INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL J. LAWTON COLLINS

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Goldberg: This is an interview with General J. Lawton Collins, former Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, in the Pentagon, Room 5C 328, on July 2nd, 1981. We have a prepared list of questions for General Collins and he will speak to these, initially. General Collins:

Collins: I am happy to be of whatever help I can be, Dr. Goldberg, and glad to see you all. I think the best thing to do would be to start right in on these questions. The first one asks what were my views on and what role did I play in the development of the National Security Act of 1947. I played a small role in the development of this particular act. Actually, Larry Norstad of the Air Force, then the Army Air Forces, represented the Army in those days. He was a very good friend of mine and a very able man. And, of course, Forrest Sherman, whom I thought was the ablest Navy man that I knew in that period, represented the Navy. So I didn't play any great part in the development of that particular act. However, I was always very much interested in the question of unification. When I came back from World War II, I was assigned as Chief of Staff for General Devers in the Army Ground Forces. But General Marshall, whom I had known very well and had served under when he was Assistant Commandant at Fort Benning, Georgia, years before, asked me to represent the War Department on both the problems of unification and universal military training (UMT). So, during this early period, I worked on the unification problem and presented to the

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Congress the Army's initial plan for unification of the Armed Services. Larry Norstad later took over along with Forrest Sherman in trying to meet some of the Navy's objections and to iron out the difficulties that we had run into. So, I played really a very small part in this particular development.

Goldberg: What was your view of the National Security Act as subsequently passed by the Congress? How did you react to it?

Collins: Well, generally speaking, I favored it. But there were a lot of loopholes in it that didn't quite meet the proposals that the Army had in mind. And incidentally the plan that I had submitted in outline form only, the so-called "Collins Plan," was not supposed to be the finished project at all. But it did represent primarily General Marshall's views on what the organization ought to be. And, of course, the Navy rigorously opposed this plan. When Struve Hensel took over to represent the Navy, he very shrewdly dubbed this the Collins Plan. They realized it would be rather difficult to take on General Marshall, but it was a lot easier to take a shot at me. There were many things that we felt were not good enough in the National Security Act, and we subsequently were able to strengthen it.

Rearden: What particularly did you find was a weakness of the law?

Collins: Basically, the National Military Establishment structure was not centralized enough and the Secretary of Defense, while he had great responsibility, didn't have the authority to put into effect the things that we felt were necessary. There was no Chairman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. There were a lot of other very important features missing from what we regarded as essential if we were really going to have unification of the Armed Services. The Navy countered with what we regarded as a superstructure. We were less interested in a superstructure of all the boards and committees

and whatnot the Navy wanted to have which had little to do with unification of the fighting elements of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Unification was what we and General Marshall were primarily interested in. Any other questions now on that?

Goldberg: Yes. During this period was it the Army impression that the Navy was really not only very much opposed to unification and trying to dilute the structure and its authority, but also that it really was rather frightened at the whole prospect and concerned about it's own future under such a reorganization?

Collins: Right. The core behind this was really not so much a fear of what the Army might do but the rising importance of the Air Force. And General Marshall had earlier given the Air Force much greater weight. It was practically put on a par with the Army Ground Forces in General Marshall's mind. And Tooey Spaatz, who was head of the Air Force at that time, really operated on a par with the Army Chief of Staff.

I think the Navy was concerned about the role of the carrier. Frankly, the Navy had great power with its Congressional grouping, particularly under Carl Vinson. They didn't want anybody to interfere with what the Navy was going to do. That was all there was to it. They didn't want any interference by anybody in what the Navy and the Naval Affairs Committees of the House and the Senate wanted to have done. And old Carl Vinson agreed with them. In other words, as he practically said, he ran the Navy according to Carl Vinson. Not only did he feel that way, but Ed Hébert, who was on the House committee at that time, felt the same way.

Rearden: Did you think Vinson felt personally threatened that he would lose his power?

Collins: No, I don't think that he felt threatened. Carl Vinson was a very powerful and a very able man in his own right. I don't think he ever felt

threatened in his own position. But as illustrative of the attitude of the congressional committees, it happened that Ed Hébert came from New Orleans, my home town. As we were preparing to present General Marshall's plan I naturally went around to see Hébert to explain to him what we were driving at. His reply was very short and to the point. He said, "You look after the Army, we will look after the Navy." And "we" was the term that he used. In other words, the Congressional committees were going to look after the Navy; we could do in the Army whatever we wanted to do. This illustrated, in my judgment, the close relationship that did exist between the Naval Affairs Committees of the Senate and the House and Carl Vinson and Ed Hébert, who later on became a very powerful figure.

Goldberg: Can we go on the Question 2?

Collins: I don't think that I have anything else on Question 1. Question 2 has several parts: what was your impression of the work of James Forrestal as Secretary of Defense between '47 and '49? How did he get along with the Army and specifically with my predecessors Ike and Bradley? Did you feel that Forrestal had a Navy bias while he was Secretary of Defense? Really, I never knew Mr. Forrestal on a personal basis at all. Of course I knew him, but I had no direct relationship with him to any great extent. I always thought that he was a very able man. You couldn't have known him without coming to that conclusion. But I also felt that he had been so converted to the Navy point of view that it was difficult for him to grasp what the Army was driving at. You all know that when the unification question came up the Navy had assembled a very able group of Admirals here in town and had organized a very clever defense against unification headed by Struve Hensel. Then Mr. Forrestal called in Ferdinand Eberstadt to help organize the Navy's counterattack. I did get to know Eberstadt fairly well later on and again I respected his ability, although I disagreed with

him.

One of the things that General Marshall had stressed in presenting his ideas on unification to me, and the Navy hopped on this with both feet, was his recognition, from long experience, that the real key was money. Irrespective of strategy or tactics or anything else, the real thing that counted in those days was how the money was going to be divided up.

Goldberg: Do you think that has changed?

Collins: No, not to any great extent. I think it is still the key question. And while you are all familiar with what General Marshall stated at that time in the hearings, it is very brief, and I'll read it. He said, "During the war, time was a compelling factor, not money," because he was given any amount of money that was needed. In fact, one of the amazing things to me was that at one stage when General Marshall was appearing before one of the committees, one of the members of the committee asked him, "General, are you sure you are asking for enough?" Now just imagine. That showed the confidence that those committees had in General Marshall as an individual and a man of tremendous integrity dedicated to a unified defense rather than the aggrandizement of the Army. And that was their question, "Are you sure you are asking for enough?"

Goldberg: Do you remember that when he was testifying, at the beginning of the big build up in the summer of 1940, he had to beg them not to appropriate any more money?

Collins: Yes, I have a vague recollection of that.

Goldberg: He said if you give us any more you are going to choke the cow. That is how he put it.

Collins: This little quote I think is worth recording in full. He said, "During the war, time was a compelling factor, not money. In peace, money

will be the dominating factor. Under the present system, two separate executive departments compete for annual appropriations. Each asserts its independent viewpoint before separate committees and subcommittees of the Congress. And each tends to seek the maximum appropriations for itself. Such a proceudre offers no assurance that each dollar appropriated buys the largest measure of protection for the Nation." Of course, I may be biased in my admiration for General Marshall, but to me he was one of the great men of our time. I had the great privilege of serving under him when he was the Assistant Commandant at Fort Benning. I got to know him very well, and apparently he had considerable confidence in me because he kept throwing extra jobs to me, at Benning and when I joined the War Department here. He was a great man and a devoted public servant, dedicated to the problem of trying to solve the difficult problems that he had with the services competing for money.

Goldberg: How did Forrestal get along with your predecessors, Eisenhower and Bradley?

Collins: I know very little about that, as of that date. Later on I can speak to his judgment of them. I will give you a quote from his diaries a little later on. Did I feel that Forrestal had a pro-Navy bias? I think he did but not to any inordinate extent. The fact that he had been Secretary of the Navy I think naturally caused him to favor the Navy. He knew more about the Navy than about the other services and while I don't think that he consciously went out of his way to favor the Navy, I think that he did inherently have a pro-Navy bias. But I don't think it deflected him from his genuine feeling of what he ought to be doing as Secretary of Defense. Now, number 3 here, if that is all...

Goldberg: Yes, that is fine. Thank you.

Collins: What is my impression of Secretaries Johnson, Marshall, and Lovett who

served while I was Chief of Staff? Well, I never had any great regard for Mr. Johnson, to be very frank. I know my experience and I think it was true of the other Chiefs. I did get to know Johnson very well, and I am confident that had I remained on as Chief of Staff and had he remained on as Secretary, we would have clashed more than we did. And I probably would have been relieved. There is one specific incident that I well remember. I, following General Marshall's thesis (I keep referring to Marshall and of his influence on me, but this is my own judgment in addition to anything that I may have learned from him) was a firm believer in maintaining close relations with the State Department people. I had a much higher regard for them and their ability than perhaps a good many other Army people because I worked with them a great deal. Doc (Freeman) Matthews and so many others were, in my judgment, very able men and I felt that we ought to maintain close relations with them. Again I trace this back somewhat to General Marshall because he had organized a small commmittee including himself and the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of State and somebody else I can't remember now. This committee met periodically to discuss our international problems, from the State Department point of view and from the point of view of the military. I went with Marshall to these meetings.

Goldberg: That would be SWNCC, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee.

Collins: Yes. That is right. I went with General Marshall to the first meeting of that group, which General Marshall felt was a very valuable little agency. So he believed always that instead of our thinking and operating on our own we ought to consult frequently with the State Department to develop our thinking from a broad standpoint. Years later, at one of the meetings of the Armed Forces Policy Council, which Johnson set up, I was present representing the Army. Some matters came up on which I felt the State Department

ought to be consulted, and I said so. Well, Johnson turned to me immediately and said, and I will have to paraphrase him now, "We will not consult with the State Department on this or any other matter without my permission." In other words he didn't want to have the State Department brought into this matter at all and that was his general attitude. Apparently he didn't trust the people in the State Department, he didn't like them, and he didn't want us going meddling with the State Department and he put his foot down right short (thud) just like that. General Marshall immediately corrected that when he took over as Secretary of Defense. So this represented Johnson's narrow point of view on the problem of correlating policy from a broad standpoint -- that is, in trying to correlate foreign policy with military policy.

Lovett I didn't see as much of, although I had considerable confidence in and admiration for him. He was a man of character and great skill, far above the level of Johnson. Lovett came from the same school as the great Secretary of War, Mr. Stimson, for whom I had considerable admiration.

Condit: How did you feel that Marshall operated as Secretary of Defense? You haven't covered the changeover from Johnson to Marshall.

Collins: Well, of course, I think that Marshall was a tremendous improvement. I knew General Marshall well, I knew what his thinking was, and he was in my opinion on the right line whereas Johnson always had a very narrow point of view. General Marshall always took a very broad point of view, and I thought the broad point of view was the better path to take.

Condit: Several people have told me they feel Marshall was a little bit over the hill at this time.

Collins: I don't believe so. Marshall's mind was still clear. He hadn't become aged, if that is what these people meant. Not by any matter of means. His mind was still clicking, his expression of what he wanted me to do and

his expression of ideas were perfectly clear. I never had any question about what he was thinking.

Condit: How did he react to the civilian personnel who remained on in Defense?

Collins: Well, I can't give you any clearcut answer to that. But as indicated by the fact that he wanted to have close relations with the various Assistant Secretaries of State, I think he was always ready to listen to anybody that had a new or logical idea with respect to whatever their proposals were. I never heard him say anything pro or con about Marx Leva, for example, or Jack Ohly or who was the third in that triangle?

Condit: McNeil.

Collins: McNeil. I never heard him say anything against him at all. Marshall was a very broad minded man who would listen to anybody with an idea that he thought made sense.

Condit: Was he easy to talk to?

Collins: Easy to talk to. A lot of people didn't think so because his appearance was austere, he was not given to camaraderie or anything of that sort. But in my own relations with him, I always felt perfectly free to speak. He encouraged people when he was in the Army to advance new ideas. Let me cite an example from the period when he was the Assistant Commandant at the school at Benning (the Assistant Commandant was the man who really ran the academic part of the school). General Marshall said he wanted published any student's solution to a given problem that varied from the standard school-approved solution. In other words, the student didn't have to agree with the school's solution. The students were encouraged to think on their own, and this was characteristic of General Marshall throughout. And then he would listen to people. I may have had a slightly privileged position with him but I'll give you an example, something he said to Captain Charlie Bolté (later General Bolté, a very able man) and me one day during an interim in one of our exercises. He said, "Now look, don't let

them (the establishment) in the event of a war in the offing, stick you on a staff job like they did with me. You get out in the field if you possibly can." Well, when as World War II approached the War College was closed, chiefly in order to release the students and instructors to join new divisions as they were being activated, I was temporarily attached to the Secretariat in General Marshall's office. Word got around that I was going to be stuck on staff duty with the Secretariat of the General Staff. I was constantly being told that General Marshall wanted to keep me on the Secretariat. I said not me. Finally, Colonel Ward, who was then the Secretary of the General Staff, said to me, "Collins, General Marshall has given me direct orders to assign you to the Secretary of the General Staff." I said, "Do you mind if I see him?" He said no, so I went in to see General Marshall and said, "Remember the time down at Benning when you told Charlie Bolte and me not to get stuck on a staff job?" He just roared. He said, "Well, OK, Collins, I'll let you go." But that was the kind of relationship that we had, not quite so austere as he was made out to be, at least with people whom he knew well. Shortly thereafter, General Fred Smith, an older man, was assigned to organize and command the VII Corps headquarters. Smith knew few younger officers to man his Corps staff. He asked Marshall to suggest someone to be his Chief of Staff. General Marshall advised Smith to ask me. After some hesitations I accepted, as I was anxious to get out of Washington.

Condit: How did the other Chiefs feel about your relationship with Marshall?

Collins: I don't think they ever felt about it one way or the other. At least I was never conscious of it.

Condit: Well, did they feel more secure when Marshall came in as Sec/Def?

Collins: I would think they did. I certainly did. Because I am sure, as I said earlier, had Johnson stayed on we would have clashed and I would have

been relieved. That is all there was to it. Because I would simply not have gone along with some of the things that Johnson was advocating.

Trask: Could I ask a question about Marshall's replacing Johnson, or more specifically the circumstances of Johnson's dismissal? What knowledge of that did you have at the time? Why was Johnson relieved?

Collins: Well, I really don't know, in all honesty. But I think that had to do with Johnson's relationship with President Truman. Inevitably Truman diverged from Johnson in their general relations. Each of them was out primarily for economy. They should have really gotten along well together because each of them, in my judgment, made the mistake of cutting back on the Armed Services at the wrong moment. But Johnson's personality was such that he probably finally irritated the President and he also was, in my opinion, shooting to be the next President of the United States. Mr. Truman was basically a politician and a good one. And as one politician to another, he was interested in maintaining his position as President of the United States and I think that that had a good deal to do with his final release of Johnson.

Trask: Were Johnson's toubles with Secretary of State Acheson a factor that you can recall; did you have any knowledge of that at the time?

Collins: Not any intimate knowledge but I did know that they were antipathetic, that's all. They were two totally different men. In my opinion, Acheson was far the abler and broader man of the two and it was inevitable, in my judgment, that Acheson and Johnson would clash.

Goldberg: Is it your impression that Marshall turned most of the administration of the Defense Department over to Lovett and concerned himself only with some of the top policy matters?

Collins: I don't know how accurate that statement is. But I believe that this was generally the case. Lovett really operated as Deputy to the Secretary

of Defense. Initially the Secretary of Defense didn't have a Deputy. I have forgotten now just when he got one.

Goldberg: It was in the revision of 1949.

Collins: '49. There was too much responsibility placed on the Secretary with not enough help. You see, the Navy had convinced the Congress and to some extent the public that they had better look out for this great General Staff which they said was modeled after the German General staff. Some people feared that it would take over the running of the government. This was never the thought of General Marshall or any of the people who were behind the unification of the services. But that was one of the things that was stuck up by the Navy to shoot at. Of course, the fact of the matter was that the German General Staff did a remarkable job for Germany. When you consider what they did from a military point of view in taking on the rest of the world, there was no question that the German General Staff was a remarkably efficient organization. That is, until Hitler interfered with it. The best help we had came from Hitler later on.

Goldberg: When leaving office and afterwards, Lovett was rather critical of the Joint Chiefs of Staff organization. Did he have any problems with the Joint Chiefs of Staff that you are aware of?

Collins: Well, I knew subsequently that this was true. But the source of it was never clear to me. I never could quite get what it was that Bob Lovett was skeptical of if he was skeptical with respect to the Joint Chiefs. It didn't seem to be the sort of thing that he would feel. But frankly, I don't know. I never really got to know Mr. Lovett on a personal basis at all, but I had considerable admiration for him as a man.

Goldberg: I think that brings us to number 4 and the budget. You have already partially answered that one.

Collins: Well, we followed the established procedures in the development of the

budget, and the Chief of Staff made the final recommendation for the Army to the Secretary of the Army, with respect to, first of all, what the organization of the Army ought to be. How many divisions should we be shooting for? Mr. Pace was Secretary of the Army during most of the time that I was Chief of Staff; I had three different Secretaries but Pace was with us the longest. Mr. Pace, who had been head of the Bureau of the Budget, was a very able man and we got along very, very well together. Our offices were immediately adjacent. We consulted daily; I doubt if a day passed that one of us wasn't in the office of the other one.

Most of our difficulties with the Secretary of Defense's office were with McNeil, who was the Comptroller for the Secretary of Defense. McNeil had been associated with the Navy. Our instinctive feeling, rightly or wrongly, was that McNeil, where there was any question, had at least a slight bias in favor of the Navy. Though I couldn't substantiate that at all, it was a feeling. General Bradley was Chief of Staff when McNeil first took over. McNeil appeared to be setting up a chain of command for the comptrollers from the Secretary of Defense's office right down the line and had a tendency to give orders and instructions to the Army Comptroller over the heads of the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army. Bradley finally put his foot down, I fully supported him, and we were able, I think, to stop that. But McNeil, a very able guy, was endeavoring to set up an independent chain of command for the comptroller. Now whether Forrestal had intended that or supported that, I don't know. Bradley insisted that McNeil go through channels. He had a tendency to go over Frank Pace's head and both Frank and I objected to that. But except for that one thing we proceeded along the normal staff lines, basing our requests for budget dollars on what we felt the tactical structure of the Army ought to be. So many divisions, so much artillery, so many tanks and

so on, the costs for which could be computed. And the great difficulty that all of the services had was that these recommendations had to be submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed them, and they always had a difference of opinion. We finally would come to some kind of a compromise after much slaving, and then at the end we would agree on a proposal to the Secretary of Defense. And after we worked on this for months, one day the order would come down and allocate the Navy, the Army, and the Air Force so many dollars. So frankly, to a large extent all the effort that had been made before was thrown in the wastebasket. The final decisions were not really based on good sound military reasons but on some kind of political, allegedly equitable, distribution of funds between the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. Unfortunately this was the case and it never did change.

