing conclusions about what influence the CBI experience had on my later attitudes toward policy. For example, at the time that we were building NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], there were a good many people in Congress who were interested in a NATO in the Pacific. That was during the Truman administration. And, I was one of those staff people that took a good, hard look at that during the Truman administration; and we concluded that we should not make that effort, as far as Southeast Asia was concerned. For us to go in there and ally ourselves with some and not all countries in the region would mean that the American connection would become a divisive element within southeast Asia; and that we should wait until the entire region developed its security consciousness. Then we could stand behind, in strong support of the region as a whole. So, I was not in favor of what later came to be known as the SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization] Treaty. During the Eisenhower administration, after the Geneva Conference that divided Vietnam, they concluded that treaty. That, then, became a part of the structure of collective security in the world. How our attitude toward that treaty seemed to us to have a direct bearing on what other governments would think our attitude would be if other treaties were challenged. I did get some sense of the people in that area--the sheer size and the complexity of India, with its great cultural diversity and things of that sort--something about the distances, something about the terrain, the physical aspects of it. The Brahmaputra River, which rises in Tibet, would be maybe a mile and a half wide in the dry season and twelve miles wide in the rainy season. There are all sorts of problems in moving things and people from one place to the other under those circumstances. Burma--well, many years later when I was at the Rockefeller Foundation I visited Rangoon and was invited to a party in Rangoon of high Burmese officials. At that time there was real guerrilla-type activity going on up in northern Burma with some of the dissident tribes and things like that. The Chinese were playing a little bit with it. They were very amused to find out that I was the only person in the room who had tramped all over that area. I knew this country up there. I knew where they--when they talked about problems, I knew exactly what they were talking about.

RICHARD RUSK: This would have been with the Rockefeller Foundation, or as Secretary?

DEAN RUSK: Well, later when I became president of the Rockefeller Foundation I visited Rangoon. That was the occasion where I met with some of these high Burmese officials.

RICHARD RUSK: I see.

DEAN RUSK: And I was the one in the room who actually had direct personal experience with the country they were talking about.

RICHARD RUSK: That CBI experience, if anything, may have given you the impression that use of American force over in Asia would be sort of a limited thing and we could only have a limited effect on events because of the nature--

DEAN RUSK: Well, there were a very few, not many, people in Washington who thought that we should intervene in China to help Chiang Kai-shek throw back the communists. Well, I knew enough about China to know that, in the first place we would have to mobilize large numbers of people for our own armed forces. We didn't have effective armed forces just after VJ-day. And secondly, that even if we mobilized several million men we might occupy a few cities along the coast of China, but to think about occupying and taking charge of several hundred million people in China was just nonsense. The Japanese found that out in terms of their effort to control China completely during their ten-year war against the Chinese. So I think there were some, if you like, realistic understandings of what the problems were. And these are not just chess pieces on a board, they are big, populous, complicated countries that don't lend themselves to easy solutions.

RICHARD RUSK: If you had those kinds of understandings, how does that reconcile with your thinking that if we had had C-46s available in quantity at the end of the war to airlift supplies to Chiang Kai-shek that that might have made a decisive difference?

DEAN RUSK: No. C-54 is the big four-engine planes.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you think that really would have been that decisive a factor with the Chinese--

DEAN RUSK: Well, had we had the C-54s for at least a year before we began to get them, we could have done a great deal toward equipping and supplying Chiang Kai-shek's armies and put him in a much better position to take care of the communists at the end of the war. See, even so, at the immediate end of the war, Chiang Kai-shek had, nominally in his army, forces that were ten to one superior to the communist forces. But their quality, their equipment, and their leadership was very poor and Chiang Kai-shek made some very serious mistakes. For example, he moved the Chinese army in Burma up to the northeast where the communist threat was pretty serious, but he apparently was jealous of the Chinese commander of those forces and wouldn't let him have those forces as a unified group. He broke them up into pieces all over the place, and so they were, in effect, defeated piecemeal.

RICHARD RUSK: Call it defensive death: if you lose your army a piece at a time--

DEAN RUSK: Well, I just think he did not want that general who had commanded that force in Burma to gain any public or military position that could challenge Chiang Kai-shek's own position. I suppose service to the CBI theatre was very much responsible for my being drawn back to the Operations Division of the War Department general staff in Washington at the end of the war. And that had a lot to do with my later career in terms of going from there to the State

Department and working under George Catlett Marshall and so forth.

RICHARD RUSK: You made an effort to learn one of the dialects of India, apparently, Urdu, and you took it for a while and you dropped it because someone told you that really that was a British staff language more so than a--

DEAN RUSK: Yes. I started taking lessons in Urdu, which was the language most used in the Indian armed forces, but I was told by an Indian friend that the language I was learning was the language of British military command and it was not the Urdu that could be used in polite society among civilians.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you something of an anomaly as far as American staff people were concerned, trying to learn the native language like that?

DEAN RUSK: More or less. I'm sure there were some in, for example, OSS [Office of Strategic Services] and other places, who were working on the languages there.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you make any other efforts to find out about the cultural traits of these indigenous peoples over there in Asia? Was part of your effort to really try to--

DEAN RUSK: We've talked a good deal about that, and I was fortunate at having a British liaison officer to the American headquarters--to our headquarters--J.M. Sanders, Mike Sanders, who married an American wife. And he had commanded a battalion of the Garwhal Rifles and he was very familiar with these different cultural patterns and traits and so forth. And I read a good deal while I was over there. You know--paperback books from the bookstores. We didn't have as much communication as I would have liked with the true Indian leaders. A good many of them were in jail. So, I saw a good deal of different parts of India. I didn't feel that I really established any basic cultural communication with their leaders.

RICHARD RUSK: Talking about psychological warfare--

DEAN RUSK: We had a CBI patch which every American in the theatre wore, and it was the same patch all over the theatre. It carried the stripes--

RICHARD RUSK: Did you design the patch?

DEAN RUSK: --and the sun of China and the star of India. I helped design that when I was back in the Pentagon.

RICHARD RUSK: Oh, did you?

DEAN RUSK: In G-2, because we wanted to draw that sharp distinction between the Americans and everybody else out there. As a matter of fact, at one point General [William Joseph] Slim's division came under General Stilwell's command in northern Burma and General Slim asked permission to have his men wear the CBI patch and we wouldn't give it to him because we didn't want to have other nationalities wearing that patch because of this political problem. But I must

confess that we got a lot of cooperation from the Indian people. They did an awful lot of the work that's necessary to keep a force active, particularly a force that's going to build a road from India to China. They ran the trains and they took care of our messes--food--and water, and built our bashas. If the Indian people had been opposed to what we were doing, we would have had a very tough time. We simply couldn't have done even as little as we did.

RICHARD RUSK: How would you account for the fact that two million Indian soldiers serving under British leadership served faithfully in that war, despite the tensions in the country about independence? And I know Gandhi took a certain position early in the war and you told me about that. Do you have any further recollections of why they hung with it like that?