Condit: It never changed even after Korea started?

Collins: No, not in this era we are discussing now.

Condit: '47 through '50?

Collins: Yes, most of the time that I was Chief of Staff up to the Korean War. When the Korean War came on it was imperative that we do certain minimum things in the Army which had not been done. And we were able to get more funds then.

Goldberg: Yes, but once again it was a matter of war as against peace time.

Collins: That's right.

Goldberg: In peace time money was the key factor. Would you have expected it to be otherwise in peace time?

Collins: Not really. Not until we had real unification, not as long as there were three separate departments. Not the least of the difficulties was that each of these departments appeared and defended its wishes before separate committees of the Congress. I would say, in reflection, possibly the best

thing that ever happened to achieve real Service unification was the unification of the Congressional committees in the House and the Senate. Until that was done, one couldn't get anywhere. That is where the real unification took place.

Goldberg: That's an interesting point to make, I think.

Collins: Yes. No question about that, in my judgment. Now the interesting thing is that after Carl Vinson became head of the Armed Services Committee he took a good deal of leadership in making unification effective through the budget. I will say that to his credit. Prior to that time it was hard to get anything by Uncle Carl, but thereafter he would listen to what I had to say and had a very important part to play. Also important was Sterling Cole of New York, a member of the unified House Armed Services Committee, who had been another great advocate of the Navy.

I would call your attention to the 1950 hearings on the reorganization of the Army and what I consider an extremely interesting colloquy between Secretary Gordon Gray and me. The question came up on the wording of the responsibilities of the Army Chief of Staff. I am going to refer to Hearings on H.R. 5794 before Subcommittee No. 2 of the Armed Services Committee of the House. I accompanied Secretary of the Army Gray, who was a very able and very fine man, incidentally, to the House hearings along with Colonel Kilbourne Johnston, Archibald King, and Lt. Colonel G. Emery Baya, who had done the spade work on the reorganization act. We clarified and cut out a lot of details from the old Army Act. The old law even prescribed the tables of organization and a lot of details that were hamstringing the Army. All of that was brushed aside and gotten rid of in these hearings. Let me quote from my autobiography. "No real problems arose in the hearings until we reached Section 204, which spelled out the duties of the Chief of Staff. It had always been the clear intent

of Congress and the Army to preserve civil control of all aspects of Army organization and operations. Ever since the Army Reorganization Act of 1903 under Elihu Root, the Army Chief of Staff had been solely a staff officer. He commanded nothing. This was in marked contrast to the status of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Air Force Chief of Staff, who commanded respectively the 'operating forces of the Navy' and 'the United States Air Force.'" Carl Vinson and some of the members of the old Naval Affairs Committee noted this difference.

Goldberg: The Navy hadn't acquired that function until 1945 when they merged the Chief of Naval Operations with the Commander of the U.S. Fleet. King was the first one to have that authority.

Collins: Yes. That's right. But the Chief of Naval Operations did have command of the fleet at that time, whereas the Chief of Staff of the Army commanded nothing, and never had commanded anything. Vinson and other members of the Naval Affairs Committee questioned me about this matter. So on their recommendation, particularly Vinson's, I reworded the applicable paragraph of Section 204 of the Army Reorganization Act to read, "The Chief of Staff shall preside over the Army staff. He shall be directly responsible (and the key word here is directly) to the Secretary of the Army for the efficiency of the Army, its state of preparation for military operations, and plans therefor. He shall transmit to the Secretary of the Army the plans and recommendations prepared by the Army staff, shall advise him in regard thereto, and upon the approval of such plans and recommendations by the Secretary of the Army, he shall act as the agent of the Secretary of the Army in carrying the same into effect. Except as otherwise prescribed by law, by the President, or by the Secretary of Defense, the Chief of Staff shall perform his duties under the direction of the Secretary of the Army." Now this was the first time that the wording stated that the Chief of Staff

shall be directly responsible to the Secretary of the Army for these various things. The reason for our putting in the word "directly" was because some of the Assistant Secretaries of the Army, very much like the Comptroller of the Secretary of Defense, had been taking over true responsibilities of the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff and issuing instructions directly to members of the staff. I vigorously opposed that. So I was responsible for having inserted the new wording, with the full support of Carl Vinson and particularly of Sterling Cole. And so that was written into the Act. Gordon Gray was just being relieved by Frank Pace, and I felt in loyalty to Gordon that I ought to call this wording to his attention. He happened to be away at the time; when he came back I called his attention to the fact that the proposed changes would make the Chief of Staff directly responsible to the Secretary of the Army. He immediately disagreed because he had some quite able Assistant Secretaries and they had begun to take over some of his duties in dealing directly with subordinates of mine, to which I objected. He let it pass for a while, but later, when the Committee considered the Act as a whole, he testified against the wording of this particular paragraph. To start with, the Committee agreed with him but when they asked me I told them the opposite. Then they agreed with me. So we had quite a friendly discussion about this, but to me it was very important. The Chief of Staff of the Army had to have direct responsibility to the Secretary for the combat organization and all sorts of things like that in the running of the Army. One former member of the Naval Affairs Committee fully supported me because what I had proposed was parallel to the responsibility of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Air Force Chief of Staff. This colloquy involving these members of the Congress and Gordon Gray and myself was very important. I think anybody who is interested in the Army ought to read those few pages of

testimony because they clarify the responsibilities of the Army Chief of Staff. And it's put in black and white: the Chief of Staff is directly responsible to the Secretary. He is not to be bypassed, but is directly responsible to the Secretary with no intermediate subordinates to interfere.

Condit: Did Pace agree with you?

Collins: Pace agreed with me. Actually, Frank and I never really had any real disagreements on anything during the whole period that we worked together. We had a very close relationship. That didn't mean that he was simply a yes man and just offhand agreed with my recommendation. But I don't know of a single major recommendation with respect to the organization of the Army or the conduct of the Army on which Pace and I didn't come to full agreement. Later, we became very close friends on a personal basis. Our families also became close friends, and we've kept in touch ever since.

Goldberg: We can move on Question 7, about close air support.

Collins: Before we go to that, I would like to comment on my relationship with General Bradley and General Eisenhower and to some extent my relationship with Mr. Forrestal and Mr. Forrestal's general feeling with respect to the question of reorganization of the Department of Defense. My judgment at the time was that Mr. Forrestal, in all of the preliminary discussions on unification, had more and more tended to take the Navy point of view. Frankly, without, I hope, being unduly critical of the Navy, they had given him a biased point of view with respect to the Navy versus the Army, or the Air Force, for that matter.

Goldberg: Especially the Air Force.

Collins: Especially the Air Force. And Mr. Forrestal had swallowed -- I hate to use the word swallowed, but that pretty well describes it -- the Navy line almost completely with respect to the relationship with the Army and the Air Force.

Goldberg: Would you say hook, line, and sinker?

Collins: Pretty much, but only initially. Gradually he came to realize that he had been given great responsibility but darn little authority to enforce his wishes. And here I would like to read from Ike's Diaries a little paragraph, which came out of the blue to me and may come out of the blue to you. I'm sure it came out of the blue to the Navy. This is on page 156 of The Eisenhower Diaries, which were edited by a very close friend of mine, Bob Ferrell of the Department of History at Indiana University. I'll read only the part that I think had application -- a diary entry on February 2, 1949. This was while General Eisenhower was acting informally as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the President's request. "Have had two days briefing in Navy Department. Interesting, and confirms impression that Navy now views its main mission as 'projection of American air power' against enemy. Control of the seas is not primary and exclusive function in this view. My idea of majority rule in joint chiefs of staff is out. It will not be accepted. Now I shall (at McNarney's suggestion) attempt to get president to appoint a president of the chiefs of staff and assign him to Forrestal. This may work; but I doubt that it will cure basic evil, which my scheme was intended to do. This evil is the freedom with which each service attacks any decision of the joint chiefs of staff or secretary of defense that it does not like. But anything would be better than what we have now. (This is the key paragraph now). Jim F. (Forrestal) is apparently highly discouraged. He exaggerates greatly the possibility that I will materially help in his task of 'unifying' the services. He blames himself far too much for the unconscionable situation now existing. He is obviously most unhappy. At one time he accepted unequivocally and supported vigorously the navy 'party line' given him by the admirals. Only today he said to me, 'In the army there are many that I trust -- Bradley, Collins, Gruenther, Wedemeyer, and Lemnitzer and Lutes, to name only a few.

In the navy I think of only Sherman and Blandy (who was a combat man on the navy side and whom a great many of us though should have been made Chief of Naval Operations) among the higher ones. Possibly Conolly, also." I have forgotten just what Conolly's job was at that time.

Goldberg: I think he was Commander in the Eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

Collins: Yes. And then Ike goes on to say, "It must have cost him a lot to come to such a conclusion." A very revealing quote. Ike never discussed that with me at any stage of the game.

Goldberg: Who was responsible for bringing Eisenhower in at the time as the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Collins: I would say the President was.

Goldberg: Do you think it originated with him? It wasn't Forrestal's idea at all?

Collins: Not that I know of, but it could have been. Forrestal may have had something to do with that.

Goldberg: Symington suggests that he urged it also.

Collins: Could have been. But I am not personally familiar with it. Ike didn't want to do it, I know. I think he says so somewhere along that line in these diaries. I would suggest that if you are not familiar with this diary of Ike's that you read two or three pages, 156 and 157 and 158. Let's see if Ike says anything about why he happened to be picked for the job. My recollection is that he didn't attribute it to any particular person.

Goldberg: Could we go on to number 7, on close air support, which is a major question? This was something that really came to a head during the Korean War period.

Collins: Yes. Well, of course, as the Chief of Staff for the Army I had to obey a President's directive. And I had mixed feelings to some extent. I am trying

to resurrect what some of my thoughts were at that time; mind you this was a good while ago and I wouldn't vouch for any intimate statement as to what my feelings were at that time. But basically, the Army people and myself always felt that we should not get embroiled in fighting on the ground in the continent of Asia. Now just when I had arrived at that conclusion I don't know. The debacle of the French in Viet Nam was subsequent to the Korean War. So therefore I have a little difficulty separating my views as of that period from the Korean period. But generally speaking most Army men with any knowledge of the Far East opposed putting Army troops on the ground on the continent of Asia. I had served in the Philippine Islands as Chief of Staff of the Philippine division; I had traveled in China, visiting Peking in 1933, I guess it was. I had traveled all up and down the coast there at that time, I knew something about the Far East and I had a feel for it. Now how much of our opposition to ground troops in Asia had been formulated prior to our entry into the Korean War, frankly I can't specifically state.

Trask: Would General Marshall have said anything about that after his stint in China? I mean from '45 - '47?

Collins: I am sure that he would have felt the same way, but I didn't talk to General Marshall about his experience in China. I can't recall anything to quote from General Marshall on this particular subject. And General Hodge, our Commander in Korea, was a personal friend of mine. He had served as my Assistant Division Commander in the 25th Division of the South Pacific during World War II. I had a general feel for him; he was a very competent field soldier. I was of course conscious of the fact that the North Korean forces were being built up to a really very powerful force at the same time that we were withdrawing our Army troops from Korea. General MacArthur went along with the withdrawal. We were leaving behind and supporting only

a constabulary, not a true fighting force, which was trained primarily for maintaining internal security in South Korea. We knew that this imbalance was gradually getting worse and worse and we feared the possibility that someday the North Koreans might attack. That is about as much as I can say with any confidence as to my thinking at that time. However, when the North Koreans attacked, General MacArthur called and told us about it. He got me on the telecast, which we had in the Pentagon, and described to me what the conditions were. He said that it was a critical thing and asked at once for authority to put some Army troops on the ground to try to stem this onslaught from the North. I told MacArthur that I couldn't authorize his sending a regimental combat team, that is, a regiment of infantry with some supporting units, over from Japan, but I would bring the question to Mr. Pace's attention at once. This was in the middle of the night or early in the morning. I recommended to Pace that we approve General MacArthur's request to send this RCT over to at least stem the tide until we could evaluate what might be done. President Truman approved immediately, Pace phoned me back, and I got General MacArthur directly on the communication system and told him that the President had authorized a RCT. He wanted a Division to go over right away and I said, "Well, we don't have that authority as yet, but we will talk tomorrow with the President," and we did that the next morning. The rest of it is spelled out pretty much in detail in my autobiography. I supported General MacArthur's request that we do something about the North Korean invasion. I knew enough of the Far East to recognize the importance of Korea, in addition to Japan, which we were supporting at that time. Under the conditions of the Treaty, Japan didn't have any military forces. The only way to protect Japan, which we realized would be somewhat of a counter to the Russians, was to support MacArthur both in Japan and in Korea. And I think

General MacArthur's recommendation was a sound one. There was no question in my mind that if we didn't take some action immediately the North Koreans would quickly defeat the small South Korean constabulary force, which had no air support, no real artillery, and that the country would be overrun and then we would be faced with a fait accompli. Whereas, if we took action promptly, General MacArthur felt that we could check the North Koreans and I agreed with that. So I recommended to Pace that we recommend to the President approval of MacArthur's request.

Goldberg: Could you speak to Question 7 now because it deals also with Korean War period? That is question of providing close air support for the Army and the differences between the Air Force and the Army on that issue.

Collins: There were no real differences between the Army and certainly the old Air Corps despite all that you may have read and heard about the fact that the Army didn't do anything about close support and didn't get any close support during World War II, in contrast to the Navy with its own close support. That is completely false. I, as Commander of the VII Corps of the Army, which led every major attack of the First Army all the way from Normandy to the Elbe, got top flight close support from the Air Force under Pete Quesada. We had an excellent close-support system. I used armor out in front of the attack once we made the breakthrough from Normandy. The 3rd Armored Division moved fast ahead of our infantry division. The only way I could keep up with them on the ground was to fly around in a little cub airplane, but we kept constant communication with them. We even put air controllers in the lead tanks. The Air Force each day would furnish a flight or more of airplanes that flew right over our columns as the latter went along. There was direct communication between the man in the airplane and the tank people on the ground. The airman would point out where the difficulties were developing and warn the

leading troops on the ground. The people on the ground, particularly our armor, would call for the air support. We would designate the targets to the airmen using red smoke, which was readily distinguishable against the background of the terrain. And since we would call for support only if the artillery couldn't clear out the opposition we knew exactly where we wanted the air force to strike. We knew exactly what was holding us up. So then frequently the airman in the plane would give the orders to the ground troops to fire the red smoke. The artillerymen who would have been shooting at this target would fire red smoke right on target. The air support planes could come right in and dive bomb that target. It was a perfect combination. We had the closest possible and most effective support between the Air Force and the Army on a perfectly friendly, cooperative basis.

Goldberg: How about in Korea?

Collins: Well, the same thing applied but maybe to a lesser extent. I had no personal knowledge of the details of that because I was involved with other things. But I am sure that they carried on the same general technique that we had in Europe.

Goldberg: But it was during this Korean War period that the Army began to add to its own air resources. They began to add a variety of aircraft under Army command and control as distinct from the Air Force, and in years after that there was a growing disposition on the part of the Army to have its own close air support aircraft. And much of this did stem from the Korean War experience.

Collins: Yes. Well, this must have been after the war. I personally have no direct knowledge of it, and I think that I probably would have opposed it.

Goldberg: Do you remember the Pace-Finletter agreements on the size of the aircraft that the Army actually could have and use?

Collins: Yes.

Goldberg: Those were steps in the direction of more and larger aircraft under Army control and operation.

Collins: But this was primarily, as I recall it, related to the range of the aircraft and their dependability in the air and things of that sort. I can't remember with authority on that subject, but I don't think the Army ever had the idea that it would take over the close support mission. We felt and I still feel that it would be too expensive if we were to try to assign to all Army units the same preponderance of close air that the Marine Corps was able to get out of the Congress -- of having so much close air support assigned to the Army constantly whether it was being used or not. We couldn't afford it. As a man who always believed in the broader outlook with respect both to money and functions of the services, I would have opposed trying to get for the Army the same quantity of close support aviation permanently assigned. I felt we could always get, and certainly during the war we did get from the Air Force, support when required. During World War II every day we would get word from the Air Force what they could allocate to us. The VII Corps was carrying the ball for the First Army, leading its major attacks. But the Air Force might have a mission to go in and bomb Ploesti or some other place a long way from the leading Army division and those long range bombers needed close support to proect them. I recognized that fact; I never objected when I saw those great squadrons of long range bombers going over. I applauded; this was going to help us later on. I recognized, and I think the Army recognized, that these bombers themselves needed close support aviation in order to get through the fighters on the German side. I felt the same thing was true throughout. There would always be a demand for close support aviation, but the United States couldn't afford to give every Army unit the close support that was an integral part of the Marine Corps.

Goldberg: It's true. The Marine Air Wings had about 250 aircraft apiece.

Collins: Yes, that's it. We couldn't afford it.

Condit: I understand that, but I am surprised that you weren't more aware of the Army-Air Force fight, the Army feelings that they wanted better air support and that the Air Force was unwilling to give better close air support during the Korean War.

Collins: I do not recall that we had any serious complaints during the Korean War, although I believe the system for coordinative, close air support was changed after World War II. After I retired I did not try to second guess my successors or members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I thought it would be a mistake to have done so. They had the direct responsibility and I no longer had responsibility. And I am sure of one thing -- authority should never be separated from responsibility. So, I was willing to accept the judgments of the senior people in the Army as to their needs without looking over their shoulder and saying, "Now look, during the war we did it this way, you fellows are all wrong."

Goldberg: Could we go on to Question 9 now? This has to do with General MacArthur.

Collins: As I have already said I supported MacArthur's view that we had to take action in Korea before it got too late. This had to do not only with the specific situation in Korea but in the relationship of the United States to Japan. Japan was not an ally, but we relied on her as a potential opponent to Russia, which was still the object of our concern. Unquestionably, this move in Korea was an extension of the gains that had already been made by the Russians who had taken over part of the Islands, I've forgotten their name.

Goldberg: The Kurile Islands.

Collins: Right. They had seized them and had never returned them to Japan, and that was a dangerous thing. So I certainly didn't want the Russians to have this Korean bastion, a good-sized land base on the continent of Asia, so

close to Japan. I hated to think about getting our troops involved there but there was no alternative to it at the time, and so we were in a sense stuck with a problem of supporting South Korea. And I favored the support of South Korea, much as I hated to spend the money there. Certainly the South Koreans were supplying the manpower, taking the casualties and so on. Otherwise we would have had to take more of them ourselves.

Goldberg: Did you support the move north of the 38th parallel?

Collins: Well, I wasn't asked whether I supported it or not because MacArthur just did it and that will always be a highly debatable question. Thinking back on it, I was certainly not enthusiastic about it. I disagreed with General MacArthur exceeding the authority that the President had given him in crossing the 38th parallel. I never did support it, I wasn't asked to support it, and I certainly didn't support his move to the Yalu. I knew enough about Asia, and I knew enough about the hordes that could be made available by the Chinese in opposition to that. I could appreciate why the Chinese didn't want us right up against the Yalu. I think MacArthur made a mistake from a tactical point of view when he divided his forces and sent Barr up to the Northeast and Johnny Walker up to the Northwest with the formidable Taebaek mountain range in between. All of that I thoroughly disagreed with. I think it was one of MacArthur's great mistakes, and he has to bear the responsibility for it.

Trask: Did you have any opportunity to express these views as these events were taking place? You said you weren't asked, but was there any other way that you could express these views?

Collins: Not as I recall it. I made five trips, if I recall rightly, to Korea during the period of the war. I knew Ned Almond and Johnny Walker personally.

I always felt that MacArthur made a mistake when he didn't set up one commander; I would have picked Johnny Walker. MacArthur didn't like Walker, who was not an engaging personality, but I've always said that his handling of his little reserve forces was nothing short of a masterpiece during the retreat. He had really only three first class units with which to plug gaps caused by Chinese attacks. He had the 5th RCT under Johnny Throckmorton, who was an extremely able man. He had another RCT of the 27th Infantry under a young fellow, Colonel John Michaelis, and Brigadier General Edward A. Craig's 1st Marine Brigade.

When I went up to Taegu the first time I found Mike Michaelis' command post in a culvert under the main road that led down to Taegu. The North Koreans were infiltrating on both sides. This young fellow was just as cool as a cucumber, it didn't disturb him one iota. He was the man who really saved the command post at Taegu. Johnny Walker shifted these three RCTs back and forth with great skill. He was never given credit for this by MacArthur or as far as I know by anyone else perhaps except myself. He was not an engaging man personally, but no question about his ability to handle the Eighth Army at that time.

Condit: General Collins, when you said that MacArthur exceeded his authority you are not referring to the fact that he crossed the 38th parallel?

Collins: No, no. But to go North to the Yalu. You see the instruction that the President gave him was that he would not have American troops close to the Northern borders of Korea.

Condit: And that is where I think MacArthur possibly exceeded the instruction, although he pointed to Marshall's letter of September 29th, saying that it gave him that authority.

Collins: But that wasn't the President's instruction.

Condit: But the President, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, wrote it as U.S. policy. And I believe you had something to do with that. That it was U.S. policy not to use American troops near the Northern borders. But MacArthur said that in his view it was policy, not an order.

Collins: Yes, but it is pretty hard to separate policy from instructions.

Condit: Well, when we interviewed General Carter he made an interesting point about that.

Collins: Carter?

Condit: Yes, Marshall Carter. He made the observation that when there is any ambiguity in an order and you think it is giving you what you should have, you don't question it, you take it.

Collins: Yes.

Condit: And he said in fact that General Marshall had told him that once himself. So I think there could be possibly some extenuating circumstance as to what MacArthur did in regard to the Yalu.

Collins: I think that is probably correct. There was certainly some potential defense of what MacArthur did.

Goldberg: There is another part of the question about MacArthur's relief, his dismissal.

Collins: I had nothing to do with that in the initial phase. It happened that I was out of Washington, I think either in Korea or Japan, when this matter came up. I was immediately notified of it, however, and I sat in on the final decision. I agreed that he had to be relieved. That's all there was to it. You can't under our system of civilian authority, with which I am in thorough agreement, contravene the instructions of the President.

It is just antithetical to my idea of what a military man ought to be doing, and so regretfully I agreed with the decision to relieve MacArthur. But I didn't initiate it.

Condit: What was Marshall's viewpoint?

Collins: Well, I can't say for sure but my understanding is that Marshall supported the President.

Condit: How did Bradley feel about it?

Collins: Bradley's view was the same. When I came back from abroad, I think it was Bradley who called me in with the other Chiefs. I know that I was called in and told either that the Joint Chiefs had been consulted, or were being consulted, by Secretary Marshall and that Marshall was considering recommending to the President the relief of General MacArthur. This was a Sunday morning it I remember rightly. When we met, it was the unanimous judgment of the Joint Chiefs that MacArthur should be relieved. He had exceeded his authority in his public statements, which were contrary to the President's directives, and frankly he'd just gotten too big for his britches, that's all. And the time had to come when the President had to exert his authority as the Commander-in-Chief and I supported that, reluctantly.

Trask: Can I ask what was your general opinion of General MacArthur before his dismissal?

Collins: Well, again I have to speak from my own personal point of view. I think MacArthur made some very serious mistakes as a military man in Korea. First of all he should have unified his command. He made a serious mistake when he had Almond in command of X Corps east of the Taebaek mountain range with Walker's Eighth Army west of the range. He tried to coordinate both

forces from a different country several hundred miles away. That was a definite military mistake. The second main mistake was that he should never have given Almond, who was his Chief of Staff and of whom he had a high opinion, a separate command. He didn't like Johnny Walker, and frankly I think that had a lot to do with his failure to put Almond under Walker's command, which he should have done with a mountain range between these two forces.

Goldberg: Do you think his attitude towards Walker was colored by the fact that Walker had been in the European Theater during World War II?

Collins: No, I don't think that that was a factor. I think, but I may be wrong, that Johnny Walker had to some extent a slightly abrasive nature about him. He was also a pretty independent guy and I think that that didn't sit too well with MacArthur. Really I don't think MacArthur knew Johnny Walker because as far as I know, until the Korean War came along, Walker had never served under MacArthur. He was in the European Theater the whole time. And there may have been some doubt at the back of MacArthur's head about these fellows like myself who came from the European Theater and had fought over there, although I had served in both theaters. He had a tendency to use older men who had served under him and in whom he had confidence -- that is human nature. For a variety of reasons then, I think that he was skeptical about Johnny Walker and he tended to favor Almond who was his Chief of Staff. He had a great deal of confidence in Almond, who was an able man. I had known Ned Almond thoroughly, in fact I succeeded him at Benning in charge of the Machine Gun Committee under General Marshall. So I knew Ned Almond, and we had very good relations.

The final mistake that MacArthur made was at the end when he realized that the Chinese were coming in with great preponderance of force. He then issued an order which frankly I don't see how he could possibly have ever believed would work. He ordered these two forces to join across a mountain range under terrible conditions. So unfortunately at the end, in my judgment, MacArthur made serious military blunders, totally aside from the political questions in which he went counter to the President of the States.

Goldberg: Can we pass on to number 10, which is about NATO?

Collins: Well, it is a long time since these events transpired. But let me say that I felt that Germany should be severely punished for what it did. I had thoroughly disagreed with their attitude toward the Jews, I had thoroughly disagreed with the way they handled their prisoners and whatnot. One of my outfits had captured Nordhausen, which you don't hear very much about but which was just as bad as some of their more publicized prison camps. Nordhausen was on the way to the Elbe. My armored division overran it. I personally went into some hangars that were filled with prisoners. They were Eastern Europeans, probably mostly Jews, although I don't know. These poor people had no facilities of any kind. Several hundred of them were mixed in with the straw on earth floors of some hangars located along the railroad tracks. We, not knowing anything about them, had bombed these buildings because they looked like supply facilities for the Germans. I was brought into Nordhausen by Doyle Hickey, the Commanding General of the 3rd Division which had just overrun these underground factories where the Germans were assembling the V-1 and V-2 bombs. Hickey said to me, "General you've got to come and see this thing with your own eyes, you won't believe it otherwise." So I went down and saw these buildings, partially destroyed

by American bombers which were trying to disrupt the German supply situation. The hangars were filled with half-naked prisoners, some dead or dying. It was just ghastly with a terrible stench. I had the Burgomeister and the leading citizens of Nordhausen come down and clean it out. I left behind my G-5, the civil relations man, to make these Germans carry the bodies out and bury them. I had them dig a trench where the prisoners could be buried in their cemetery and left instructions that there should be a monument of some kind erected by the town. Whether that was ever done I don't know. At that stage of the war, I was all in favor of punishing the Germans for this kind of ghastly operation. Later on, after the war, when we faced a de facto threat from Russia, I realized we would need to cooperate with them.

I had been stationed in Germany after the first World War, I knew the German mentality, I knew their military ability, and I also was conscious of their fear and hatred of the Soviet Union, this great monolith opposite them. Therefore I favored getting the Germans into NATO. France could never be depended on, and the only other people, the satellites of the Russians, were too close under the guns of the Russians. The only people you could really count on for support against the Russians were the Germans, much as we didn't like it.

The same thing was true with respect to the Japanese in the Far East. From a strict political and military viewpoint it was the only sensible thing to do, and therefore I felt we should do it. I had gotten to know the Germans: I lived in Coblenz-am-Rhein for 2 years, I was billeted in a German family, and the people of that region of Germany were the same type of person as the Germans up here in Pennsylvania -- good solid citizens, nice people, no question about it. So after the war, I felt we ought to

support the Germans like I felt we should support the Japanese; whether we liked them or not they were the ablest people in Europe and the ablest people in the Far East. And the only sensible thing to do was to get them on our side; thus I favored Germany entering NATO and being given our support.

In reference to Question 10, I don't remember what the EDC Plan was.

Goldberg: It was the European Defense Community.

Condit: The French signed but never ratified the plan. So it never came into existence. It was a plan designed to provide a way for the French to agree to the rearmament of Germany. The European Defense Community would have become a part of NATO with the German contribution coming in through the EDC.

Collins: Well, the French initially were members of the Atlantic Alliance, but they withdrew. The cause of that in my opinion, was DeGaulle's insistence on la gloire de la France -- the prestige of France. He couldn't believe that France was not on a par with Britain or the United States as a power. And he was bent on making it so, even to the extent of being willing to withdraw from NATO.

Goldberg: Well, he was half right.

Collins: Yes, half right.

Goldberg: On a par with Britain but not with the United States.

Collins: And of course despite the fact that now the French cooperate with us in many ways, the great weakness of NATO frankly is the fact that here you have a country, right smack across what should be our lines of communication to the west, which is not part of NATO. It will be a great weakness

in the event of a Soviet attack.

Goldberg: Question 11 has to do with the Eisenhower New Look Policy and its effect on NATO.

Collins: Well, again you'll have to tell me more about what the New Look Policy was because I don't remember too much about it.

Goldberg: When Eisenhower came in he was very much concerned about the size of the military budget. He was determined to cut military expenditures, and the major way of doing it was to emphasize nuclear weapons and nuclear strategic offensive forces and cut the ground forces and to some extent the Naval forces. The Army declined substantially in both numbers and money under Eisenhower. Also, he stretched out whatever buildup had begun during the Korean War.

Collins: Well, first of all with respect to the introduction of nuclear weapons I was firmly in support of that. In my judgment, and I said so in talks and testimony that I gave at that time, without nuclear tactical weapons in the hands of our troops in Germany there was no question and there is no question now that the Russians could overrun Europe, in a matter of a few weeks if not days, with their tremendous preponderance of tanks and manpower. We had to convince the Russians that if they attacked we would use nuclear tactical weapons -- not strategic -- to bomb the troops leading the attack. This was feasible with the equipment we had -- tactical air support and later artillery as it was developed. We could force the concentration of Russians through the defiles that led into Western Europe. And there are two or three distinct defiles, in other words, narrow passages, where they would have to concentrate and where they would then present good targets for the nuclear weapon without danger of destroying the cities. This has

never really been made clear to the American public with respect to the possibility of small nuclear weapons. The whole idea was to preserve the population of Western Germany and the cities but to destroy the leading troops of the Russians. If we can ever convince the Russians that they cannot quickly overrun Western Europe, we have some chance of political and other maneuvers and strategic bombing deep into Russia which wouldn't hurt the German people so much but might dissuade the Soviets from launching an attack. This is the whole point of view that I had in fully supporting the development of the atomic cannon. And I got great support from some of the technical men, Bob LeBaron, for example, who was an Assistant Secretary in the Defense Department. He kept telling me, "Joe, you are on the right track. We are going to get this bomb down to small dimensions so that it can be used by the artillery." The artillery can hit selected targets very accurately, not just bombing a whole countryside. They can put fire right on a column of troops. And with the limited explosive capability of these shells you would not destroy a city, but you could destroy the leading elements of the Russians.

Goldberg: Did you support the notion that the Army could not hope, even with the help of the Europeans, to create an effective conventional defense of Western Europe?

Collins: I did.

Goldberg: The case has been made that the estimates of Soviet ground force capabilities in the late '40's were very much exaggerated, that in carrying 175 divisions we were greatly exaggerating the Soviet capability. Many of those divisions were empty, they simply had cadres. They were reserves and the Soviet strength was much less.

Collins: Yes, but what did we have to oppose even 10 Russian divisions? We didn't have ten divisions. We had only our small forces in Germany. Here was France, no longer participating militarily in NATO, sitting on the lines of communication where all of our supplies would have to be brought in. And our logistical support in Antwerp, instead of being behind the troops, was on their flank. It was, in my judgment, an impossible situation. The Russians could have overrun Western Europe in nothing flat, even if their preponderance was not as great as may have been thought at the time. It was great enough to roll around Western Europe unless we had the use of the nuclear weapons that could be fired by close support aviation and by our own Army artillery.

Goldberg: There is a thesis that both the Navy and the Air Force were much more assertive in their own interest in demanding resources, weapons, and forces than the Army was during this period. Is there any justification in that?

Collins: Well, I don't know. I wasn't Chief of Staff at that time.

Goldberg: Well, I mean even during the time that you were Chief of Staff, and Vice Chief of Staff.

Collins: Remember that at that stage of the game the Navy had its own congressional committee up on the Hill. And as I said earlier, the biggest step towards real unification was the unification of the Armed Service Committees of the Congress. The Navy had the wherewithal and the support up on the Hill, public relations-wise, everything. Traditionally, the American people have always been skeptical about an Army. They don't know so much about the Navy, it's off at sea, it's a glamourous service; the Air Force was new and so on.

Goldberg: That is well put and correct. I think it's simply that in peace time the Army just doesn't get the same attention that the other services do.

Collins: And the only parts of the Army that the public sees are the National Guard and the Reserves and these are part-time soldiers, not really soldiers ready to fight on D-day. Politics still plays a very good part, particularly with the National Guard, and they were not professional people. I don't even think they claim to be. Some of them may, but they are not professional soldiers.

Goldberg: I think the answer may be that by the late '40's the country, the leadership, Congress, and public opinion, had pretty well reached the point where they were not willing to maintain a very large Army, not willing to commit a lot of manpower to the ground forces. They were willing and even determined to substitute technology and weapons for manpower.

Collins: No question about it.

Goldberg: No matter what the Army tried to do, I suspect they would not have been successful in getting more divisions, more manpower.

Collins: No. We did our best up on the Hill but while the Secretary of Defense tried to be as fair as he could the Army always got the smallest amount of appropriations. The Navy and gradually the Air Force got more and more. But the Army was always the third one down the ladder.

Condit: General Collins, while we are still not too far away from the subject of nuclear weapons, did you feel that atomic weapons should be used in Korea at any time?

Collins: I didn't think it was necessary and I don't think that the subject ever came up. But I may be wrong about it. We didn't project the movement into Korea of any nuclear weapons. At that stage I don't think that nuclear weapons had been reduced enough in size so that they could be used locally

in artillery shells. As far as I know, we did not consider the use of atomic weapons in Korea.

Condit: Nor in China?

Collins: No, not as I remember it. Let's see, does that cover Question 11?

Goldberg: I think that takes care of most of it.

Collins: Another part of Question 11 asks how serious was the Soviet threat to Europe during the period 1953 - 1956? Well, I think it was always serious, but as I look back on it, I didn't think we were about to be attacked by the Russians. But there was no question that this great potential was there, given our military weakness. Here we had stripped our Army and to some extent our Navy and Air Force while the Russians were building up their forces. That was a fearful thing, no question about it, and I was afraid of it.

Goldberg: Could we go back to the first year of the Korean War and the extent to which we felt apprehension about a possible Soviet attack, not only in Europe but on the United States? Do you remember the circumstances of that? The Joint Chiefs on several occasions during that year expressed real concern about the possibility of a Soviet attack.

Collins: Yes, though I can't remember now anything in detail. I was always fearful that while we were stripping our forces here we knew that the Russians were building their forces. But I don't think I ever felt we were about to be attacked.

Goldberg: Do you remember that we had that false alarm in December 1950 when the radar picked up what they thought were aircraft flying. . .

Collins: Well, you see how seriously I regarded that, I've forgotten all about

it. I never did think, frankly, that we were about to be attacked the next day at sunrise.

Goldberg: No, but there were estimates, for instance, by the JCS during this time of periods of what would be maximum danger if the Soviets were going to attack. For instance I remember very well that September 1951 was considered a time of possible maximum danger for Soviet attack.

Collins: Right.

Goldberg: I remember that from the JCS papers at the time.

Collins: Yes. Well, there was always that possibility.