DEAN RUSK: There are Indians and Indians. It's a very diverse country. There was no problem about the so-called martial tribes--people like the Gurkhas, and the Garwhal Rifles, and the other hill tribes that just liked to fight and were ready to fight at different times--Sikhs and others. The British army in India had so many different sects involved among its personnel. One way, I was told, that they dealt with that was if you had a battalion with different religions in it, they would have a Brahmin in the kitchen. If the Brahmin was in the kitchen, then it was possible for anybody to eat the food that came out of that kitchen. Whereas, if it had not been the case, then there would have been some problems about these tribal customs.

RICHARD RUSK: Sometimes contact between different groups of people--different cultural groups, nationalities--does not necessarily mean cooperation or mutual understanding. Sometimes guys in these circumstances will get the idea that not all men are brothers. Was this a problem with the American troops operating with these different ethnic and national groups, and were you involved in--

DEAN RUSK: No. I think on the whole, the American personnel in CBI did a good job in their personal relations with local people because they were polite, there was very little rape, and we were often able to offer them things which they themselves did not have. Now, we upset the British because we paid our servants more than the British officers had been used to paying them out there and they were rather resentful of that. I paid my bearer, personal servant, fifty rupees a month. Well, that's what--\$12, \$15--that sort of thing, a month. But that was fifteen rupees a month more than the British officers had been used to paying their people, so they didn't like that very much.

RICHARD RUSK: British colonialism: I know you didn't care much for it as a philosophical concept, but how about out there in CBI where you had a chance to see the effects of British colonialism upon people there? How did it strike you there?

DEAN RUSK: Well, broadly speaking, the British empire carried in their knapsacks all over the world the ideas which would necessarily lead to the dissolution of the British empire. Britain has been the home of the great ideas of political freedom. It took several centuries to work them out in institutions which provided such freedom. Now, they couldn't be free at home and tyrants abroad. It's just not possible for them to be. Further, the British did develop in India a first-class civil service, made up of both British and Indians. That professional service was a great asset to India when it became independent. Then, the British were not afraid of education. They

established a lot of schools and a lot of colleges--institutions of higher education--out there. And, in a way that the Dutch did not in Indonesia, or the French in their African colonies, or the Belgians, or the Portuguese. So, I think the British did a much better job in preparing their colonies to become independent than any of the other colonial powers.

RICHARD RUSK: What were the more adverse aspects of colonialism over there, as you personally witnessed? Just in the social exchanges between the British and Indian counterparts, or anything significant there?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I think probably the principal thing is that the caste system continued to flourish under British rule, ranging all the way from the maharajahs right down to the untouchables. The British did not do very much about trying to moderate or modify that caste system. Maybe they felt--Well after all the British ruled India with only a handful of people, relatively. So, they made alliances and worked through these princes, and maharajahs, and mizans, and other local leaders. When I was in Delhi I belonged to what was called a Gymkana Club, G-Y-M-K-A-N-A, I think, Gymkana Club, which had the same--kind of a country club. It didn't have a golf course, but it had tennis courts and swimming pools and things like that. The top American officers were members of it, but no Indian could be a member of that club. I'm not even sure that an Indian could be invited there as a guest. Well, there was a fair amount of that kind of thing in British India.

RICHARD RUSK: The problems of relationships between general staff and staff people in general and troops of the field--

DEAN RUSK: Well troops of the field, wherever you find them, don't care much for the staff. They're the guys back in the rear who are safe, relatively comfortable, not being shot at regularly. But, you see in the CBI we only had Merrill's Marauders as far as combat, ground troops were concerned. So that was a limited impact, whatever that impact would be. I'm sure they hated the guts out of rear headquarters from time to time, and maybe even General Stilwell. But, I remember on one occasion we found that some of our top flyers were smuggling gold across the hump.

RICHARD RUSK: The pilots?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. And we felt we had to cut it out, and we issued the necessary orders, but also once in a while we'd catch one of these fellows. I remember being in a basha hut up in Assam once, which I was sharing with one of these hump pilots, and he was awaiting court martial on these charges. He kept saying, "It's like a stab in the back. It's like a stab in the back." He didn't like that kind of thing at all. Anyone who was completely free to carry things back and forth across the hump could get rich out there, given the monetary situation in China and what could be done with it. Of course, we were artificially supporting the Chinese currency with the American dollar during those days, so there were ways to make a big killing. I remember one officer in our headquarters once told me that if I went home without a million dollars I was crazy. I wouldn't have anything to do with that kind of thing.

RICHARD RUSK: There were officers out there taking advantage of some of this?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Sure. War breeds corruption.

RICHARD RUSK: Every fellow brings back from the war theatre, whether he was front line or rear echelon, some unpleasant experiences about war that they personally don't always like to talk about. I'm not suggesting that you have to talk about any of this, but did you have any such experiences and memories that have been difficult to share? And, what might they be?

DEAN RUSK: No. My personal experiences were relatively limited because I was general staff and, among other things, I was under orders not to fly over Japanese-held Burma because I had knowledge of our general war plans. But I had to violate that from time to time because I had to go back and forth to China several times. I can't claim any serious combat experience.

RICHARD RUSK: You told me a little bit about what you did have and also about the aircraft incidents.

DEAN RUSK: Did I tell you about the jeep drive with General Stilwell into Burma?

RICHARD RUSK: Where you stopped to flush out a sniper?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: Well. So I was occasionally exposed to them, but the principal dangers I was exposed to was the danger inherent in taking off and landing in these planes, so often under the most dreadful weather one could possibly imagine. Nature just writhed out there in the monsoon season. Those monsoon winds came up out of the Indian Ocean and hit the mountains. It just was a convulsion. And there were times when you thought you were going to die and were afraid you wouldn't. I mean, you would be tossed several thousand feet at a time up or down in these terrible storms.

RICHARD RUSK: If you knew moments of real fear in CBI, it could probably be related to that flying?

DEAN RUSK: Flight commissions. Did I tell you one of my first jobs out there was getting in a DC-3 aircraft with a little bow-legged Texas pilot and flying up into the Wa country of western China.

RICHARD RUSK: Looking for an alternative route to China?

DEAN RUSK: Landing in cow pastures and things like that to install automatic direction-finding boxes to help our hump flyers. We'd land in these open fields, having buzzed them a couple of times, and see how bad the rocks were. Then we had to deal with these people--these Was--who had never seen a white man, let alone an airplane.

RICHARD RUSK: W-A-A-S?

DEAN RUSK: W-A. Wa. In the Wa country of western China. So we had to bargain with them and ask for their protection of these black boxes. At that time--

RICHARD RUSK: How did you speak the language of those people? Did you have someone who could communicate with them?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we did a lot of it by signs. I didn't have anybody with me who could speak Wa! At that time opium was the only medium of exchange in that part of China. So, we would deal in little bags of opium as our money--until the State Department found out about it and told us to quit.

RICHARD RUSK: Would that be among your more wild or exotic cultural experiences out there?

DEAN RUSK: Well, it was a very unusual one. But these little automatic black boxes were very useful for pilots who might have lost their way across the hump, and that sort of thing, to take a direction on.

RICHARD RUSK: I wonder if we could talk about Myitkyina, which was the only real sustained use of American troops there, and even they were limited. Merrill's Marauders--

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: Talking about personal illnesses in CBI.

DEAN RUSK: Well, there was always malaria, so we had to take malaria suppressant pills all the time. That caused us to turn yellow in color, but we knew we were carrying malarial bugs around in us because the mosquitos all were infected with malaria and there was no way of keeping from getting bitten by mosquitos. Then, there was the ever-present problem of dysentery. In my own case, I had a mild form for the two years I was out there. Apparently this mild form helped to fend off some of the more dangerous forms. We usually were dealing with some kind of case of the squitters the whole time we were there. When you have several hundred million Indians urinating and defecating in the open air all over the place, the very dust and the air you breathe have got all sorts of bugs in them. On the whole, I stayed--I don't recall that I was ever hospitalized out there for any illness.

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: --up the Burma Road.

DEAN RUSK: Building the Burma Road was a fantastic problem from the engineering point of view because of the terrain, the torrential rains, the mud, the swollen rivers. Our fellows really kept building that road right in the middle of the worst kind of monsoon weather and it was just a miracle. I drove that road once myself in a jeep.

RICHARD RUSK: You drove it one time?

DEAN RUSK: Well, parts of it more than once, but I drove the entire length of once. It was just astonishing what had to be done to put a road through that kind of country. But, they did it. It's curious that we never used the road for the purpose for which it was built.

RICHARD RUSK: We've got that on another set of tapes. Did they have--

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: --Parts of that road, our fellows would be using bulldozers with a piece of armored plate in front of the drivers because the Japanese were sniping all over the place. It was a very large undertaking

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: --Degree of idealism with Japanese effort to establish their own sphere of influence in the Pacific. They had a term for it?

DEAN RUSK: The All-Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.

RICHARD RUSK: Was there a degree of idealism there that meant something to their own people, say, comparable to what you encountered in Germany with your young friend over there and a lot of the younger people--

DEAN RUSK: I just didn't know enough about the Japanese of that time. Now, from an economic point of view the Japanese have just about established an all-Asia prosperity sphere.

RICHARD RUSK: They lost the battle, but won the war.

DEAN RUSK: --from an economic point of view. The attempt of their warlords to take over that program and make it a military empire is the thing that caused all the trouble.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: Most of the American activities in Burma were in northern Burma where a good many American missionaries had been working and where tribes like the Karens and the Kachins didn't think all that much of the Burmans further south. We had good cooperation from these northern tribes, the Karens, and the Kachins, and people like that. And there were a number of American missionaries up in there that helped us with information and knew the country.

RICHARD RUSK: Stilwell was out in the bush quite a bit, was serving in the front lines or up close to the front lines with his various efforts and undoubtedly a lot of staff responsibility fell upon you. You mentioned earlier that you personally authorized an airdrop to Vietnam in his absence. Can you give some other examples of things that you personally had responsibility for

in the absence of Stilwell? Or given his willingness to delegate things to you, just how much responsibility did you have over there?

DEAN RUSK: Well everything you did was in his name. And part of the art of the matter is to know when you should go ahead and act and when you should refer things to him.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you catch it from both sides that way with Stilwell?

DEAN RUSK: I never was reprimanded by Stilwell for exceeding my authority. Now, there may have been moments when he may have thought that I had, but I never had that problem with him. He expected me to be a take-charge staff officer and I tried to be that kind of a staff officer.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he reprimand you the other way?

DEAN RUSK: No. Although I did let one telegram get out of our headquarters. I didn't see it at the time. When Merrill's Marauders came down with typhus we found that we could treat these fellows quite successfully up in the Twentieth General Hospital, up in Assam, with air conditioning. So they sent back word to Delhi that they needed more air conditioning units. The Chief Surgeon of the theater back in Delhi, a G-4 apparently, sent a message back saying "We don't have any." Well, Stilwell sent back a stinging message to General [Daniel I.] Sultan, who was his deputy in Delhi, saying, "You and I both know where air conditioning units are. I want them up here immediately." Now General Sultan was furious when he learned what had happened because he knew that we could tear out any number of air conditioning units in Delhi and get them up there to help these fellows get over typhus. So we got them up there right away. Well that's the kind of message that will slip through sometimes when you know that if you had seen it you would not have let go through.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: Now, the China-Burma-India theatre was in effect a large contingency thing. We had to be seen making our best effort to get supplies to China and to keep China in the war. We also were trying to be ready to give substantial support to the Chinese if, in fact, at the end of the war the Japanese armies in China continued to fight even though Tokyo might have surrendered. Fortunately those contingencies never materialized. In a sense building the Burma road, for example, was about like building the Alcan Highway. We might have needed it. In fact, we didn't, but at least we were working on it. See, we were pretty desperate in '41 and '42 to try to find some kind of road into China. I flew over the Himalayan Mountains, flew over Afghanistan, and studied the maps out of that area very carefully looking for any kind of a route into China. It was just tough to find any, and this Burma Road seemed to be about the only feasible thing that could be done to get supplies in there because the Chinese were pitting down large numbers of Japanese forces in China while [Douglas] MacArthur and [Chester W.] Nimitz were coming across the Pacific.

RICHARD RUSK: Talking about Myitkyina for a minute, where were you during that campaign? Were you in New Delhi, or, or here and there?

DEAN RUSK: I probably was here or there, traveling around a good deal. You see, Myitkyina was a key juncture to communications spot for any kind of a road into China. It had an air strip, which was of considerable importance to us. There was also a rail line that made its way up to Myitkyina from the south, so it was a fairly important point to take. When General Stilwell took it, he took it in advance of the plans that had been laid by Lord Louis Mountbatten and others, and he sort of surprised Lord Louis Mountbatten by the capture of Myitkyina.

RICHARD RUSK: His comment upon landing at the air field was, "Boy will that burn up the Limies." The literature I read about Myitkyina was a really desperate thing on the part of "Galahad"--on the part of the Marauders who had been in combat for some time and who really overextended at the time they made their march. And there was a need of Stilwell to drag people out of the hospitals and take cooks, and transport people, and new replacements from the States who had not received any training and just stick them in there to try to hang on and take that thing. Were you part of the staff?