Goldberg: The Soviets had gotten nuclear weapons by this time, and they had some aircraft that could make it to the United States on a one way flight from advanced bases. I remember during that first year of the Korean War in Washington, or a year and one-half perhaps, there was very considerable apprehension right here in the Pentagon about the possibilities of Soviet attacks in Europe or even against the United States.

Collins: Well, I have difficulty in going back to that period on this particular subject. Reflecting on it, I've always felt that the Russians would be somewhat given pause by the fact that they couldn't trust their satellites. One of the sources of strength of the West is that the Russian line of communications passes through Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Germany. And the Russians would not be greeted with open arms, in my judgment, in the event of a war, with the Poles sitting right astride their line of communication. I think this has always given them pause. I think this is what worries them about the growing freedom today in Poland. They know that their lines of communication would be going across Poland. Our line of communications is lousy also as long as France isn't with us.

To digress for a moment, I think that we ought to keep in mind that if we ever did come to a conflict we ought to encourage the Poles and the rest of the Russian satellites to sabotage the Russian line of communication. And I'm sure the Poles are thinking about it and that they'd do something about it because they hate the Russians' guts. I have some personal knowledge of that. I've made two trips to Russia in the last fifteen years, once with a party of medical research people when I was with Pfizer after I retired from the service. We had heard that there were some new developments in the medical field in Russia, and Pfizer sent a small group of research people over there. Because of my knowledge of the general conditions I went along. I was a member of the Board of Pfizer at that time. We visited each of the major research pharmaceutical centers in Moscow and one or two other places. We could find nothing that we didn't already know, incidentally. But on our way back from Russia there were a number of Eastern Europeans on the plane. They broke into cheers when we crossed the frontier. The pilot had enough nerve to say we were crossing and there was general applause. They had no love for the Russians, no question about it.

I visited Prague and Warsaw and two or three other major countries, and then later on I was in Moscow. It happened, incidentally, that I was there the day that Khrushchev was fired. You would never have known it from anything on the streets. I didn't know about it until I went to a reception at the American Embassy and our Ambassador said, "Well, General, you've certainly come to Moscow at an interesting moment." I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, Mr. Khrushchev has just been fired." I couldn't believe him.

You would never have known from the demeanor of the people on the streets. There were no knots of people standing around the street corners. I found one interesting difference. The day before as we went to visit some of the research centers, we saw an enormous picture of Khrushchev, covering the whole side of one building. The next day we came back on the same route, but I couldn't find his picture! It had gone down overnight. We ought to capitalize on the fact that these Russian lines of communications cross a bunch of people that have no love for them. And I think this may be one thing that gives the Russians pause about launching an attack.

Goldberg: We have one more question left and that concerns your views on the Department of Defense leadership between '53 and '56 when Secretary Wilson was there.

Collins: Well, I think Mr. Wilson was one of the big misfortunes when he served as Secretary of Defense. I had the same problem that the other Chiefs had in dealing with Mr. Wilson. We might be called into his office to discuss some serious problem. Irrespective of what it was, we were never there for more than five minutes before Mr. Wilson would be telling us about his experience with General Motors. You couldn't get him back on the track at all. So you finally threw up your hands and walked out, sometimes without ever discussing the problem you went in to see him on. He was a nice guy. I said once to a man that I got to know in General Motors, "Why did you ever let Mr. Wilson get away from General Motors?" He said, "Well, General, we were quite relieved." Wilson was a nice man but I don't know how he ever got to be President of General Motors. He had little executive ability, from my point of view at any rate, and as I say he didn't seem to be greatly interested in the Defense job. He

was no Forrestal by any matter of means, and he never had anything like the ability of Mr. Forrestal.

Goldberg: What about the rest of the Department leadership during this period? McNeil was still there. How did you feel about McNeil during this period?

Collins: I thought he was a very able guy, too able from my point of view. As I said earlier, he was trying to establish a line of command in which he would issue orders from the Secretary of Defense's office right down through the chain of command.

Condit: It is surprising therefore that he should have come to like Secretary Johnson, who cancelled the carrier.

Collins: I didn't know that.

Condit: He spoke very highly of Johnson in an interview.

Goldberg: He is one of the few people who has.

Collins: Right.

Trask: Do you think that Wilson was less competent than Johnson as a Secretary of Defense?

Collins: Well, in a different way. Johnson was a positive man. Wilson was not. With Johnson you at least could discuss things and you knew pretty well where he stood. I never did have a feel for what Mr. Wilson felt or believed. He was a very difficult man from whom to get any clearcut ideas. You might disagree with Johnson, but at least you knew where he stood. Frankly you never fully knew what in the world Mr. Wilson was thinking. You had an awful job pinning him down about his judgments on most anything.

Goldberg: Let me ask another question in that connection. It was during this period, '53 to '56, and after too, that the Army had its greatest difficulties. And this was with Eisenhower as President and Wilson as Secretary

of Defense. Do you remember the problems that Ridgway and Taylor had? The Army felt that it was being discriminated against and treated unfairly; it was bearing the brunt of most of the budget cutbacks, losing the most people, and felt that it wasn't really in a position to carry out its mission given all these cutbacks.

Collins: Yes.

Goldberg: Remember, Ridgway was satisfied to leave after two years and Taylor was unhappy during most of the time that he was Chief of Staff. I know you weren't scond-guessing anybody, but what were your views during this period?

Collins: Well, my general feeling, and I have difficulty trying to resurrect what it might have been at that time, was that the public at large was really responsible for this. In other words, the public at large had reverted to the old attitude towards the Army. They didn't want a large standing Army that could be seen and that they knew cost money and was always trying to get money for new things. The Army had a lot of artillery and a lot of tanks. The fact that these were outmoded tanks didn't really percolate to the average American citizen. He saw tanks, in parades and so on, and said, "Why aren't those good enough? Why do we have to spend millions of our dollars developing a brand new tank or a longer-range artillery? We have a lot of cannons, we have a lot of ammunition," and so on. This was all stuff that they could see, that they knew about in the storage places and so on. Whereas the Navy was off at sea thousands of miles away and would come back into port with colors flying. It was a popular thing. And the Air Force was new, and I think that the American

public was right in wishing to support this new arm of the military. It was my judgment then as it is now, that a war on the ground simply cannot be fought unless you have superiority in the air. The dominant factor is air superiority.

Goldberg: But if you had been Chief of Staff during the period when Ridgway and Taylor were Chiefs of Staff, do you think you would have taken a position different from theirs?

Collins: No, I don't think so. I think I would have fought for the Army's new equipment, better research, the same things for which Matt Ridgway and Max Taylor fought. I knew both of these men thoroughly. Ridgway and I had grown up in the military service. He happened to have been a classmate of mine at West Point and he was one of my deputy chiefs of staff. Max Taylor served under my command in Europe as Ridgway had. They were very able combat men, and I had no question about their loyalty or their ability. I would have said and done the same thing, I am sure, that they did. Probably with the same negative results.

Goldberg: That is a good answer. Are there any other questions?

Condit: I have one little parochial question. About the time of the Korean War under Johnson, Marshall, and so forth, there was something called the Joint Secretaries Group.

Collins: Yes.

Condit: It included the three Secretaries, plus the Deputy and the Secretary of Defense. And I believe that at one time, you felt very concerned about them as a possible counter. . .

Collins: Counter-balance to the JCS.

Condit: Yes.

Collins: Yes. I didn't take the group too seriously, talking in retrospect Because first of all I had great confidence in Frank Pace. I knew that Frank would listen to my judgment as Chief of Staff of the Army. I may have been concerned about the group at the time. But it was outside of the law. It had no representation up on the Hill, and that is what really counted so far as getting money and whatnot is concerned. And so, I don't, in retrospect think it disturbed me very much.

Condit: Well, I believe Bob Watson of the Historical Division of the Joint Chiefs of Staff wrote that if you had known about this you might have been upset, or something of the sort, about Marshall's consultation with the Joint Secretaries Group. But the point that I am trying to make is that this was a normal procedure. Johnson set it up on Secretary Matthews' suggestion, but he didn't use it very much. Marshall used it a great deal and Lovett continued to use it a great deal. And I have always felt that the Joint Secretaries was not an important thing. When we talked with General Carter, he seemed to feel it was a nothing. Then I checked, not so long ago, the Rockefeller Committee Hearings in April, 1953, and we have Mr. Lovett saying that he found the Joint Secretaries more useful than the JCS! Now that shocked me.

Collins: Yes. It would have shocked me if I had read that at the time. But I must admit that I never got very close to Bob Lovett. I had respect for him but I have no clear impression about his views. He didn't assert himself too much, in my judment, as Secretary of Defense. He was a nice fellow up there at the top. An able man on Wall Street and all that sort of business but he never had any great influence on the thinking of the JCS or anybody

else around here that I knew of except that he had general respect as an individual. And he was always in my mind a protege of Stimson. Never any doubt about Mr. Stimson. So I never did know too much about this group but I suppose that Frank Pace kept me pretty well informed of what was going on. I don't remember now.

Condit: Well, there are a great many subjects on which there will be a JCS paper and a Joint Secretaries paper, one giving military advice, one giving civilian advice. Secretary of Defense Marshall made this definite at the National Security Council when he said he would always submit JCS papers to the NSC as per law. He also said he would read the Joint Secretaries papers and take them into account in forming his own opinion. That is the way he handled it, and Truman agreed, so this was formal in that sense at least through his time. Now as I say, in '53, Lovett made this statement about the Joint Secretaries which shocked me. You'll be pleased, perhaps, to know that when I talked with Mr. Lovett in '76 he said very clearly that he found the Joint Chiefs of Staff individually and as a body much more impressive than the Secretaries. So I don't know what to think. There is a difference in retrospect.

Collins: I think that was the fact of the case. I don't even remember that this group ever really functioned in any important way. But that is a long time ago.

Condit: Sometimes their papers were sent to the JCS.

Collins: But we got a lot of papers.

Condit: You know you got the Joint Secretaries viewpoints.

Collins: Yes, well. . .

Condit: I think that your statutory prerogatives were taken care of always.

Collins: I would have been skeptical of the advice of the three civilian Secretaries if they got over into the military field. They didn't know anything about it, frankly, and this is the whole purpose of the JCS. It is supposed to be the organization that represents the professional military point of view. And any group of civilians, however able they might be as investment bankers or anything else, are not competent to judge military matters. The military profession is not that simple. There are intangible things of morale, for example, which a person who never served in the military services can't really appreciate and value.

Goldberg: I don't think there was any intention that they get involved in operational matters. And I don't think that they did. On the other hand, there are some areas where their involvement was justified.

Collins: Well, there were clearly political and military areas -- for example, in Korea the business of advancing to the Yalu -- that would be a perfectly legitimate concern of the civilian leaders. No question about it.

Condit: Or the question of a peace treaty with Japan?

Collins: Yes.

Condit: There are political ramifications of that as well.

Collins: Most assuredly. I thoroughly agree.

Condit: Incidentally, why were the Joint Chiefs so much against a peace treaty with Japan? The peace treaty was signed on September 8, 1951.

Collins: I can't imagine now why we would oppose a peace treaty with Japan,

and I can't visualize opposition that I might have had to a peace treaty with Japan at that time.

Rearden: I don't think it was Army opposition so much as it was Navy opposition.

Collins: Could have been.

Rearden: They worried that they were going to lose their bases.

Collins: It may have been some technical thing like that. And that would have been a legitimate concern on their part. So far as the Army was concerned, I can't remember.

Condit: Well, MacArthur was for the peace treaty.

Collins: Yes.

Condit: And he had been for it from 1947 on.

Collins: Surely, and there was no doubt about it, MacArthur knew the Far East and he knew Japan also. I think you probably are right that the concern may have been on the part of the Navy and maybe to a lesser extent the Air Force with respect to the potential of using areas of Japan as bases. Now I can see where they might have been concerned about that.

Condit: Using Japan as a staging area for Korea was a great concern.

Collins: Oh, sure, because if we had air bases there -- we would have to have naval bases there, and it would be a great advantage if we had air bases there. Whereas, since we weren't contemplating the use of Army troops on the Mainland of China, we weren't much concerned before the North Koreans attacked. We were just plain lucky when the Koreans attacked that we had troops in occupation in Japan.

Goldberg: Yes.

Condit: Well, the JCS were against the treaty for the duration of the Korean War. They were not against it forever.

Collins: Now, that may have explained it also. Yes.

Goldberg: Yes. Any other questions? We want to thank you very much, General, it has been very helpful.

Collins: Well, I've enjoyed discussing these matters with you.

Oral History Interview

with

General M. B. Ridgway
Commander-in-Chief, Far East Command and UN Command, 1951-52
Supreme Commander, Allied Powers Europe, 1952-53
Army Chief of Staff, 1953-55

Conducted on

April 18, 1984

by

Dr. Maurice Matloff

OSD Historical Office
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Matloff: This is an oral history interview held with General Matthew B. Ridgway in his home in Fox Chapel, Pittsburgh, on April 18, 1984, at 2:00 P.M. This interview is being taped and a copy of the transcript will be sent to General Ridgway for his review.

Ridgway: I'm delighted to cooperate in any way I can with you and I trust that my memory will be sufficiently clear and positive.

Matloff: If we may, we will focus on your role as Chief of Staff of the United States Army and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in this interview. But I should first like to direct your attention toward certain factors in your background and experience relevant to the history of OSD and national security policy in the post-World War II era. First, with respect to the movement for unification of the services after World War II, how did you view the National Security Act of 1947 as it affected military organization? Were you consulted on your views? Did you play any part in that movement?

Ridgway: I doubt that I was consulted. I probably had conversations with the first Secretary of Defense, Forrestal, whom I admired a great deal. My impression at the time was that it was a great step forward, and I looked hopefully to find results from it.

Matloff: With reference to the reorganization act of 1947, did it have any impact on your role and functions in your assignments after World War II, for example: on the Military Staff Committee of the United Nations between 1946 and 1948; as Chairman of the Inter-American Defense Board in that same period; and then, somewhat later, as Commander in Chief of the

Caribbean Command, 1948-1949? For example, did you have any dealings with the Secretary of Defense or other top officials in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in those capacities?

Ridgway: Yes, primarily with Secretary Forrestal. My personal relations with him were most pleasant, from my point of view, and I think from his. I had a letter from him just before he died expressing our friendship. I had nothing but cooperation at that time from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, both when I was serving as General Eisenhower's representative on the Military Staff Committee of the United Nations and subsequently when I was Commander in Chief, Caribbean. The only little point that comes to my mind at this time on the United Nations service is that each of the three services had a senior representative there. I had considerable arguments with the naval representative, Admiral Kelley Turner, at the time. He was a four star admiral; I was a three star general. I raised a question with General Eisenhower as to whether we were co-equal on this, as service representatives, because both the Navy and Air Force ranked me. They were both four-star men. General Eisenhower said, "You're completely co-equal." I went into Admiral Turner's office one day and stood in front of his desk and said, "Admiral, I'll no longer tolerate this attitude on your part, and it's got to stop." His mouth dropped open a little bit, but I don't recall that he said anything. That passed over the dam, and we had most pleasant relations thereafter, but it had to be clarified that he wasn't going to order me around because he was senior in rank.

Matloff: In what connection did you have dealings with Secretary Forrestal in that capacity?

Ridgway: I doubt if they were on substantive matters. They were probably just personal. I would frequently come down from New York, where my headquarters office was, to check in with General Eisenhower's staff and occasionally would meet Forrestal, but I had no problems to bring up to him at all. They were all handled through Bob Patterson, who was Secretary of War at that time.

Matloff: There were no instructions coming directly from the Secretary of Defense?

Ridgway: No, they all came through channels.

Matloff: Since we've touched on your experience in the United Nations, and I know you have had many dealings with the Russians in various capacities, what impressions did you come away with from dealing with the Russians in the United Nations in that capacity on the Military Staff Committee?

Ridgway: I wrote a memorandum dated February 3, 1947. You should have a copy of that. After ten months of duty on the Military Staff Committee, I wrote this memorandum, addressed to the Chief of Staff, and said that I was convinced from almost daily contact with the Russians over that period that there was a very clear pattern of their objectives and their approach to the attainment of those objectives. The essence of it was the domination of the world. (That is in a much longer memorandum written in August 1953 and that I will give you.) That memorandum went through Eisenhower to Patterson, the Army Secretary. Shortly thereafter I was down in Washington at a luncheon at the Blair House, where President Truman was then temporarily domiciled. Dean Acheson, who was a friend of mine of

some years, said, "Matt, that memorandum of yours made policy." That's the reason I would commend it to your attention. It set forth the Russian policies at the time very clearly, and today, after a lapse of all these years, they have never deviated from those policies. One other thing on the Caribbean command, I had most happy relations with the Navy, and have had throughout my whole career. When I was the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander in Europe just at the close of the war, Bill Glassford, a Vice Admiral of the Navy, was my naval commander. I had a great problem there. The Defense Department, including the Army, had laid down these rules that when each individual in any of the services obtained so many points over there in Europe, he could get on a boat and come home; he could drop his tools and leave. I said that this applied to all the nurses in our hospitals over there. They all had more than enough points to qualify to go home, but that would strip our hospitals. They couldn't do that. So I went to Glassford and told him what the situation was and said, "My old friend the Surgeon General of the Army, Norman Kirk, has promised to get me some replacements, but they can't be here for two or three months. What I'd like to do is get these nurses home by Christmas, if possible, and the only way I can get them there is on a Navy ship and I know your regulations don't permit that." He replied, "I'll contact this Carrier Captain, Pirie (later to become Admiral), and see if he is willing to take them aboard and take them home from Naples." Captain Pirie radioed back that he would be glad to do it, and we got all those nurses home in time. It was an instance of cooperation between the services in a combat area.

Matloff: Let's move now to one of the roles for which you are well known, Commander in Chief, Far East Command, and United Nations Command, in 1951-1952. I know you have been interviewed countless times on this, but I would like to look at it from the point of view of OSD interests and policies, national security policies, strategic planning, and matters of that kind. First, the background of the appointment. What were the circumstances of that appointment--when did you first learn of it?