DEAN RUSK: No. I didn't staff out the actual operation of Myitkyina. Fortunately the Japanese, when they dug themselves in at Myitkyina, dug themselves in to protect the town and not the air field; so we were able to take and use the air fields substantially before we had reduced Japanese resistance in Myitkyina. I landed fairly early at the Myitkyina air field when it was taken and the Japanese were still holding some strong points inside the town. It was a pretty battered and beaten up place because it was subjected to an awful lot of artillery.

RICHARD RUSK: Stilwell came under a lot of criticism for that particular part of the mission. I have some British comment on him.

DEAN RUSK: In retrospect, General Stilwell demanded more from Merrill's Marauders than that number of men can sustain over a period of time. He had been trying his best to get two divisions of army troops from the United States out there and that was turned down. So he, in effect, abused the Merrill's Marauders by expecting more of them than they could take. I think that has to be said. But, he enjoyed his wicked tongue. It wasn't really representative of the man himself, deep down inside, but he enjoyed it. He sort of felt that that was part of the role he was playing out there. When he first walked out of Burma, instead of alibiing or anything like that, he just said, "We got the hell beat out of us. We've got to get ready and go back." And he had some staff people, personal staff, who encouraged him to use these smacking remarks. He had an appreciative audience in some of his personal staff. They should have tried to tone him down a little on things like that.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you have to do that, or try it, as part of your commission?

DEAN RUSK: I tried to keep that sort of thing out of all the cables that I sent. He never pulled that kind of language on me. He treated me with a good deal of, shall I say, dignity.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you like Stilwell?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. I liked him. You see, Stilwell had, during those years he had served in China before the war and through his own studies, he had developed a very great affection for

the Chinese people. He really did respect the Chinese people. And he was convinced, for example, that Chinese soldiers who were well-trained, well-equipped, well-led, would be very good soldiers. So it really burned him up when he saw some of the treatment that the Chinese people were getting because of corruption, and ineptness, and inefficiency, and things like that, in the Chinese government. He had no regard for the idea that the British should go ahead and continue to rule India at the end of the war. He was clearly in favor of an independent India. But he had a passionate interest in the common people of China. There's no question about it in my mind.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he teach you anything? Did you learn--Was he one of your mentors in the same sense that George [Catlett] Marshall, and Dean [Gooderham] Acheson, and Robert [Abercrombie] Lovett, and some of these other fellows were?

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: I think one lesson I learned from working with General Stilwell was that if you've got something to say, say it succinctly, to the point, and then shut up. Don't smother things in a sea of words. Later that was to be a primary requirement of George Marshall, but Stilwell certainly expected that and we learned not to waste a lot of words when we were trying to get things done.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, when General Stilwell was recalled, were you involved in that? Obviously he was replaced by some people you had to work for in turn.

DEAN RUSK: Over on the China-Burma side, that part of the theatre, continued under the command of General Dan Sultan, who had been the Commanding General of the rear echelon during my service there--a very fine, honorable officer--probably was too old to be a top combat commander. Then the China side was taken over by General [Albert] Wedemeyer who had been Lord Louis Mountbatten's Chief of Staff. But, I didn't get much experience with that divided theater because I soon came home to the Operations Division of the War Department.

RICHARD RUSK: After Stilwell's departure. You came home fairly soon after that?

DEAN RUSK: Yes.

DEAN RUSK: I might mention that during the latter part of my service of the CBI, a G-4 was Colonel William Gaud [Jr.], a lawyer from New York. He later became head of the foreign aid agency during my years. He was a very able, hard-hitting fellow with a lively tongue and occasional four-letter words. But we worked very closely together.

RICHARD RUSK: Colonel [Gordon Stifler] Seagrave and his Burmese nurses--

DEAN RUSK: Dr. Seagrave was an astonishing fellow. He had run a missionary hospital up in the northeastern part of Burma a good many years. He would try to treat anybody who turned up who needed treatment. Then, when the war broke out he was made a colonel and incorporated into the American Army, but he was a most unusual colonel; he had no notion of the military or

military discipline or anything of that sort. He performed some valuable services up there in northern Burma and made a lot of friends for the Americans. Some years later we had a problem with him because he was arrested by the Burmese government--this was after the war--for treating members of those dissident tribes up there--the Karins, Kachins, Shans, and things like that. So they arrested him and brought him down to Rangoon. Well, I worked out with the Burmese government to release him; let him go--

RICHARD RUSK: What year would that have been?

DEAN RUSK: --and come back to this country. Sometime during the Truman administration when I was Assistant Secretary. But he refused. He said, "I don't want to go home. I want to go back up there to my hospital." Finally the Burmese let him go back up there and he started practicing medicine again. But he was a very individualist kind of fellow.

RICHARD RUSK: Stilwell had a lot of respect for him.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Now some of the medicine he practiced was probably rather primitive; but when otherwise they would have nothing, whatever he could do for them was a big help. And his nurses were devoted to him and did a great job. His nurses were Burmese.

RICHARD RUSK: --R&R [rest and relaxation] in CBI for Dean Rusk and my dad just reported that he really didn't have any for two years. His first R&R experience was coming back to the states in '45 at Mills College.

DEAN RUSK: And then while I was out at Mills with your mother a telegram came in from the War Department ordering me to the Operations Division of the General Staff in Washington, which meant that I would not be returning to Burma. General Stillwell, by the way, had put me up for promotion to a One-star rank Brigadier General and I was turned down for the best of all possible reasons. The reason they gave was that since the war was coming to a conclusion they didn't need any more generals. (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: Oh, is that what they said? I'll be durned.

Pop, I've got a general question about World War II. Approximately forty to fifty million were killed in that war. We had major fighting in all parts of the globe and yet at the very end of the war it seemed almost as if nothing was settled. Certainly Germany and Japan were defeated and that ended the threat of totalitarianism. But right at the end of the war, here we are choosing up sides again. What effect did that have on you, do you think, the fact that immediately we were forming up into armed camps having just come through this terrific experience.

DEAN RUSK: Throughout my life my primary concern has been peace in the world. I have deeply regretted the casualties on all sides of every war in my lifetime, beginning with World War I. To me the institution of war as a means for settling disputes among nations is obscene: It's the principal blot on the human race. So, I've given a lot of thought in my day to the question of how you prevent war, how you organize a durable peace. There are some experiences along the way that have caused me to think one way rather than another. But I am completely convinced

that just wishing for peace is not going to bring it. I suppose if there were over four billion Quakers in the world we might have peace, but we don't have them. And even the Quakers are faced with the problem of what do you do when the armed battalions begin to march, because in the short-run the armed battalions will get what they want if nobody stands in their way. There is another, to me, curious thing about this business. When you talk about aggression against other countries, the appetite of the aggressor grows with the feeding; nothing is ever enough. The Japanese demonstrated that, Hitler demonstrated it, the Russians tended to demonstrate it. So, if I had to start from somewhere I would start from the United Nations Charter. I think it has in it--at a time when our minds and spirits had been cleansed by the fires of World War II--it has in it some pretty fundamental ideas and commitments, and in fact laws, that have a lot to do with how you maintain peace in the world. But it also--and my feelings on this have led me to agree wholly with George Marshall, who strongly felt that the use of force to settle disputes must always, always be the last resort and that every other possibility should be exhausted before one considers the use of force. I suppose we will never be in the situation, with more than 160 nations, where somebody isn't fighting somebody. But I do think there is a very good chance to prevent World War III, and thus far we have demonstrated almost forty years now without that kind of conflict.