Ridgway: I do not know the background, but the actual fact was that Secretary of the Army Pace was over there on a visit. He wanted to see a battalion in the attack so I was up with him. It was in the spring and a light snow was falling. While we were up with this battalion, a newspaper reporter came to me, I think from The Baltimore Sun, and said, "General, I hear you're to be congratulated." I asked, "For what?" I hadn't the faintest idea. He could tell, I guess, from the expression on my face that it was an honest answer and he said nothing more. It was some little time after that that I learned from Secretary Pace that I'd been appointed Supreme Commander. I'd had no knowledge whatever that I was even under consideration. I was then commanding the Eighth Army and the ROK Army.

Matloff: Were there any instructions, written or oral, given to you at that point, and by whom?

Ridgway: You have a copy of Truman's order to MacArthur, I presume. That was a basic thing. It said that this message was to have been delivered by Secretary Pace, but there was a foul up in communications and he didn't

get it in time. It said in essence, "Upon receipt of this order, you stand relieved and General Matthew B. Ridgway will take over all your duties and responsibilities." That was my basic instruction, and nothing followed for some little time after that.

Matloff: Did the President or the Secretary of Defense try to orient or guide you at all at that point?

Ridgway: No.

Matloff: Were you briefed by your predecessor, before he left?

Ridgway: Very courteously, very calmly, and very pleasantly. I got that message in the afternoon, and I was in Tokyo around 11:00 at night or so, as soon as I could get there. I radioed ahead, requesting a meeting with General MacArthur. He met me and the only other person present in the library of the Embassy there was Doyle Hickey, his Chief of Staff. He had complete composure, and said, "Matt, anything I can do to help you, I'll be glad to do." He showed no rancor at that time, no trace of what later was termed by some people to have been insubordination. That was all.

Matloff: What problems did you face when you took over? I know that they were enormous. What was your initial conception of your role?

Ridgway: It had been made clear to me that my primary responsibility was the defense of Japan. The JCS had made that very clear. So I immediately mapped out a plan of reconnaissance, because if the protection of Japan was the primary objective, I wanted personally to reconnoiter what the staff considered to be the most likely landing places in case of a

Russian attack. So I started out and made a series of reconnaissance trips in my B-17. We flew up around the northern end of Hokkaido, where you could just look down on those Habumai Islands up there, only a quarter of a mile to the nearest one which the Russians were occupying at that time. You could see across the strait to Sakhalin. Then I visited the other probable landing places, those the staff had worked out as being likely. Also, I wanted to try and disabuse the garrison attitude of mind on the part of staff and all the elements there in Japan. They were living a nice, quiet, sheltered civilized life with dances and parties, and so I took it upon occasion to say, "You may be under the bomb sites of Russian aircraft here at any time. This is the war zone and I think you should keep that in mind, and perhaps your attitude will change."

Matloff: Was the defense of Japan the first priority, even over what was going on in Korea?

Ridgway: Absolutely. You would find that in the JCS message.

Matloff: Did your conception of your role and priorities change during the rest of your tenure in that post?

Ridgway: No, I thought I could handle both. The JCS sent me a message, which, of course, must have emanated from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, that said in effect that "while, of course, your primary mission is the defense of Japan, we expect that you can handle that side of your duties, and Korea too, for the time being."

Matloff: Would you describe in brief, just for the record, what the situation was at the moment in Korea?

Ridgway: It was shortly after that when the Chinese started their last two-prong attack in April. The first phase was in April, and the second carried over into May. Van Fleet, meanwhile, had taken over the Eighth Army and he met that very well. I wasn't concerned about that. I was back and forth between Tokyo and Korea frequently.

Matloff: Let's speak a little about the working relationships that you had in that position with the Secretary of Defense and other top officials in OSD. For example, how often did you see them, or did they come to see you, while you were in Tokyo?

Ridgway: Secretary of Defense Marshall came to visit me there in early June. He was our house guest in the embassy. I kept this "eyes only" message which said that Secretary Marshall would leave the United States and fly to Tokyo; there was to be no leakage whatever about this visit until his arrival. I thought that that was impossible, that the Secretary of Defense couldn't leave the United States without one of the sharp-minded newspaper fellows following. But he did and he got away with it. There wasn't the slightest knowledge among the press corps of his arrival. I had his plane land at Yokosuka airfield, at the far end of the field, and I had my plane standing by to take him to Korea. As soon as the plane landed, we transferred him to the other plane and went off. The outside world knew nothing of his arrival until he landed in Korea. That was my only personal contact with the Secretary of Defense, because shortly after that he retired.

Matloff: Were there any other officials from OSD with whom you were in touch during that period?

Ridgway: No. Anna Rosenberg had been there before that. She was Assistant Secretary for Manpower at that time.

Matloff: How about your relationships with the Joint Chiefs of Staff? Were you in frequent communication with them?

Ridgway: They couldn't have been better. I knew them all personally. I deplored the death of Forrest Sherman during that period, as I remember it. They were all most cooperative.

Matloff: Were the instructions coming to you through the Joint Chiefs of Staff from Washington?

Ridgway: No, they were coming through Collins, the Army Chief of Staff. He was the agent for them. That command channel was changed later.

Matloff: Did you have any dealings with the White House when you were in that capacity?

Ridgway: Not directly. I had a fine liaison with LTC Beishline. He was the Army's liaison officer with the White House. I got a photograph from Mr. Truman, in color, inscribed to me and wishing me every success, or something like that.

Way back when I was a young captain, I served on the staff of Major General Frank R. McCoy, who was one of the greatest internationalists we've ever had in any of our branches of military service. I went with him when he first went to Nicaragua to supervise the national elections down there in 1927-28. He told me, among other bits of sage advice, "If you're ever sent off on one of these quasi-political/military missions, be sure you arrange for a safe line of communications back home." I

always remembered that. Before I left Washington to take over the Eighth Army, I arranged for this line of communication so I could get these messages to Beishline, in addition to my normal communications through Collins, who was the acting agent for the Joint Chiefs. I had that dual line of communications.

Matloff: What was your perception of the threat when you took over? Did you view communism, for example, as a monolithic bloc? How did you view the threat that the United States and the allies were facing?

Ridgway: This is getting into an area where it is difficult to say, because what I might say now might not accurately represent what I actually thought. As I recall it, I didn't have any concept of monolithic communism. My perception was centered on the fact of the capabilities of the Soviet Union, and that made very clear what their aims were. That was covered in the February 3, 1947, memorandum, when I was with the U.N.

Matloff: Did you perceive any differences between the Defense Department and the State Department, or even within Defense, on the nature of the threat and how to meet it?

Ridgway: Not to my knowledge. If there were differences back in Washington, they were not made manifest to me out there in Tokyo. I had no idea that any such differences existed.

Matloff: How about between the government of South Korea and the United States?

Ridgway: We were very well aware of that because of Syngman Rhee's continual urging us on to the Yalu, and his repeated statements that if

we didn't go up there with him, he'd go alone. It was laughable, because he couldn't have gotten anywhere. We had control of all the logistic support.

Matloff: Were there any differences in the perception of the threat between the United States and its other allies who were in the U.N. command, for example, with Britain?

Ridgway: Yes, you'll find that in my memorandum. The British, for instance, refused to go along with our policy toward Red China. They did not withdraw recognition from Red China, and Dulles was pressing them not only to withdraw that but also to recognize Taiwan, which the British refused to do. Dulles pointed that out to me. I probably wouldn't have known it except for him. He was over there on a mission of the final drafting of the Japanese peace treaty.

Matloff: Let's focus on problems with allies in the course of carrying on the conflict in South Korea. What were the major problems that you encountered in dealing with the allies in your U.N. command?

Ridgway: I had none. I had most harmonious relations with all of the sixteen combat elements there, their commanding officers, and their diplomatic representatives in Tokyo.

Matloff: No differences of views, for example, over war aims or strategy?

Ridgway: No, that would have been beyond my sphere and theirs, but on tactical missions no disagreement--complete cooperation.

Matloff: Nothing on the question of whether the war should be enlarged or limited?

Ridgway: No.

Matloff: Nothing on the role of Formosa, or the use of Chinese nationalist troops, which was one of the issues?

Ridgway: Are you talking about me as Army commander, or Supreme Commander?

Matloff: I'm focusing on Supreme Commander here in the period of 1951-52.

Ridgway: I'm not too clear on that. I know that there were differences with Great Britain, primarily. I just ran across this story the other day. It was sent to me from a Pittsburgh source here. The title of this article was "The Incredible Story of Michael Straight." Does that name mean anything to you? He was all tied up with the Snowden gang in England, in the period between the two world wars. This group of Cambridge people got together and issued a manifesto that, in the event Britain got into a war, they would not fight for king and country. The story in this thing was that after MacArthur's spectacular success at Inchon, Attlee, who was then prime minister, came over here to see Truman, to find out what the United States' aims were with respect to Korea. In this article, he asked Truman two questions: a) would he use the A-bomb? and b) would he invade China? Again, according to this article, Truman gave him clear categorical answers--"No" to both questions. The reason that Attlee was questioning that was that he had information that Stalin was urging Mao to invade and Mao was holding back because of his fear of the A-bomb. As soon as this information, which went to Attlee, and his senior aide there, MacLean, who was the head of the American desk in the British Foreign Ministry and one of the two spies that later defected to Russia,

MacLean passed it on through his secret channels to Stalin. Stalin passed it on to Mao, and then Mao invaded. Did you know that story?

Matloff: No.

Ridgway: I didn't either. MacArthur made several charges that these two British spies, MacLean and Burgess, were responsible for his troubles over there, but I don't know that MacArthur knew that. Certainly, as far as I've read his memoirs, he never alluded to how this thing happened.

Matloff: I take it, then, that OSD did not get into any problems that arose with other allies, and that you weren't aware of any sharp differences?

Ridgway: No, but General Marshall was such an astute statesman himself that he could have handled that while he was still Secretary of Defense. The Secretary of State at that time was Acheson, wasn't he?

Matloff: Yes. So you weren't being burdened with this?

Ridgway: No.

Matloff: Did you play any role in connection with the Japanese peace treaty? Were you drawn in on those discussions?

Ridgway: No.

Matloff: Looking back on that whole experience in the war in Korea, how well prepared were American policy and planning for the type of war encountered, even before you took over as Supreme Commander?

Ridgway: We were very poorly prepared at the outset, before we threw combat forces into Korea. I alluded earlier to the garrison frame of mind that permeated our troops in Japan. They were living a life of

luxury. They had stripped their infantry divisions of their tanks and armor for several reasons. One of those was that the Japanese roads and rail bridges wouldn't handle them and they didn't think they were necessary. They had cut down the firing batteries of our artillery from three to two per battalion. They had done all sorts of things, but most of all they were just living the life of Riley there, and so they were not prepared physically or spiritually to be thrown into combat. It was only a very few weeks before the attack occurred that General Walker, who commanded the Eighth Army in Japan, even started a serious training program. It was far too late then to have it take effect. But he did see the light and started to get the troops ready for what might come. They were all far understrength. I would say that no unit was committed to combat there under less advantageous conditions than those earlier troop commitments.

Matloff: How about on a higher level, did you find that American policy aims were clear? You were having to execute aims.

Ridgway: I thought that the President had made it unmistakably clear that his primary concern was not to be responsible for initiating World War III. It was a clear recognition that I got through the message from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, not long after I arrived in Tokyo--not while I was still with the Eighth Army. It said that the Soviet divisions in Soviet Maritime Provinces are in an advanced stage of readiness for war and could initiate it with little or no warning. That was the official message I got from the Joint Chiefs. So it was very much on my mind,

since I had already been told that my primary mission was the defense of Japan.

Matloff: How about American policy aims for Korea? Were those clear?

Ridgway: Yes. I had been Deputy Chief of Staff in Washington, following this affair twelve hours a day every single day of the week, before I was shot over to Korea. I thought that the President had made it unmistakably clear. His instructions to MacArthur were categoric (and disregarded in most cases), that he did not want to start World War III. MacArthur had been pressing to attack China, to bring Chinese troops onto the Korean peninsula, and to impose a blockade of the Chinese coast. All of which were war measures.

Matloff: You had no problem in that regard? You didn't feel that those were necessary for carrying out the mission that you were given?

Ridgway: This is a gray area. Just what I thought at the time I don't now know, but the President's objectives were very clear. I consulted with the Joint Chiefs on this. For instance, MacArthur wanted to attack targets across the Yalu. Vandenberg, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, was very much opposed to it. He said, "If we do that now, our losses through attrition, plus combat, will so weaken us that we will not be able to respond or build up for two years thereafter in case something breaks out in Europe."

Matloff: Looking at it from the military side, did you feel that American military doctrine was adequate for the limited war that was encountered in Korea?

Ridgway: I don't think that at that time American doctrine (you'd have to refer to the basic field manuals) contemplated limited war. The concept had always been all-out war, where everything is used in order to achieve victory. Of course, we went into the question of whether the A-bomb should be used over there, and I recommmended against it.

Matloff: At what point did that come up?

Ridgway: I don't remember. I was Supreme Commander then. General Bradley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, came over, and I said, "Brad, I have no idea how many of these bombs you have, but we are particularly vulnerable here. We have practically our whole artillery ammunition supplies in one very congested area near Pusan and it could be taken out with one bomb, if the Russians have a bomb. I don't know whether they do or not. But there might be a use against personnel." We were authorized to war game that, which we did. I had no atomic weapons in the Far East theater, and we would have not only to get the President's permission, but they would have to be brought in from somewhere else. So we tried to figure out if we might find a remunerative target for an A-bomb, for instance, against personnel, and we couldn't. We found out by war-gaming that, by the time we could locate a target, it would be so easy to disperse it, before we could get the President's permission and get the bomb on target.

Matloff: Was anyone pushing for the use of the A-bomb at the time?

Ridgway: I don't know whether anybody was pushing or not. It was probably just an inquiry. Much later, Radford was the one who was pushing the use down in Indochina.

Matloff: What lessons did you feel the experience in Korea taught for American strategic planning? You have given a good deal of thought to this and I know that you had strong feelings about fighting in the Asian theater and the like.

Ridgway: I felt, along with the overwhelming majority, before the attack occurred in June of 1950, that we should not fight a war on the mainland of Asia, that it would be suicidal. I never changed that opinion. When Korea came along, it was little bit different. It was the mainland of Asia, but it was a little sliver off that great Asian land mass, and a sliver over which we controlled the complete air mastery of the skies and the seas around it. Also, we had been the godfather of the Republic of Korea and we had a moral responsibility from which we certainly could not walk away. We were committed to help that little fellow there. I don't think that American doctrine even envisioned a limited war, while, after the Korean war, I thought that every war should be a limited war, if it were possible.

Matloff: What lessons did you draw about the future role and conduct of limited war? Would this be a feasible option for the President?

Ridgway: Limited to this extent: there should be a close and continuing cooperation between the military and the civilians, between State and Defense, in a spirit of friendly, open-minded cooperation, listening to each other's views. I would illustrate it that the civilian sector, the State Department for instance, would say, "Here's what we're planning to do. Now can you support it?" If the answer is, "Yes," OK. If not, then,

"How long would it take you to assemble the means so you can support it?" That sort of thing. This has got to control these things in the future. So by limited war I mean that the civilian authorities have got to make a clear-cut statement of what the political objectives are and the military objectives have got to flow from the political, not vice versa, as they did in Indochina.

Matloff: How about the lessons for unification as a result of the Korean War experience? Did you have any feelings about the progress of unification, or any feeling about what more could or should be done?

Ridgway: No, I had, with that one exception that I'll mention, complete cooperation from Air and Navy in the Far Eastern theater. The only thing that always came up was this question of the Air Force. I understood their point of view and they understood mine--adamant opposition against any parceling out of control over any part of the air forces in the theater. It must be all centralized in the person of the senior Air Force commander on the spot. The Marines were always pressing to get back the first Marine air wing there, in sole support of the Marine division. I said, "Just look at it from my point of view, as the Army commander now. You've got about four times as much support in that first Marine air wing as I could give any one division here. It's got to go into the central air control pool." The Marines bucked that, and the Air Force did, too. To go back to the European theater, I had to bring up the same thing. Norstad was the Air Force commander, when I was Supreme Commander in Europe, and I said, "You've got northern Norway and eastern Anatolia,

that are 4,000 miles apart. I think that those two commanders in the far west and in the far east should have a certain amount of close support aviation under their direct, instant control at all times. I'm the Supreme Commander, and I can order the detachment of those fighting squadrons at any time. But that fellow has got to know that he has something he can control himself, if the emergency breaks." You couldn't budge the Air Force point of view. It never varied from that. Norstad and I were good friends and I admire him greatly, but he got his orders from Washington. This was the doctrine of the Air Force, and it was not going to change it, and so far as I know, it never has.

Matloff: What lessons did you draw in dealing with the communists, particularly at the time of the truce negotiations? The handling of the truce table discussions, along with the battlefield and the home front, was apparently a rather clever attempt to join all three--heating up the battlefield in an effort sometimes to get more pressure at the truce table. Did you come away with any impressions about what this meant for American policy and American negotiators, who might in the future have to deal under similar circumstances with the communists?

Ridgway: No, I doubt if I was thinking back then what the reaction would be here at home. I was thinking of my own problems. We didn't pull our punches in the military and tactical field at all while these negotiations were going on.

Matloff: You were using the battlefield too, in other words, to get pressure on the truce table?

Ridgway: We would go right ahead with our tactical planning.

Matloff: Looking back, how well in your opinion did the American national security apparatus operate during the Korean War from your vantage point out in the theater? Was it working effectively?

Ridgway: You're talking about intelligence now?

Matloff: Intelligence and also policymaking, and the directives that were coming to you from Washington and the like. Did the whole apparatus seem to be working well, did it mesh?

Ridgway: I had no objection whatever to any instructions I got from Washington. I felt that the intelligence situation was deplorable. Bedell Smith, who was then the head of the CIA, and was a dear friend for many years, came over there to see me and I said to him, "I must say that it is very puzzling that all I can get from the whole intelligence community, not just combat intelligence, but also theater and worldwide intelligence, is one big goose egg out in front with 174,000 Chinese. That's all I've got, and I don't know whether they're in there or not. The only way that I can find out is to launch a careful, well coordinated, probing attack to find out." I thought that the total intelligence effort was very poor. Charlie Willoughby, on MacArthur's staff, was a very professional intelligence officer and I think that the intelligence he had of the Chinese order of battle, as it later proved, was very accurate. The great fault over there was poor evaluation of the intelligence that was obtained. They knew the facts, but they were poorly evaluated. I don't know just why that was. It was probably in good part because of MacArthur's

personality. If he did not want to believe something, he wouldn't.