RICHARD RUSK: When you were back there in CBI and in the '40s, how prescient were you in seeing the cold war tendencies that were about to unfold there, beginning in '45, really? I know there was probably a great deal of hope on our side that we would be able to cooperate in the post-world war with the Soviets and FDR personally thought he could work things out with Joe Stalin.

DEAN RUSK: Before FDR died he, himself, had had serious misgivings about postwar cooperation with the Russians as a possibility.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you see any of this coming--any of these terrific tensions that developed prior to the war?

DEAN RUSK: Well I was very much involved when I was in the Operations Division general staff at the end of the war. I was very much involved in some of the difficulties we were having with the Russians over the handling of Germany. I was very much involved indeed in such decisions as that we would not give the Russians a zone of occupation in Japan and repeat in Japan what we had been living through in Germany. After the war was over I was personally involved in many of the immediate problems we had with the Russians during that period of western disarmament following V-J [Victory in Japan] day. For example, the first case before the U.N. Security Council was about the Russian effort to keep their troops in Azerbaijan, the northwest province of Iran. If you ever see a television replay of Secretary of State [James] Jimmy [Francis] Byrnes sitting at the Security Council presenting our case on that matter, you would see a staff officer sitting behind him who was me. Then with the Greek-Turkish Aid Program, the Greek Guerrilla Affair, which was also before the United Nations, the coup d'etat in Czechoslovakia, the blockade of Berlin, the Korean War--So I had had an early deep experience with our problems with the Russians during that immediate postwar period.

RICHARD RUSK: At CBI did you ever volunteer for combat, and the second part to that

question would be did the lack of combat experience hamper your efforts or understanding of the things you had to do there as a G-3 for Joe Stilwell.

DEAN RUSK: Well we spent so much time with the forward forces, and remember we only had the Merrill's Marauders as a ground force, up in Assam with the troops. I don't think that had much to do with my ability to carry out my particular end of the job, which, after all, was war planning. It might have affected me had I been G-4 and had a little stronger sense for the actual needs of a fellow on the ground when he was needing supplies, a greater sense of urgency about getting him the stuff he needed and that sort of thing. But I don't think that affected my work. On one occasion out there, after I had been out in CBI for about a year, it seemed necessary to send a colonel back to Washington to get some things straightened out. So I tossed a coin with another colonel in our headquarters to see who would make the trip and he won the coin toss and was to make the trip. But then when his plane took off at Karachi it crashed and he died.

RICHARD RUSK: At takeoff?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be durned. Everybody on board the plane was killed?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Of course, you sort of valued the idea of getting a trip back to Washington in those days: a chance to see our families briefly and catch up on a lot of other things. So there was one that I thought I'd lost, but I won.

RICHARD RUSK: Jack makes a point in his letter [Jack Foisie] that the idea of an American officer surviving two or three years in CBI or any theatre was kind of slim. When you went over there did you expect to come back? How did Mom take all of that? That must have been a terrific strain for her.

DEAN RUSK: Well your mom took it in stride. She's quite a remarkable woman. I remember putting your mom and David, who was then very small, on the train in Washington for the train trip all the way back to Mills College. We had no way of telling. I'd been given that CBI experience out of the class of people who had been specially selected to go to Leavenworth for a ninety-day course for overseas duty. Out of that I was picked to go to CBI under General Stilwell. But I tried to keep in close touch with Mom and David. I would write frequently and sent them a good many snapshots, photographs of the surroundings: sent them a good many pictures that I had not taken, but just bought off the stands over there to give them some idea of where I was and what I was doing. Your mom would take David to the movies to see the newsreels of the war so he would get some impression as to what was going on. But, you know, we didn't--I didn't have any--

END OF SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

DEAN RUSK: --allotment on my salary to Mom and things of that sort.

RICHARD RUSK: Your salary was sent back automatically or deducted here?

DEAN RUSK: Sent to her automatically.

RICHARD RUSK: GI insurance, what would that have paid if--

DEAN RUSK: \$10,000. (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: --in a case where you were--

DEAN RUSK: I've still got it.

RICHARD RUSK: Oh, is that right?

DEAN RUSK: I've paid much more than \$10,000 in premiums, but at any given moment it seems to be better to keep it going than to just toss all that away. So I've still got that particular premium, policy.

RICHARD RUSK: My life insurance friend tells me I'm worth more dead than alive. Did you think you were coming back? Did you give much thought to it? Do guys wrestle with those kind of things?

DEAN RUSK: I didn't really give much thought to it. I didn't give much thought to it. There was a war that had to be fought and won. I had to do what I was told to do. When I was ordered to go back to G-2, War Department general staff, I was then the Assistant Operations Officer to the Third Division on the west coast. My general, with my full support, did his best to resist this transfer. When I got back to Washington I learned that his effort to resist it guaranteed that they would insist upon bringing me back there. Had I been with the Third Division during the war, it is very possible I would have not have survived.

RICHARD RUSK: That's the group that went through Bataan and Corregidor?

DEAN RUSK: No they went through North Africa, Sicily, Italy, the campaign in France, and so forth.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: When I was sent back to Washington I was then a captain in the Third Division on the west coast. Most of the other captains in the Third Division were sent to the Philippines. This was before Pearl Harbor. And of course most of them were on Bataan and Corregidor.

RICHARD RUSK: I take it there wasn't a great deal of ambiguity about whether or not we were

right to be in CBI or right to be fighting that second world war. When General Marshall sent his memo out advising all the commanding officers of these various units to give them a talk about our reasons for fighting that war and make sure that morale was good and that we all understood what we were doing, you felt that it wasn't really all that necessary, that men fight for each other because of unit morale and their devotion to each other.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, I don't believe that these great generalizations have much to do with troop morale on the battlefield. I think it's unit morale, your relations with your own buddies, comrades, peers, and the fact that you simply find yourself in a situation and you have to fight to get out of it. Marshall was concerned about that point though, and tried to do things to improve morale from that point of view. But I thought much of the effort was sort of misguided or pointless. For example, when I was a company commander in the Thirtieth Infantry, the [Pacedio?] Regiment sent me a stack of cards and told me to give twelve lectures to my company on these political issues. Well, I had been a professor in college on such matters, so I looked at these twelve cards and I gave my company a lecture. And I went over to the regimental headquarters to see if they had cards for the next lecture and they told me that the cards they had sent me were for the entire twelve lectures. No, I think the record that Hitler had already made before Pearl Harbor and the fact of the attack on Pearl Harbor pretty much clarified things. Although the last time I looked at the figures the desertion rate in World War II was higher than it was in Vietnam. Of course in World War II you had many more places to run to than you did in Vietnam.

RICHARD RUSK: But there was a good feeling of common purpose.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. And the general public supported the war effort quite well. I'm sure there was cheating on rationing and some profiteering and things like that, but on the whole there was pretty strong public support for this world war.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you have some sort of feeling of deliverance, having come through a big war experience in which millions of people were killed? Did you find yourself thinking all types of deep-seated thoughts?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I think in view of some of these instances I have talked about, I have always had a little feeling that I have been living on borrowed time since World War II. On at least two occasions my chances were fifty-fifty and I won both of them, or at least they came out in my favor. But there were other situations of danger, so I had a little feeling that I was fortunate to have survived the war and that any time I've had since then has been sort of a free ride.

RICHARD RUSK: Did religion play any factor for you over there?

DEAN RUSK: No. Did I tell you about the little incident involving the letter I wrote my father about becoming a colonel?

RICHARD RUSK: No.

DEAN RUSK: Is the tape on?

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. Do you want it on?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. When I was promoted to full colonel out in the CBI theatre I sat down and wrote my father a little note just to tell him about it. And I must have made some snippy remark about my grandfather, who had been a colonel in the Confederate army in our civil war, because my father wrote me back a little note to remind me that one must always respect those who fight for what they believe in. And you know, that was the last note I had from my father. But I wrote him back to tell him I had not meant to cast any aspersions on my grandfather. But he died while I was in the CBI theatre and I was not able to get back to his funeral.

RICHARD RUSK: You received that word by letter, did you?

DEAN RUSK: By telegram. Maybe through the Red Cross, I'm not sure.

RICHARD RUSK: Then, did the CBI experience and the World War II experience as a whole affect you as a person: your goals, your values, your plans for the future? Did it have a dramatic influence on you?

DEAN RUSK: I think it was not so much the experience of the CBI theatre itself as my reactions to it or reflections upon the events that got us out there in the first place, beginning with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. As a student I put in an enormous of time studying every detail of that Manchurian incident, including all the U.N., the League of Nations reports, and things of that sort, because I had a feeling that something very important had happened. So I was deeply affected by the succession of events during the thirties which led my generation of students down the trail into a World War II which could have been prevented. The CBI experience was simply a demonstration of what that combination of pacifism and isolationism and indifference, that had been such a major part of the American thinking during that period, what its consequences had been. When Secretary of State Henry [Lewis] Stimson, at the time of the Japanese seizure of Manchuria, felt that something really ought to be done about it. But apparently President Hoover pulled on his coattails and wouldn't let him do anything about it. So he simply announced the Stimson Doctrine that we would not recognize any situation brought about by the illegal use of force. Then when Mussolini moved into Ethiopia, I remember the Senate Foreign Relations Committee would not even let Cordell Hull make the statement that if the League of Nations decided to impose sanctions on Mussolini we would not frustrate those sanctions by insisting upon our right to trade as a mutual power. He wouldn't even go that far. So I had all sorts of concerns with the affairs that led up to the outbreak of World War II.

RICHARD RUSK: You've given your impressions of people like General Stilwell and some others you served with in CBI. Any other personalities of that period? [Claire Lee] Chennault you have talked about. Any of these other people that you knew personally and have some observations on? What about [Orde C.] Wingate? Did you have any dealings with him?

DEAN RUSK: Not directly. I'm not sure that I actually ever met Wingate.

RICHARD RUSK: Apparently when he was killed the British were so shaken by the fact that he

died that they wouldn't release the news of his death. I think that his widow back in England finally put out a little obituary notice in the paper and so the word got out that way. They were so shaken by the loss of Wingate.

DEAN RUSK: Wingate was a kind of a spooky fellow personally. At the time out there we thought he was trying to become the Lawrence of Arabia of World War II. His activities did not play a significant part in the war, actually--the so-called Chindits, because they had no serious military objectives to accomplish. They would go in there and horse around on air supply and then come out after a few weeks. They really didn't contribute much. And when we had to use aircraft to support them, when we ourselves were very short of aircraft, it got to be a bit of a burden. I was sitting in my office in Delhi one day and there came across my desk a copy of a telegram that had been sent from one of our stations up in Burma signed Brown. Well actually all of the telegrams sent out of that particular station would have been signed Brown, the commanding officer's name goes on all of them. Well this was addressed to Lord Louis Mountbatten and it was a long telegram that just gave him hell about the condition of British hospitals and British services in Burma. And it was signed Brown. So I knew immediately I would be hearing from Mountbatten on this one--or we would be hearing from Mountbatten. And sure enough, here is a telegram from Mountbatten asking for an explanation of this telegram. Well as it turned out, Lady [Edwina] Mountbatten had been visiting in Burma and she had seen these miserable conditions. And her telegram had started out: "To Lord Mountbatten from Lady Mountbatten." And the signal people had said, "Oh, poo, there's something wrong with that," so they knocked off the "From Lady Mountbatten" and just let it go addressed to Lord Mountbatten signed "Brown." Well, Lord Louis, when he learned that the telegram was in fact from his wife was a pretty good sport about it. He was really burned up when it first came in.

RICHARD RUSK: --had dinner with Chiang Kai-shek on two occasions with General Sultan in China. Any impressions on the evening, impressions of Chiang?

DEAN RUSK: You can find many faults with Chiang Kai-shek. He had done a rather astonishing job of keeping up some kind of resistance against the Japanese for ten years when the rest of the world was giving him no help. He is a tragic figure in that sense, that everybody else allowed the very institutions of his government to wither away underneath him and the economy of the country to go to hell, because he carried the full burden of that war against Japan for a decade before Pearl Harbor. Madame [Mei-ling Soong] Chiang Kai-shek, during the war period, was a charmer. She was intelligent, and good looking, and she was, in fact, their ambassador to Franklin Roosevelt and George Marshall. Marshall once told me that one of the ways he dealt with her was that she would go see the President then come on to him to talk about getting massive quantities of military supplies, including our very latest material, much of which we were in short supply ourselves. And Marshall said that he kept in his bottom desk drawer a list of surplus that we didn't need any more: a lot of it just plain old junk. And Marshall would turn to her and say, "Well, we may have some problems with some of these items. Let me see what we can do." And he would get out this list and offer her this and offer her that, and usually she would go away pretty happy. There was one exchange that I was involved with that showed a breakdown of common sense in war time. We got a telegram from the Joint Chiefs of Staff that a thousand light tanks were being loaded to ship out to the CBI theatre. Well now, we didn't need tanks in the CBI any more than we needed a hole in the head. And if they had that kind of

shipping tonnage, there were a lot of other things we preferred to have. So we sent back a cable protesting their sending these light tanks out there, that we didn't want them and need them. That that was not tankable country, in that sense, and yet they insisted. And those tanks arrived in Calcutta and we had to unload them and put them in a big field outside of Calcutta, where they sat and rusted and were picked up as scrap iron at the end of the war. When I got back to Washington I poked into that a little bit and found out that some Congressional committee, maybe it was the Truman Committee, was visiting out in the west somewhere, Nevada or somewhere, and they came across this field of tanks. And the committee asked the officer there, "What are these for?" And on the spur of the moment he said, "Those are for the CBI theatre." And so, by George, they were ours. And they sent them to us whether we wanted them or not.