Matloff: In your view, what was the significance of the Korean War for subsequent United States defense planning and policy?

Ridgway: I think the major lesson learned was that every war must be, if possible, a limited war--limited in objectives, to the extent that political objectives must dominate the military; and that the political objectives mmust have a major national consensus or it will not be supported by our people under our form of government. Those are the major things.

Matloff: One last question on the Korean experience--what do you feel were your major achievements in your role as the Supreme commander and Commander in Chief of the Far East Command?

Ridgway: Accomplishment of the mission assigned me. The mission assigned was very clear: expel the invader, and restore peace to the area--both of which we did.

Matloff: Any major disappointments or frustrations?

Ridgway: Yes, a major disappointment was the handling of the POW problem. That was a tough one. I think think the underground planning that went on in the prison camps came as a complete surprise to all of us; it certainly did to me. They would have senior officers deliberately taken prisoner so that they could indoctrinate POWs that didn't have the knowledge that they had coming in from the outside, and start these uprisings with the seizing of General Dodd and all of that. That was a new experience to all of us.

Matloff: Let's move now to another of your very important roles--as the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers Europe, 1952-1953. Do you recall the circumstances of your appointment as SACEUR?

Ridgway: Yes, there I did have advanced knowledge. In fact, I was given the high privilege of choice: did I want to stay and retain command in the Far East or go to Europe. My decision was to go to Europe.

Matloff: Were there any instructions, written or oral, given to you by anybody at that time as to what your role would be?

Ridgway: No, I don't think so. I didn't get any instructions until I got to Washington.

Matloff: When you got to Washington, did the President and/or the Secretary of Defense try to orient or guide you?

Ridgway: Yes, the Secretary of Defense was Bob Lovett then, and the President was Truman. Again I would like to reiterate that I can't conceive that any field commander had finer support from his President than I had when I was Supreme Commander in the Far East. As a little evidence of his consideration for me, when I got to Washington, en route to Paris, he personally took me on a tour of the White House, which had just been rehabilitated. He had Bradley with him, too. Then Lovett had a special luncheon for me. Those are two indices of my personal relations with the President and the Secretary of Defense.

Matloff: Do you recall any specific instructions about the post?

Ridgway: I'm sure that I got none then.

Matloff: Were you briefed by your predecessor, in connection with the SACEUR assignment?

Ridgway: Yes, I had a long meeting with Eisenhower. He left about two days after I got there. Ike was suffering greatly from some eye trouble he had at that time, but he received me in a very cordial manner and gave me as much time as I wanted. He went over the main problems and the personalities of the people about which he wanted to warn me.

Matloff: What problems did you face?

Ridgway: The NATO organization was born out of a fear, that coalesced European nations to form the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In Eisenhower's early months over there, with his tremendous reputation and the admiration of the world as a military leader, he was able to draw promises of very fine support--X number of divisions from one nation, X number from another, to be ready at such and such a time. By the time I got there this fear of a Russian attack (the Korean War had precipitated the fear that it was the opening gambit in what would be the start of World War III, and I felt that way myself when I was Deputy Chief of Staff) had subsided. These nations now were finding that the things that they had promised weren't so easy, and their parliaments didn't want to go along because they were extremely costly. So they weren't meeting their obligations and there were no prospects that they would. That was my primary problem. By that time Pug Ismay had been appointed Secretary General of NATO and he was a friendly person with whom to work. He had a fine military background and had been the confidant of Churchill, so I could go to him with any of my political problems and get an understanding hearing right away. It

was perfectly obvious that our means were wholly inadequate to meet a sudden, full-scale attack by the Soviets, which was within their capability, though we didn't think a probability. For instance, in the two flanks of the area, particularly the Greek flank, from the Bulgarian border (Bulgaria was a solid Russian ally) it was only five miles to salt water. There was no possible depth that you could defend that, and my mission was to defend the NATO nations. I said, "We'll defend as far forward as we can, but some places we can't. There's no possibility to defend the head of the Aegean." We didn't have much depth in Norway, either, with the Russians right next door. Those were the sort of things that went through my mind. The next thing was to get a familiarity with the land that we had to defend and then I started my reconnaissance from northern Norway all the way around to eastern Anatolia. Much of the ground goes right up to the frontier.

Matloff: So the problem seemed to be finding the forces?

Ridgway: The willingness was there on the part of the military commanders, but the political heads had weakened in their resolve to provide the means which they had agreed to earlier.

Matloff: How far along did you find the organizational side of NATO, for example, the shape and the infrastructure, and all the rest of it?

Ridgway: The infrastructure was very weak, and Gruenther and Norstad had to deal with that later. It was lamentable, really, but to be expected. There was no parallel in history, I imagine, for a group of nations like that all of a sudden to have common doctrines, particularly logistical

doctrines, and uniformity of statistical procedures, interchange of parts, and all of that.

Matloff: How about your working relationships with the Secretary of Defense and other top officials in OSD in your capacity as SACEUR? How often for example, did you meet with them, or did they come over? Did you come back to Washington to confer with them?

Ridgway: No, I didn't come back to Washington at all during my tour over there. Nor did Lovett come over. Now, Dulles, the Secretary of State, did come over, and had a dinner party at the American Embassy--Dillon was the Ambassador then--and Dulles outlined the world plans that they had in mind at this time. They were still trying to clean up the Korean War. Dulles at that time was proposing that we would take Hainan Island in the south of China and mount a two-pronged offensive against Red China from Hainan and Taiwan, in combination with operations in Korea. But none of that ever happened.

Matloff: Then you didn't have many dealings with OSD in this capacity?

Ridgway: No, I didn't.

Matloff: How about your relations with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and its Chairman? Was there much communication or visiting back and forth?

Ridgway: Again, my relations in every one of my overseas commands with the Joint Chiefs couldn't have been happier from my point of view. Bradley was the Chairman and all three of them were fine. I didn't have any trouble there at all.

Matloff: You already mentioned that you did see the Secretary of State. How about the White House? Any instructions coming from them, any visits?

Ridgway: The Secretary of Defense had changed while I was still there, Bob Lovett had stepped out and Charlie Wilson was Secretary. Wilson was an extremely hard man to deal with. He came in with complete ignorance of the military, and a deep-seated antagonism toward it, which he was not at all hesitant in expressing before me. For example, the Army did everything wrong during World War II. He was one of these people who was intensely discourteous in his own way. For instance, I'd had 30 years of service and was Chief of Staff of one of the great services, and I would only come to him when I had something of major importance to which I had given a great deal of thought, and had checked over with Bob Stevens, our Secretary, who was tops. Wilson would look out the window and drum his fingers on the table and pay no attention at all to me. He was impossible to work with.

Matloff: Did you get some of this flavor--the personality and the feelings toward the Army--in dealing with Wilson, even when you were SACEUR?

Ridgway: No, not much. He came over there while I was still SACEUR and I met him--I didn't know I was going to be Chief of Staff at that time. It was mostly a social thing and I didn't discuss many things with him. I'm sure that I briefed him on my estimate of the military situation over there in the NATO command.

Matloff: In dealings with the President, how did you get to him--through the national security assistant? What channels were you using?

Ridgway: No, I think the channels then were quite different. In Korea Collins was designated as the agent for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, so I'd deal with him. By this time that had been changed, and as long as Bradley was Chairman I never had any trouble at all, because we thought alike on everything.

Matloff: Did you have any dealings with Congress while you were SACEUR?

Ridgway: No.

Matloff: I imagine that you must have had a good deal of contact with the NATO Council.

Ridgway: Yes, that's the political side of the thing. My foil there was Pug Ismay, who was the Secretary General. He was the top political authority of the NATO command.

Matloff: Had you met him before, when you were in the European theater?

Ridgway: No, I hadn't met him during the war.

Matloff: Regarding allied problems in the SACEUR role, what problems did you encounter in connection with such things as roles and missions of the various countries? You had mentioned earlier the fact that the budget question was coming up. Did you have problems with allies along the lines of weaponry, force structure, and buildup?

Ridgway: Yes, but they would be taken through the Council. These were questions for the political sides of the various governments, not the military, because they had to get the money from the politicians, in

order to acquire the weapons, the infrastructure, and everything else. It was a constant struggle to get standardization of weapons, infrastructure, common logistical procedures, and things of that kind. It was an enormous task, and, of course, I guess that it is still going on today. They still haven't standardized them.

Matloff: Do you recall any sharp issues between the United States and the allies on any of these questions?

Ridgway: No.

Matloff: Was there any advice that the Secretary of Defense might have given on such issues that could have been useful?

Ridgway: No.

Matloff: Do you recall any policy decisions that were made in NATO during your tenure that were important? Any changes with reference to the membership of the alliance, for example?

Ridgway: No, that did not arise while I was there. I know that shortly thereafter the question of the admission of Germany came up. We did have one problem; rather, we avoided a problem. You know of the longstanding enmity between Greece and Turkey. I had had both Greek and Turkish troops under my command in Korea and my relations with the commanding officers of those combat units had been most cordial and cooperative and so I was given a most cordial reception in Turkey. I started out by making my courtesy calls (?) on the Secretaries of Defense of the various NATO members, and I started in the east with Turkey. I wanted to see the terrain which might be subject to attack in the event of war, and the

whole show there, so I went up with the Turkish Third Army commander [Lt. Gen. Baransel] who commanded in the east all the way up to the Russian border. We spent a very friendly week on that reconnaissance, and when I got back, in conversations with these senior Turkish officers I had proposed, after checking with our Ambassador George McKee at Ankara, that I take with me to Athens senior Turkish army officers and meet with the senior Greek army officers. That was a simple suggestion, but a lot of talk went into it. It was approved back home in Washington, and in both Ankara and Athens, and so we went across the border near Thrace. We met with very senior officer counterparts of the Greek Army. We went to a little town which they said was strongly communist and told us that we really should not go in. But I said that I didn't worry about that at all. We spent one night in the town of Kavala near Philip of Macedon's birthplace, and had a delightful evening. Speeches of the most friendly atmosphere ensued by both Turks and Greeks and I thought, "This is wonderful, to break down the bonds of distrust between these two and get them to work together." The friendly spirit lasted during my command, but I don't know what happened later. They're back now again with great distrust between them.

Matloff: They were then fairly new in the alliance--they came in during 1952. Had they already come in when you took over as SACEUR?

Ridgway: Yes, they were already members.

Matloff: What did you consider the major threat to NATO to be? Was it the threat of possible ground action at the center?

Ridgway: Yes, I don't think I gave much concern to atomic warfare at that time. By that time I had the best information we had as to what atomic capabilities the Soviet Union had. I don't think they had anything much, maybe one or two bombs, but that didn't worry us at all. It was a question of a conventional attack, possibly starting on the flanks, either in Norway which was so vulnerable, or Turkey, less so. The Turks didn't fear the Russians at all. They had fought them many times and the morale of the Turkish army was very high. They didn't fear an attack; they thought that they could handle it. I felt that they ought to make a fine defense well forward. We had been over the whole terrain. The eastern Anatolian Plateau is a pretty tough nut to crack, if you have determined defenders there, even though they are in the minority. That was the main problem: how would we stop an attack through the center, which we knew was very weak?

Matloff: Did you encounter any differences between the U.S. and other allies' perceptions of the Soviet threat?

Ridgway: Yes, there was some difference there. The French General Staff always had independent ideas. Even though they hadn't beaten anybody since Napolean's day, they still thought that they were the greatest military leaders. It never came to any real clash. Juin was my center commander, the only field marshal in the French army at that time. He had been under Clark in Italy and had done very well. We got along fine together. There wasn't any trouble there.

Matloff: Did you find any feeling about the intensity of the threat receding the further away you got from the border, the east-west front, that the countries that were less immediately vulnerable were not as intensely concerned as others?

Ridgway: I expect so. I don't have any concrete evidence that I could give you on that.

Matloff: It has sometimes been said that the Greeks and Turks were more worried about each other than they were about the Russians.

Ridgway: That's right. The Italians were determined to defend their passes in the north of Italy, and the Norwegians were going to make the best defense that they could under extremely difficult circumstances. Portugal, of course, was way off by itself so I guess that it didn't have to worry about anything.

Matloff: Luxembourg couldn't field much force to begin with, and Iceland didn't have any.

Ridgway: Luxembourg had a little contingent there in Korea.

Matloff: What did you see as the major problems in NATO strategy when you took over? Was it a question of making that defense as far forward as possible?

Ridgway: I would say so. How far forward could you safely go when you knew you had to fight a defensive battle, initially anyway. Then it might be a defense in successive lines of withdrawal, until you got sufficient reinforcements to pass to the offensive. The question was: would and could the U.S. meet its obligation of X number of divisions? I've

forgotten how many--I think by M+30 the NATO commitment was about 30 divisions. There was no prospect of getting them; none.

Matloff: We mentioned atomic weapons before. What was your attitude toward the buildup and use of nuclear weapons in the NATO environment? or the question of nuclear versus conventional forces?

Ridgway: I don't think that it arose during my command. We had too few there. That all came later, much later.

Matloff: We mentioned before the central front. How did you view the relative importance of the central front vis-a-vis the northern and southern flanks during your tenure?

Ridgway: France was essential: it was the keystone of the whole thing. We didn't have Germany in NATO at that time. So you might lose temporarily on both flanks, as a matter of fact, but the real key to the thing was the central front.

Matloff: It seems to me that in recent years there has been more worry about the southern flank and the more northern flank and somewhat less about the central.

Ridgway: I think that from what I read the feeling is that the chances of World War III starting with a Russian attack through the north German plain are remote. They think that it will start somewhere else, and nobody knows where.

Matloff: How about the role and the position of Britain in the alliance? It's been trying to hold on to its independent deterrence from the very

beginning. Do you think that it was realistic for Britain to be trying to play that role?

Ridgway: It's hard for me to look back on that. I don't know just when the British got an atomic capability of their own. Do you?

Matloff: It comes later, but the talk from the very beginning is whether Britain must hold on to its prestige, its independence, and what not.

Ridgway: That's always been an element in the British planning and thinking. I'm sure it still is today. Certainly it is in the French.

Matloff: You weren't encountering anything like that?

Ridgway: No, I don't think we had any problems on that.

Matloff: How about the relationship between West Germany and the alliance. West Germany was still not in the alliance when you were SACEUR, but there was already talk about the European Defense Community. In 1952 the French raised that proposition to make some kind of a relationship with West Germany in the form of an overall European army. Did you get drawn in on those discussions?

Ridgway: No, that came later when I was Chief of Staff, when the Indochinese thing came up, and the French were bludgeoning us to take over their responsibility.

Matloff: The proposition was raised by the French in 1952, and then they sank it in 1954. You had come from the Korean War experience. What impact did the Korean War have on NATO? Did it complicate the problems of SACEUR in dealing with the NATO countries? Did it have any impact on

buildup? You mentioned the fear that Korea might be the start of World War III. Did that have any impact on your role as SACEUR?

Ridgway: Indeed it did. In the Congress, Bob Taft, the Senator from Ohio, was dead set against reinforcing Europe, as I remember it. He fought it tooth and nail. We were trying to do both at that time--with inadequate forces--build up NATO and still not neglect our obligations there in the Far East. We did wind up by bringing in a good many National Guard Divisions and only two of them got to see combat--the 40th and the 41st. It was such a miserable performance, really, in the first place, because the Congress of the United States had insisted upon tearing down this magnificent machine at the end of World War II. So, when the crisis came in Korea (which they could see coming--they had plenty of intelligence on this thing), they were totally unprepared. The only thing that they could do since there wasn't time to bring in these reserve units, even if it were politically possible and maybe it wasn't at the beginning, was to recall the senior noncommissioned officers who were in the individual ready reserve in the Army. I think that the same thing went for the Navy and the Air Force. That was a tough thing because these people had already had their combat and it should have devolved upon somebody else. But there wasn't any other source, and we had to get replacements there very rapidly. That was a sore problem over there in the early stages.

Matloff: Did you find that the President and the Secretary of Defense were following the development of NATO policy, strategy, and problems

during your tenure? Did you get any feel for how aware, interested, and active they were?

Ridgway: Yes, I'm sure, until Wilson got in. I can't answer for his thinking. Certainly when Lovett was there as Secretary of Defense and Acheson and Marshall in their positions, yes indeed.

Matloff: Going back and forward on the perspectives on NATO, I know people are going to be interested in your views on NATO, as they are in those of every SACEUR who's ever held the position. In the light of your experience, how do you see the future of the U.S. role in NATO, and U.S. relations with Europe? Do you see any changes in roles or functions of the United States?

Ridgway: I think that it's really a tenuous thing basically because it depends upon the will of politicians--the political authorities of these various nations. They make these commitments, but just as in the United States, a new administration comes in and then they change them. Look at the changes DeGaulle made. Look at the changes in the political scene that Mitterand has made in France, and that the labor and the conservative governments have made in Britain. Finally, in the last analysis, the only thing that binds allies together is fear. If they are not scared to death, there's always a question of whether they will meet their obligations made in times when they were afraid.

Matloff: How about the American side of it? In the original commitment to NATO by the United States, was there the feeling that this was going to be a long-term commitment? a permanent alliance? The reason I raise

this is that when Acheson was called to testify in Congress he was asked a direct question about whether he saw the deployment of American troops in Europe as a long-term commitment. He answered, "No." Later on he waffled.

Ridgway: When Eisenhower was President, he made a statement that I recall very clearly, that our troops were not there forever. You could interpret that in any way. No, I don't know. It had been an immemorial idea in our military that no occupation should last very long. The longer it would last, the worse the effects would be.

Matloff: Did you foresee then, some day, a phasing down, or would you want to speculate about what you think the future would hold?