RICHARD RUSK: --U.S. mail to the CBI.

DEAN RUSK: We got pretty good mail service. I'd get letters from Mom in maybe ten days, two weeks, time. I suppose they came out by air. But mail service was pretty good.

RICHARD RUSK: --did you strike some alliances with the Chinese communists, the Red army, and encourage Chiang Kai-shek and the communists to form a stronger joint cause against the Japanese? American initiatives in that regard? Go ahead, Pop.

DEAN RUSK: Well the actual contacts with the communists were handled out of Chungking. But I was aware of it, and aware of the general policy that we were trying to get anybody to shoot at the Japanese who were willing to do so. Just as I had authorized the dropping of arms and American cigarettes to Ho Chi Minh down in Vietnam, so that we would have been glad to see the Chinese communists take a more active part against the Japanese and, in fact, they did. I suppose they too were waiting for the end of the war since they could also hear about MacArthur and Nimitz coming across the Pacific.

RICHARD RUSK: Apparently they offered to fight under Stilwell--not necessarily under Chiang, but under Stillwell--and make common cause more so than they did

DEAN RUSK: No. I'm not aware of that. [Tape off and on]--The Chinese communist under his own command or direction that would have been another major problem he would have had with Chiang Kai-shek.

RICHARD RUSK: About Myitkyina: go ahead.

DEAN RUSK: Overall the seizure of Myitkyina was very much of a plus, although Merrill's Marauders clearly had to pay the price for it.

RICHARD RUSK: What about the success of the Chinese communists?

DEAN RUSK: The Chinese communists might have caught the Russians a bit by surprise and they might well have been faced with a fait accompli. From their point of view, I suppose they saw no choice but to jump on board. But it's still true that when they received the surrender of Japanese forces in places like Manchuria they turned over those Japanese arms to the Chinese

communists. So they are not completely in the clear on that point.

RICHARD RUSK: Why would they have made the agreement with the Americans to support Chiang Kai-shek and recognize him after the--Were there other reasons on the other side?

DEAN RUSK: Well that agreement was made while we were still fighting Hitler. I suppose that Stalin was so preoccupied with the war against Hitler that he was willing to give FDR a few points here and there as tokens.

RICHARD RUSK: What about John [Paton] Davies?

DEAN RUSK: My friend John Davies was in a plane, an American plane, over Burma, and the plane got in trouble and they had to parachute. John had to parachute. And they landed among head-hunting tribes up there in northern Burma:

RICHARD RUSK: Eric Sevareid was on that same plane?

DEAN RUSK: That's right. Eric Sevareid, too. They were able to get out. And then later on John Davies was in a plane over the same area and that plane got in trouble. They had to get on their parachutes and move up to the door and John remarked, "Well at least I know these people down here." I have tremendous regard for John Davies, always have had. It was a great tragedy that he was done in in Washington for a period over completely false charges. I was a witness before the investigating boards that investigated this case. When the Eisenhower-Dulles administration came in they separated him from the service.

RICHARD RUSK: He was Stilwell's political analyst--political officer?

DEAN RUSK: He was a political advisor to Stilwell, along with John [Stewart] Service and some of the others. But my own hunch is that if Stilwell had lived and had testified before those boards that those charges would not have stuck. You see, a tremendous controversy developed over China matters after the loss of China. Everybody was trying to find "who lost China" as if it were ours to lose. Chiang Kai-shek, if anybody, lost it; or the war lost it. There had been a century of pretty warm relationship between the Chinese people and the American people. We had sent all sorts of missionaries out there and they established schools and hospitals. Rockefeller Foundation had built the Peking Union Medical College. Harvard was in China and Yale was in China. There was a century of warm attitudes among the American people toward China. Now it might have been a bit patronizing on our part, but nevertheless, it was there. So when the communists took over, we had some of the feeling of a jilted lover: Here the Chinese have turned against us. And that was pretty hard to take. And that helped feed the fires of controversy back in that period.

RICHARD RUSK: --especially about the early part of the war over there when the British were defeated at Singapore and Burma and all over that part of the world. I think [Winston Leonard Spencer] Churchill called this the greatest and most prolonged capitulation in British history and they had a hard time turning that around and getting the troops back to the point where they felt like they could fight the Japanese. And one of their commanders over there, I think it was Slim,

said that, "Our troops are just plain afraid of the Japs." It was a hell of a problem. To what extent did those early reverses really complicate your efforts and Stilwell's efforts with CBI? Was that a major problem there?

DEAN RUSK: The British in Malaysia, the French in Indochina, the Dutch in Indonesia, the Americans in the Philippines, simply were not prepared to meet militarily the Japanese military thrust in those areas. Part of it was the lack of modernization of arms or even the modernization of strategy. The big guns in Singapore were pointed in the wrong direction. They were pointed out toward the sea and the Japanese came into Singapore from the north by land. So that it was simply a case of not being ready for current military effort the Japanese were in position to make. And so there were very large losses. One of the most tragic ones was that Churchill had diverted an Australian division that was on its way to the middle east--diverted it into Singapore just in time to be captured. And that put great strains on Britain's relations with Australia at that point. The forces in Burma had almost no capacity for any real defense of Burma because they were there, more or less, to give them minimum support to colonial rule. They weren't there to fight the Japanese or anybody else.

RICHARD RUSK: --about the operation of the Burma-Assam Railway and the fact that American railroad battalions took the operation of that thing out of Indian hands and began to run it on their own. What was the extent of your involvement in that?