Ridgway: I did, but I don't know just when, probably long after retirement. I thought that we shouldn't be there forever. But I don't know that you could put a finger on when you could safely withdraw them. It's been an objective of the Russians for 40 years to get us out of there, so anything that's a prime objective of the Soviet Union is certainly not to our interest. In Korea, when the armistice was signed, the governments of those nations which had contributed military combat contingents all signed and said that, in the event of a renewal of the aggression, they would be prompt to respond. So, shortly after leaving, I said, "If that means what it says, now is the time for us to reduce. Build up this South Korean army." Van Fleet did that very well there after he took over. Up to that time we couldn't take troops out of the line to train them, but then we could. I said, "Let the South Koreans shoulder the

whole responsibility, maybe supporting them with weapons and equipment, and so forth." I never thought that either one of these occupations would last anything like as long as it has.

Matloff: The proposition has sometimes been advanced that the European countries should take over more of the role for conventional defense and perhaps let the United States handle an air role of some kind. Do you have any feeling about this?

Ridgway: Of course they should, but they are not going to. Human nature being what it is, if they are getting something for nothing, they are not going to give anything themselves. When I was Supreme Commander in Tokyo, I was pressed frequently to keep urging the Japanese government to increase its measures for defense. I had by that time a very close, friendly, open, frank relationship with Yoshida, the Prime Minister, and I said, "These are my instructions, Mr. Prime Minister." He responded, "We can't do it now. There are too many prior things. Our people would have starved if you hadn't helped feed them, and there are too many other things that must be done first." Article 9 in the peace treaty denied the Japanese any military forces whatever. They've stood on that. Of course, we forced upon them suffrage for women and so forth, and now you've got big segments of the Japanese people who after that traumatic defeat, the only defeat in their history, don't go along with rearming.

Matloff: Let me ask you about some perennial issues concerning NATO--first, the relationship of NATO with the external problems and areas that have begun to impinge on it over the years; for example, problems in the

Middle East. One point that has been advanced frequently is that NATO's geographic boundaries should be extended. Another is that there should be more consultation with no expansion--consultation with the nations involved in NATO whose interests are involved with these outside areas--more frequent and effective consultation, as indicated in the Harmel report that came out in 1956, after you left. Do you have any feelings on that?

Ridgway: While I had the NATO command, the British were already beginning to press; Bill Simms, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who came from the Far East Command, was very much in favor of NATO taking cognizance of problems far outside the NATO area. To what extent that was endorsed by the British government, I don't know, but I remember he gave a talk to us at NATO at my invitation and stressed that point. My feeling was that we had enough problems of our own.

Matloff: You were not in favor of expanding the boundaries?

Ridgway: When Britain wanted me to endorse bringing U.S. troops into Greece to take over, I said that I would not recommend it.

Matloff: Would you lean more toward the consultation idea?

Ridgway: Yes. This is far over the head of any theater commander. This is a top governmental problem.

Matloff: The recommendation for more consultation on problems on the outside was also advanced by the so-called "three wise men" earlier, and then the Harmell report in 1956 picked up the same idea.

Ridgway: Just imagine, if you couldn't get the heads of the nucleus of the NATO nations right there in western Europe to agree, how are you going to enlarge the alliance worldwide and get agreement?

Matloff: Do you see any possible changes in the future in alliance structure, functions, or strategy?

Ridgway: The only thing that I would hope for is that they would continue at a more rapid pace in their standardization of everything--weapons, supplies, logistical practices. It staggers the imagination to realize that if you're refueling a plane, for instance, there are sixteen or seventeen different nozzles on these refilling airports of the NATO nations, and all different sizes.

Matloff: How far can or should military integration go? Has it reached its furthest limits, do you think, or can it go further?

Ridgway: I would say that it would all be a factor of how deep the fear of an attack is. If they really think that the knife is at their throat, they will do it. I doubt very much if they will otherwise. We don't do it ourselves here--look at us.

Matloff: Would you still regard NATO as significant for American national security?

Ridgway: Yes, we can't fight the world alone. If you go back in our recent military history, only as far back as World War I, some of our leading military authorities thought, "God forbid we have to fight a war again with allies, with all the problems." But we cannot do it alone. I think that

the cement has got to be strong to keep together Japan, Canada, and the NATO members, or we're in real trouble.

Matloff: What do you regard as your major achievements or successes during your tenure as SACEUR?

Ridgway: I don't think there was much of an achievement, because this was when the fear of Soviet aggression had so subsided that they were backtracking on all the promises they had made to Eisenhower in early 1951. I think that we got a clearer idea of the nature of the problem, which was largely political then; that we had to get the approval of the political authorities of the various countries to do what was required.

Matloff: How about your contributions in organization? It seems to me that you did help organize the alliance.

Ridgway: Yes, I had a big argument with the British representative on the organization in the east flank between Greece and Turkey, and over the question of where the headquarters of the eastern segment of NATO should be. We finally decided on Izmir. The British wanted it to be in Greece.

Matloff: Any disappointments or frustrations that you felt when you left that post?

Ridgway: No, none except the general disappointment over the slowness of providing the means which had been promised.

Matloff: Leaving the SACEUR period, we can start the Chief of Staff role, during the period 1953-1955. Let me ask the perennial question about the

background of the appointment--what you remember about the circumstances, how you first learned about it, and who informed you?

Ridgway: I think, as I told you, that I got an intimation from General Bradley, who was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, in the form of an inquiry--"If you had your preference, which would you rather do, remain where you are or take over as Chief of Staff?" My answer was, after a thorough analysis, to come back as Chief of Staff. Then there was a long period with no indication of what the decision would be or when it would be made. So I followed that up with an inquiry some weeks afterward to General Bradley, and I said that it was important that the decision be made at an early date and announced, as a lot of things hinged upon that. Shortly after that, it was announced that I would be nominated as Chief of Staff, subject to approval by the Congress.

Matloff: Was there any instruction or guidance by the President or the Secretary of Defense as to what was expected?

Ridgway: After all the new members were selected, President Eisenhower got us together and told us what he wanted us to do. In general, he told us that he wanted us to take an independent view of the whole world situation and then get together, consider these things, and come up with some recommendations. That's all covered in this very lengthy memorandum, which I am giving to you.

Matloff: In other words, he was looking for more than advice on service problems?

Ridgway: Very much so. Later, he came down shortly after we had taken office, which was on August 15--we were all down at Quantico--and gave a

talk to the new Chiefs. General Bradley, the former Chairman, was present. Eisenhower made a statement that troubled me greatly. He said, "You get together and come up with some agreed positions." I went to my dear friend, General Bradley, whom I probably knew better than any other officer in the Army, including his own classmates, and said, "Brad, I'm really disturbed about this. These are strong people. Each has his own ideas. It isn't going to be possible, many times, to get unanimous agreement. Does this mean that the President is just looking for 'yes' men around here?" He didn't think so. Maybe that was an unnecessary concern on my part.

Matloff: Were there no conditions asked of you when you were initially given the position?

Ridgway: No, none.

Matloff: It looks, from the composition of the Joint Chiefs, that he was looking for men who had had very broad experience--who had been heads of large commands and had global experience. How well did you know President Eisenhower at that point?

Ridgway: Not too well; in fact, I didn't know him well at all. We were cadets in the same company for two years; he was two years ahead of me. I didn't see anything of him there in that company. Bradley was in the same company, as a matter of fact, and I formed a very close friendship with Brad in my yearling year, when he was a first classman, but not with Eisenhower.

Matloff: How about in the European theater in World War II?

Ridgway: No, not close at all. He was very close with his Chief of Staff, Bedell Smith, but in North Africa I saw him once or twice, very briefly, and before Normandy I saw him at one or two command conferences, but that's about all.

Matloff: I think that you had already met Secretary of Defense Wilson as SACEUR head. How about the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Radford--had you known him before?

Ridgway: Yes, he was Commander in Chief Pacific, when I was Supreme Commander, Far East, so he came over there on several inspection and liaison visits.

Matloff: How about Secretary of the Army Robert Stevens?

Ridgway: I had never known him before, but I came to have the highest regard for him. He was a man of the highest integrity and high principles in every way. His misfortune was that he had to get down and fight against people like Senator McCarthy.

Matloff: What problems did you face when you took over as Chief of Staff?

Ridgway: Most of them concerned the era of cutting down, which was the decision of the American Congress. Truman himself had fought it, but he couldn't stem the tide. He soon learned the type of man that he was dealing with in Stalin and the nature of the Soviet ambitions and objectives.

Matloff: About the problems that you were facing as soon as you took over as the Chief of Staff, back in 1953--did you have any discussions with your predecessor, General Collins, about them?

Ridgway: I did, many. We knew that we were facing a new future, which had a totally new element introduced into it--the atomic capability. So the big thing would be to try and look as far ahead as possible and tailor the forces to be able to fight successfully on the atomic battlefield in the future. That was probably the major thing. Then, very quickly after that came the start of this gradual erosion, the cutting down, and the Army took the brunt of it. Along with the theory which was then very prevalent, Wilson was for a bigger bang for the buck, the use of the atomic weapons. Dulles fell for this notion, which, I think, Radford sold him. According to that theory, from now on, we will drop the atomic bomb at the times and places of our own choosing, and that will settle the whole thing. So one of my major problems during my whole tour was to combat this notion. I would never agree to the fact that this was "the" principal deterrent. It was a deterrent, but not the principal factor. In the long run it was going to be the man on the ground who survived. But this started the issue.

Matloff: Since we are talking about service problems that came up during your tenure, how serious a problem was interservice rivalry during that period?

Ridgway: Very serious, because it all revolves around the dollar, and that's a big political issue. Early in Eisenhower's administration, just after we took over, we were told that the total amount for the Defense Department would be $33 billion; now it's $300 billion plus. That very small amount had to be proportioned among the three services. So right

away you had to fight for what you believed to be your essential needs, and the Army came out on the small end all the time-bigger Navy, bigger Air Force, and smaller Army.

Matloff: In his book The Uncertain Trumpet, your successor, General Taylor, referred to his period as Chief of Staff as an era of "Babylonian captivity" for the Army. I was wondering whether you felt the same way?

Ridgway: Yes, very much so.

Matloff: What was your view of the roles and missions of the services, and did those views differ from those of the other chiefs?

Ridgway: We always had the feeling that every time we wanted to get a little more reconnaissance, puddle jumpers, helicopters, and things, the Air Force would say, "You're taking over our functions." It was a continual squabble up until the end of my tour, and, I guess, long after that. Now we've got fairly high performance aircraft in the Army and a far greater number of helicopters and an air assault division which is largely manned with those.

Matloff: Any problems with the Navy? Admiral Carney's baliwick?

Ridgway: No, Carney and I were on very friendly terms and most of the time in agreement, I think. Of course, he always wanted more money for the Navy, which meant less money for the Army. But the only problem I kept reiterating to both of them was that we recognize the needs, that we are an island nation, and that the Army is going to have to fight. If it fights, we hope that it won't fight on our shore, but abroad. It can't swim or fly, so we have to have an adequate air and sea lift. We

still have neither today. The fight has gone right on and probably always will. There isn't enough money to do all these things--that's the whole problem.

Matloff: Where did the Secretary of Defense stand in all these issues?

Ridgway: He was against the Army most of the time.

Matloff: We talked about the budget. Who was setting the budgetary figures for the whole establishment here, and how were those figures arrived at?

Ridgway: I imagine that it was the head of the budget office, Joe Dodge. I think that the President largely relied on him for recommendations, but, of course, the final decision was up to the President.

Matloff: What do you think were the dominant influences on both the President and Dodge? Were they economic considerations?

Ridgway: I don't know, but the President had to make the final decisions. But, then, the Congress could either approve or withhold the funds, if necessary.

Matloff: How about within the service--how were the budget figures arrived at?

Ridgway: I'm sure that each of the services put in its own estimate of what it needed. Then the cost of what they wanted and how much money each could get had to be arrived at. Those were decisions for the Secretary of Defense and the President.

Matloff: Did the JCS as a corporate body play any role at all in budgetary formulation?

Ridgway: I don't think so. I wouldn't say none. The Joint Chiefs would have to recommend what the makeup of the several services should be. That was generally a compromise because you couldn't reconcile it with your honest convictions of what was actually needed. What each of us asked for far exceeded any probability of getting the money involved.

Matloff: I gather from what I've read that you had strong views on the need for balanced forces. Do you want to describe a little of what you had in mind for the Army and for the nation at large, if it extended to that degree?

Ridgway: I don't know if balanced forces would mean the same thing to me today. In a combat theater you'd want a proper proportion of air, sea, and ground forces.

Matloff: This is part two of an oral history interview held with General Matthew B. Ridgway at his home in Fox Chapel, Pittsburgh, on April 19, 1984. Representing the OSD historical program, as in the first part, is Dr. Maurice Matloff.

General, I'd like to continue our discussion of your role as Army Chief of Staff, in which you served during the period 1953 to 1955, and begin by talking about relationships with various sectors of the OSD. What were your relationships with Secretary of Defense Wilson? Then we will go on to the two Deputy Secretaries during your tenure, Roger Kyes and Robert Anderson.

Ridgway: My relations with Secretary Wilson were anything but pleasant. Mr. Wilson came in with an extensive ignorance of the military establishment and a well-established dislike for the Army. He openly criticized the Army for poor performance in World War II. But, most of all, he was one of these gentlemen who have made up their minds and do not want to listen to facts. On frequent occasions I would go to him on a problem of major importance, that I had coordinated with Secretary of the Army Stevens, and find him looking out the window, drumming his fingers on the table, and paying no attention whatever. On one occasion Mr. Stevens went with me, and, as we were leaving, he addressed us as "you men," as he might well have some employees in a factory. Neither of us made any comment but his whole attitude was not lost on us at all. My dealings with Roger Kyes were not very frequent, but he was the bullying type, a man of impressive physique and, I guess, equally impressive

business record. His whole attitude was to overawe a military man who came to him with problems. My relations with Bob Anderson were most pleasant. Here was a gentleman of the first order, who would listen patiently and attentively to anything you had to say, and give it full consideration and a reasonable response.

Matloff: Did you have many dealings with other top OSD officials, for example, Comptroller Wilfred McNeil?

Ridgway: No, very little. Our Comptroller, General Decker, rendered such an outstanding performance that the congressional committees before whom he frequently appeared gave him a very high tribute orally when he was leaving the service to retire.

Matloff: How close was the top OSD leadership, Wilson, for example, with the JCS? Were there frequent meetings? Did he sit down with them?

Ridgway: I don't recall that Mr. Wilson ever attended a session of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, nor do I believe that Roger Kyes did. I'm not quite sure about Mr. Anderson. It would have been his nature to do so, but I don't recall sessions where he was present. That was quite different from the days of Secretary of State Acheson, who frequently sat in with us, and to the best of my recollection, so too did Secretary Lovett.

Matloff: How about your relations with other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and its Chairman, Admiral Radford? Were there any differences between you and the other Chiefs?

Ridgway: Very much so, between me and Admiral Radford. He had a very one-track mind. When he came to some conclusion, he would pursue that to

the ultimate conclusion, "in unmitigated act," as Kipling said. I think that he felt strongly that the defense of the United States in the years ahead devolved primarily on air and sea power, and therefore the Army could be drastically reduced. He so recommended at one time. That should be in a document in the files of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As a result, Mr. Wilson apparently had great confidence in him and I think that he accepted Radford's views most of the time. As I recall it, Radford came back with Eisenhower and Dulles, when Eisenhower went to Korea after his election but before he became president. Apparently Radford very much impressed Eisenhower, to the point where he chose him to be the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. My relations with the other members of the camp were most cordial. We never had any troubles. We had strong disagreements, which we aired orally in the meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But my views and Radford's were generally quite different. Later on, when the Vietnam war came on, he was strongly in favor of using the A-bomb there and I was strongly opposed to it. My other colleagues on the Joint Chiefs, Carney of the Navy, Twining of the Air Force and, I think, Shepherd of the Marine Corps, were all pretty much of my point of view.

Matloff: How much time did you find you had to spend on the JCS business?

Ridgway: A great deal. We had the Indochina problem coming up, and the French were pressing the United States government to intervene there in various ways. They had been pressing for money for a long time and they got a rather large amount. Then they wanted us to take over the training,

and we did that. Finally, when the siege of Dien Bien Phu was on, they supported Radford's point of view of using the A-bomb.

Matloff: Whom did the Secretary of Defense back when there were split issues in the Joint Chiefs of Staff? Did he usually go with the Chairman?

Ridgway: Yes, generally speaking.

Matloff: Was there a deep schism in the Joint Chiefs over massive retaliation, by the time you got to 1955? Was the feeling rather strong about the pros and the cons?

Ridgway: Yes, I would say so. I think Carney and I thought pretty much alike. He could correct me on this, but I think he and I were pretty much in accord, and, to a considerable degree, Nate Twining, too. My only strong differences of view--and they were honest views, I'm sure, on both sides--were with Radford. We were not hesitant in expressing our opinions. So there was a very strong divergence of view there throughout most of my two years between Radford and me.

Matloff: About relations with Congress--how did you handle the problem when you had to appear before congressional committees, when your original view differed from that of the position taken by the Secretary of Defense or the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

Ridgway: I can only recall clearly now--and all these things should be checked by documents, which I think still exist--when I was a witness before a joint session of two committees of the Senate--Foreign Relations and Armed Forces. It was chaired by Walter George of Georgia. It was a most impressive occasion, and I can't now give you the substance exact in

detail, but Senator George said to me,-"General, we want your frank opinions." I replied, "Senator, you shall have them. To whatever degree the other members of the Joint Chiefs agree (all of whom were present there at this meeting), they're here in presence and you can ask them, but my views follow." I told him exactly what my views were and I think the reception that joint committee gave me was very satisfying.

Matloff: Let's touch on the McCarthy hearings just a bit. You mentioned that Army Secretary Stevens became involved with the McCarthy hearings. Did that involvement in any way complicate your dealings with Congress?

Ridgway: No, I don't think so.

Matloff: You weren't drawn in in any way?

Ridgway: No, I wasn't.

Matloff: How about the impact of those hearings on Army morale during that period?

Ridgway: I couldn't answer that question. I know that the impact personally on Secretary Stevens must have been very deep, because he was a man of the highest principles and integrity dealing with a character of quite opposite personal traits.

Matloff: Let's talk somewhat about the relations with President Eisenhower. How did President Eisenhower conceive of your role as a member of the Joint Chiefs versus that of the Army Chief of Staff in importance? Did you sense any feeling on his part as to what the relative importance of those roles were?