DEAN RUSK: I was heavily involved in that because all the supplies that went into China during that period were landed in Calcutta and had to be moved by train from Calcutta up to Assam to the airfields where they could be loaded and moved into China. They had this long, winding, narrow-gauge railway that had been run in the most casual kind of fashion for decades, and so many little things that drove you nuts. For example, when the train stopped to take on water at a water tank, they would use a hose about the size of an ordinary garden hose to put the water in the train, so it would take several hours to put water on the train instead of having a huge thing to just throw the water in there almost all at once. When they had to cross a river by barge, they would draw the barge up along the dock, alongside of it, so that you put your cars on your train one at a time, cross-beam on the barge. Then you'd go to the other side and you'd unload them the same way. Instead of having barges that would be pointed into the dock, and rails running along the length of the barge so you could put on five or six cars at the same time. And then it was customary for the Indian drivers of these trains, when they got to their home somewhere up along the way, they'd just stop and spend several hours with their family. So the tonnage on that railway was atrocious. So we finally began to operate them ourselves and quadrupled the tonnage almost overnight. Now there are one or two incidents that didn't help very much. When our fellows would just turn on the steam and let her roll, there were one or two cases of trains running off the track and things like that because of this old dilapidated railway. In effect, the infrastructure out there in that part of the world was almost literally nineteenth century in character. So we had to work pretty hard to make things more efficient and moving tonnage was one of our primary responsibilities. I did go out to the Red Fort one day in New Delhi where a huge crowd had gathered to watch the very, very tall Viceroy of India pin a Victoria Cross, British highest decoration, on the widow of a Gherka soldier. And this tiny little woman must have been not much more than four feet tall was standing there getting this decoration from this very, very tall Viceroy of India. It was quite an impressive affair.

RICHARD RUSK: --that the prolongation of World War II worried George Marshall and he thought if this happened that it would have a bad effect upon institutions of American democracy. What was he driving at there?

DEAN RUSK: Well, he and I were on a trip somewhere--a good chance for a bull session--and in the course of it I referred to the dispute we had had with Winston Churchill in World War II as to whether we should go in through Normandy or go in through the soft underbelly of Europe, as Churchill called it. Well actually it wasn't a soft underbelly, it was mountainous Balkan terrain. But anyhow, the Americans insisted on the Normandy landings and carried the day on that. And I asked General Marshall what was really in the minds of the American side in that dispute. He said, "It was very simple. We felt that we had to get the war over with as quickly as possible before the very institutions of our society melted out from under us and we could no longer sustain the war effort." And he talked about education and the professions and what was happening to industry and that kind of thing. And he said we felt that we could not delay the end of the war for postwar political reasons. And our view was that going through Normandy was the quickest way to bring the war to an end. But I don't know at what point "real" war weariness would have set in among the American people had it been a long and sustained war. There is always that problem, of course. [Karl von] Clausewitz, in his famous book on war which many people in uniform consider as their Bible, said something that many people in uniform these days seem to forget, and that is that Clausewitz talked about the social element in arms strength, that is the relations between the armed forces and the people of the country. That's something we have to keep in mind. I have reminded some of our people in uniform these most recent years that if we go down the road of bloated defense budgets and sharp cuts in social services that we could create an alienation between the armed forces and the very elements in the population on which they critically depend. They'd better watch it. And I have referred them to Clausewitz on this point.

RICHARD RUSK: That's a good point, Pop--. Britain and their colonialism in the early 1940s-- Britain maneuvered to regain her colonial possessions in Asia, yet moved to grant Indian independence in 1947, and shortly thereafter voluntarily gave up possession of the rest. Why this sudden about-face?

DEAN RUSK: The dramatic change in British policy on this can be explained in terms of two Prime Ministers. After all, Churchill was the one who said that "I did not become His Majesty's first Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire." He just wouldn't have any of this talk with Roosevelt, during the war, about bringing India and Burma and places like that out of the war as independent nations. But then, during the Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945, there was an election in Britain, and to everybody's surprise Richard Clement Attlee with the Labor Party won the election and became Prime Minister.

RICHARD RUSK: So the British people themselves went through a fundamental change.

DEAN RUSK: Well, at least they weren't prepared to back Churchill in peace, although they owe him an infinite debt for his work in wartime. So all of the factors that were steadily building up over time, over a period of thirty or forty years before the war, moving toward independence,

meant that the Attlee government moved promptly in that direction. It was Lord Louis Mountbatten who was made Viceroy of India and presided over the granting of independence to India.

RICHARD RUSK: --about the degree of callousness that men think they some times have to effect in war situations just to harden themselves against the brutality and the suffering, Pop, as contrasting Omar Bradley and Patton at one point.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. The commanders, in effect, have to steel themselves about giving orders that they know will result in the deaths of people. Sometimes that gets on their tongue in language that doesn't sound very appropriate and is not appreciated. But it's tough on commanders to move people to their death and they do have to harden themselves to it from time to time. Now, Omar Bradley had an extraordinary ability to carry out and accomplish his military missions with a deep concern for the fighting men who were doing the job. That attitude of his sort of got around among the troops and was greatly appreciated.

RICHARD RUSK: --Talking about the psychology of command decision-making and how the military itself might help train its officer corps to deal with decision-making that involves combat losses.

DEAN RUSK: When you're training officers to be leaders of troops you have to impress upon them very hard that one of the most elementary qualities of leadership is concern for your men. And you're supposed to do your damndest for your men, not only against the enemy but also against some of your own higher headquarters from time to time. That is a part of the training. Now in terms of actual combat, how that gets across and how it is reflected in the perceptions of troops as to the attitude of their own officers will vary greatly with the individual personalities.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you in touch with combat leaders over there--enough of them to kind of make a comparison between how they handled that, or to see the degree of agony they would have to go through?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I don't think--It's not something that is worn on one's sleeve so that you don't recognize it just in talking to somebody. But if you've got a first class commander, like a General Slim, the British head out there in Burma--

RICHARD RUSK: How well did you know Slim?

DEAN RUSK: I knew him pretty well. No question that he had sorted these things out and that he had a real concern for his men, but he also realized he had a fighting job to do and that he was going to try to get it done. For many decades before World War II China had claimed a considerable part of northern Burma. So when Chinese troops came into Burma to help out there were those on the British side who felt that the Chinese troops were bringing their boundary stones in their knapsacks with them.

RICHARD RUSK: You flew these guys home at the end of the war?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. And so to get over that problem we flew the Chinese troops back to China at the end of the war so they wouldn't stick around and occupy northern Burma on behalf of China.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: You had to use C-46 aircraft rather than the old DC-3s because on the DC-3s the wiring for the aircraft ran below the floor and when these animals would urinate that would short out the wiring. On the C-46s the wiring ran along the sides of the airplane. We hauled a good many animals across the hump. There were times when we had to crack down on Chiang Kai-shek. For example, at one point he wanted us to use such tonnage as we had to fly Chinese currency across the hump. Well, that would just multiply the runaway inflation they were already having. It would make no contribution to the war effort, so we simply refused to do it. A lot of bargaining goes on in trying to allocate such short tonnage. [Tape off and back on] During the war the various theatres of operation were given various specific boundary lines. And the boundary line that separated the CBI theatre from MacArthur's theatre ran along the Chinese coast. Well, on one occasion some of Chennault's planes got down to the coast and went off shore and bombed some Japanese ships offshore. When MacArthur heard about this he sent a very stiff message to Stilwell complaining about this unauthorized intrusion into his, MacArthur's, theatre. Stilwell simply sent a short cable back to him saying, "Keep your shirt on, Doug." (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: Ah, that is funny.

END OF SIDE 2