Ridgway: No, I don't believe so. The President was very generous in listening to my views at any time. As a matter of fact, he asked me to present the results of that mission I sent over to Indochina, to examine the state on the ground and come back and report. I made a personal report to him, first alone, and then before the National Security Council.

Matloff: Was this in 1954, at the time of Dien Bien Phu?

Ridgway: I'm not sure of the timing.

Matloff: Still on relations with the President, did you find Eisenhower as commander in chief impartial? Did he favor his old service, or did he lean over backwards in other directions?

Ridgway: My recollection would be that in order to appear completely impartial, he rather leaned over backwards not in favor of the Army. He didn't want to be accused of partiality toward his former service. I think that the opinions of others would bear that out.

Matloff: Did he ever seek your advice on other than purely Army issues?

Ridgway: Military issues broader than the Army, yes.

Matloff: You mentioned that mission. Do you recall any other examples where he might have done that?

Ridgway: No, I don't.

Matloff: What were Eisenhower's views in connection with split JCS papers? Do you reall his ventilating any feelings about not wanting split papers, that he wanted a unanimous or some kind of agreed upon position?

Ridgway: I referred yesterday to that meeting when the President came down to speak to the Joint Chiefs, then newly installed in office, at Quantico, and General Bradley, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, was also present. Eisenhower in his informal off-the-cuff manner said, in substance, "You new Chiefs get together and thrash these things out and come to agreement, and present me with agreed papers." This was when I went to Bradley, whom I knew so intimately, and said, "Brad, I'm disturbed about this because, rightly or wrongly, I get the impression that the President is saying that he wants 'yes' men around him. When strong men get together, as these all are on the Joint Chiefs, there are bound to be fundamental disagreements sometimes, and they cannot be reconciled. They should go forward in that manner. This is the province of the civilian superiors. They have got to make the decision." I don't recall what Bradley's answer was, but I cite that as an example of my first real encounter with the President. Just after I came back from the European command, the President invited me over to the White House for breakfast, just the two of us. I don't recall the topics of our conversation, but I assume that we went over my service with NATO, because he had left that post himself shortly before. It was a very pleasant breakfast, and I'm sure that we ranged over the whole world situation.

Matloff: Did you have direct access to him once you were in the position?

Ridgway: I never sought it, no.

Matloff: Did you go through his national security advisor, or staff secretary, as he was called in those days?

Ridgway: I never had occasion to ask for a meeting with him. He asked me to come over and present the report in person, after that mission came back from Indochina.

Matloff: Were there ever any repercussions on his part when you had to appear on the Hill and your feelings about the Army's slice of the budget were quite strong? any attempt to lean your public position before the committees?

Ridgway: No, I was called before the Congress very infrequently. The only thing that I clearly remember now was before that joint session of the two Senate committees.

Matloff: Concerning the State Department, particularly Secretary of State Dulles, what were your relations with him?

Ridgway: Very pleasant. I had contact with him when I had first joined the Military Staff Committee in London when the United Nations were formally organized. That was the first time I had ever met him. Later on, I got to see a good deal of him, because at least for the first year of my tour as a member of the Joint Chiefs all of the Chiefs attended the sessions of the National Security Council. In the latter part of my tour that was changed and the rest of us were not invited; only the Chairman attended. I recall one incident when the President was ill--it may not have been a meeting of the whole Council--but I do recall that Vice President Nixon was in the chair. Some major issue arose and Admiral Radford elected to state the views of the Joint Chiefs, including those of the Army. I interrupted, apologized to the Chairman, and said, "I

must object to this. I'm Army Chief of Staff, and I will present the views of the Army on this question." That cut that off right away, and Mr. Nixon heard my views.

Matloff: Did you have the impression that Secretary of State Dulles understood the role and uses of military power?

Ridgway: He was obsessed with the idea that we would use the bomb at times and places of our own choosing. I think that he had a fundamental misconception of the possible use of the A-bomb. It was something that you just could not use indiscriminately. But I think that, initially at least, Mr. Dulles would have settled any problem that arose by the threat of the use of the A-bomb, as was done in Korea before Eisenhower became President. The whole history of the world since that time has shown that it really doesn't have any use. It's all or nothing with that thing. Herbert York, a prestigious scientist, wrote a book called The Road to Oblivion, that covered that point very well.

Matloff: We'll be talking with him, too, in this program. I take it then that Dulles probably didn't understand the possible uses of the Army as an instrument of national power, either.

Ridgway: I would think so. I would think that that would follow.

Matloff: Let me touch for a moment on the DoD reorganization of 1953--did you favor it or not? That came along during the period that you had taken over. That reorganization, based on the recommendations of the Rockefeller Committee, was called Reorganization Plan No. 6. It in effect removed the JCS from the chain of command. The service secretaries, rather than the

service chiefs, became the executive agents for the unified military commands. What impact, if any, might it have had on the Army? Did it make any big differences, for example, in the Chief of Staff's handling of the ground forces in crisis actions?

Ridgway: My memory is not clear on that. I recollect the Rockefeller plan but I couldn't answer your question. Let me go back to my dealings with Dulles. Mr. Dulles was a top-flight lawyer with a trained mind, and his oral briefings of the National Security Council at the times when I was present were done in a masterly fashion. Fact after fact was clearly stated in beautiful sequence. In fact, so much so that one time, after the National Security Council broke up, I went up to express my admiration for the clarity and completeness of his presentation of a complicated situation. On the question of downgrading or changing, which did or did not occur under the Rockefeller plan, I don't remember that. I do remember very strongly that I felt that the service secretaries were being degraded in influence, and I put this in a talk I gave to the whole Army staff at one time, before I knew how it was going to be handled. The Secretary of Defense had stated publicly that he would honor the authority and position of the service secretaries, and orders to them would only come from him. That was discarded very early. As a matter of fact, I think that you would find that the service secretaries were very frequently getting orders from various assistant secretaries of Defense, and not with the knowledge and approval of the Secretary of Defense himself. In other words, the service secretaries were really being denigrated. I protested against that. I have a paper--when

McElroy was Secretary of Defense, he asked for my opinions--I'll get you a copy. I felt that there was a double barreled thing there. In the first place, the service secretaries should have the full authority of the great responsibility they carry and deal with nobody less than the Deputy Secretary or Under Secretary of Defense, and not have this proliferation. There were numerous assistant secretaries who would come down and give orders to the service secretaries. I thought that was wrong, and I stated that in the letter to Secretary McElroy.

Matloff: On the positions of the Joint Chiefs versus the service secretaries, do you recall any change in relationships between those two in the chain of command?

Ridgway: No, I don't. You see, during the Korean War the Army Chief of Staff was the agent for the Joint Chiefs, so he issued orders direct to the Far East Command. This was changed after the Korean War, and thereafter any such instructions came not from any member of the Joint Chiefs but from the service secretary concerned or from the Secretary of Defense.

Matloff: In connection with the perceptions of the threat with which the United States was faced, do you recall the dominant attitude toward the Soviet threat that you found in DoD when you assumed office? Was it any different from the perception of the threat in your other capacities? Were there any differences of views about the threat within DoD? within the JCS? or between the JCS and the Secretary of Defense?

Ridgway: I think that we had a pretty clear perception of the scope and the magnitude of the threat, although the actions which should be

taken to minimize that threat were quite different from those which the JCS would have taken. I think that's been true all the way through, as I was referring to a little while ago. It's impossible for me to imagine why the advice supported by incontrovertible evidence of the senior military leaders over the period of several successive administrations was given only lip service by the civilian authorities.

Matloff: This touches on what we were discussing earlier. Have your views about the threat changed over the years?

Ridgway: Not a bit. Everything has confirmed them. Everything in the document that I gave you this morning, which was written in 1947, stands just as true today, except for one thing. At that time Soviet naval power had not emerged as a threat to our Navy in the oceans of the world as it is today.

Matloff: Let's turn to strategy and strategic planning, and we will touch on the New Look policy of the Eisenhower administration. Who in the Department of Defense was primarily influential in strategy-making during your tenure? Was it the Joint Chiefs? the services?

Ridgway: It should have stemmed from the Joint Chiefs as a body. In other words, the civilian authorities state the political objectives, and the prime responsibility is, of course, the protection of the country. From those, the Joint Chiefs try to evolve a plan to meet any reasonable contingency which they can foresee.

Matloff: Did the Secretary of Defense play any role in this process?

Ridgway: Not during the formulation, but after the views of the Joint

Staff reached him, he was responsible under the President for either approving, disapproving, or changing whatever views were submitted.

Matloff: Some Secretaries of Defense have been very active in this role, for example, Secretary McNamara. But Secretary Wilson, I take it, was of a different stripe.

Ridgway: Yes. Fortunately, I didn't serve under McNamara.

Matloff: How closely did the President or the Secretary of Defense follow the development of military strategy? Was Eisenhower keeping a fairly close watch on it?

Ridgway: Yes, I think so. Of course, you must remember always in evaluating Eisenhower that he had two very serious illnesses that took a lot out of him. He had unique experience in World War II as Supreme Commander in Europe. This reminds me of the time when Acheson was taken apart by the media for having put Korea outside of our line of defense. That was simply carrying out a decision which President Truman had approved. The Joint Chiefs had recommended that to Truman, and he had accepted it. And why wouldn't he? It was a joint recommendation of Leahy, who was senior aide to Franklin Roosevelt and later to Truman, Eisenhower, Nimitz, and Spaatz. Those four all agreed on this question. If we got into a war, Korea was the last place in which we wanted to have to fight. It would be a secondary or tertiary theater. They forwarded that recommendation to the President, who approved it. So Acheson was only enunciating a policy which the commander in chief himself had approved, on the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Matloff: On the origins of the New Look Policy, on which so much has been written, discussed, and debated, did you get any impression as to how this came about? Was it possibly British influence; purely economics; Air Force influence; strategic considerations? Did you have any feeling as to why the administration began to talk about the New Look and argue for it?

Ridgway: The New Look, if I understand it, was primarily that they would use the A-bomb to save money. You wouldn't have to have an enormous military, because you would just drop an A-bomb and that would settle it. I have no idea of any influence the British exercised on this, none whatever.

Matloff: In the middle of the 50s the writing of some of the British analysts dealt with the swing over to the idea of independent deterrent as one way that Britain could go, too.

Ridgway: I don't know about that.

Matloff: I was going to ask you whether this policy of the New Look only accented or emphasized trends that were already started in previous administrations--whether it was really that new and different? How about the impact on the services, particularly the Army's attitude toward the New Look? Did you support the New Look in principle or did you have strong reservations?

Ridgway: No; I'll give you a concrete example, to which I referred before. Radford was the big proponent of dropping the A-bomb on Dien Bien Phu. He said that this was the first very clear chance to apply the New Look. I was in wholehearted opposition.

Matloff: What in your view should have been the Army's role under the New Look policy? Was there a place for the Army?

Ridgway: Absolutely. The Army is the essential, the final arbiter, because the control of land is the ultimate basis. Neither the Navy nor the Air Force can operate without secure land bases. How would they get the secure land bases?--by the army's protection of the territory involved. Really this is the big theme the Army is trying to put across to the public today--that land power is the final key element in the whole thing.

Matloff: What was your attitude toward nuclear weapons--their buildup and use? Did you and the other chiefs favor the use of nuclear weapons under certain circumstances at least?

Ridgway: I think that you will find almost unanimous disagreement, except on Radford's part, of the use of the A-bomb in Dien Bien Phu. Earlier in Korea, it was certainly considered, to the point where we war-gamed the situation to see if we could make proper use of the A-bomb. Even earlier than that, when the President was over there (before he took office), I read that he threatened that if they didn't produce an armistice, he would use the A-bomb on them. It was perfectly apparent that it could be used. It was a weapon that was available and we gave very careful consideration to it. Bradley came over to see me, when I was Supreme Commander in Tokyo, and asked, in effect, "Would you use it now?" I said, "No, I would not, because I don't know how many bombs the Russians have, but we are very vulnerable to this thing."

Matloff: On questions of conventional versus nuclear defense, I thought you would have leaned toward conventional.

Ridgway: Yes. But I've often said that if I were field commander and I had a nuclear weapon under my control and if it came to the point where it was a

question of the destruction or saving of my forces, I would unhesitatingly use it, with or without permission.

Matloff: Did you ever have any discussions with Dulles or with the President on what they meant by brinkmanship and massive retaliation?

Ridgway: No, not personally. Again, I'll come back to my relations with Dulles. I recall an incident when Adenauer came over to the United States and I was Chief of Staff (I had had very fine relations with him when I had the European command). He wanted, I learned later, to consult with me on how he could best reconstitute the German army without having the flavor of the old Hitler regime. I'd had the same problem with Yoshida: how he could build up the Japanese ground self-defense force without getting this militaristic element into it again. I told this to Mr. Dulles, who said, "I'd like you to arrange a meeting with Mr. Adenauer, and feel free to talk to him about this." So we did. The reason I bring this up is because a short time later LTG Trudeau got in trouble and was relieved because apparently, either with Adenauer or a British high official, he went about something the wrong way. The point I am making is that in my case it was done because the Secretary of State himself asked me to do it. I think that Trudeau might have possibly stepped out of bounds. He's a very able man, splendid in every way, and he finally was vindicated and brought back. Dulles had a vindictive streak in him. The Oppenheimer case proved it very well. He crucified Oppenheimer. Finally, years later, it was retracted but it was too late. He practically ruined that man's career.

Matloff: Did you think that massive retaliation was merely rhetoric with Dulles, or was the administration serious about the possible use of atomic weapons?

Ridgway: I think he believed this. He would say, "I'll tell you what, you do so-and-so and I'll use the A-bomb on you." He'd bring them right up to the brink. I think he was absoutely sincere. I don't think it was just rhetoric at all.

Matloff: Would the President have gone along with him, do you think?

Ridgway: I don't think Eisenhower would have. Eisenhower said in his memoirs that he might have gone along with intervening in Indochina in 1954, had Britain and France gone along with him, but primarily Britain. The British government said that it would have no part of it.

Matloff: Still on the question of strategy and touching on weaponry, did the President encourage you and the other chiefs to go forward with the development of conventional weapons?

Ridgway: I can't remember any overt encouragement; certainly no contrary opinion brought against it. We in the Army were trying, among other things at that time, to foresee the character of the battlefield in a future war--not trying to look too far ahead, but to be practical about the thing. We realized that the present organization we had of a very heavy division probably needed some drastic change. So we had a very thorough study done. Like all these things, it only offered a partial solution or correction. Since then, we've had numerous changes in the organization of divisions and, right now, we are trying to organize a light infantry division.

Matloff: You mentioned some difference of views with Admiral Radford. Wherein, if at all, were your views of limited war and brushfire wars, even the use of conventional weapons, different from those of the other chiefs?

Ridgway: The main difference was this question of using the A-bomb.

Matloff: How did you see the Army's role in the atomic age? You've written in your volume, Soldier, that one of your main concerns was what the Army of the future should look like and what its role should be. You had given considerable thought to this question.

Ridgway: I'd rather rest on what I what I wrote. It was fresh in my mind, and I stated it in the precise language I wanted to use.

Matloff: We'll refer the reader to your chapter on the Army's role in the atomic age.

Ridgway: I frequently reread my letter to the Secretary of Defense dated June 27, 1955, three days before I retired. That is the one that I sent to him unclassified. He didn't like some parts of it, so he classified it--marked it "secret." The New York Times got ahold of it within 48 hours, in toto, not through me or any of my subordinates. I don't know how they got it. They published the whole thing. Then they queried him about it, and he said, "It wasn't important anyway."

Matloff: You have a copy of that in your memoirs.

Ridgway: Yes, I read it and reread it. I would hardly change a word in that thing. The only thing was that I couldn't then foresee that the Russian military machine, which had through the ages been essentially a ground force, could possibly become a first-class blue water navy. It was

not in the tradition of the Russian people. The last time they had a sizable fleet, the Japanese destroyed it at Tsushima, in May 1905.

Matloff: Let's turn to NATO for a minute. We talked yesterday at considerable length about your experiences in NATO. Did the problems in NATO change when you became Chief of Staff? Did you get involved again with NATO problems in any way? You touched on the German army buildup.

Ridgway: The German army thing came a little bit later. That came during my Chief of Staff tour. The problems had changed from the time I took over from Eisenhower. Eisenhower had gotten there in a spirit of euphoria among the heads of the government, with his tremendous reputation and the realization of the real threat of the Soviet Union, so that they were willing to promise everything, and they did. They promised all these divisions--that we would have X number of divisions by M+30 and all of that. But that period had very much cooled when the political heads of these governments found what the cost of this thing was, and meanwhile they apparently felt that the threat had somewhat abated. They weren't willing to go along and provide the funds to do it. That was our big problem.

Matloff: When you became Chief of Staff of the Army, were you involved with NATO policies, strategy, and buildup?

Ridgway: Yes, because this was when we were trying to reinforce our forces in NATO, and Senator Taft opposed this strongly. We were trying to provide two more divisions there and beef up the divisions we already had in the area, in spite of Korea. Korea was more or less static. The decision had been made by Mr. Truman before I became Chief of Staff, while I was still

Supreme Commander in the Far East, that there would be no material reinforcement of the forces in Korea. You work with what you've got over there now, the rest of it will be going to Europe. This is what Taft opposed. So we were very much involved in that in doing our planning, but these political directives came down from Eisenhower and, of course, he wanted to build up the strength of our NATO contingent, too.

Matloff: Along with the question of the German rearmament and the admission of Germany to the alliance in 1955, the question of the buildup of the German army became important. You touched on this a little earlier. Did you have any doubts, misgivings, or qualms at first about German rearmament, in view of Germany's past history?

Ridgway: Again, it's a hard thing to look back 30 or 40 years. I think that my thinking goes back so far that the German people are essentially militaristic. The love of soldiering is bred in the bone of the German people. I'm sure that I wasn't trying to look ahead another decade or two as to what might happen if we permitted West Germany to rebuild its army. But neither would I have ignored the fact that that was a very likely contingency, as it was with Japan. The forces operating against it in the case of Japan were: (1) the thinking of the Japanese electorate when the women got the franchise and everything else after the peace treaty, and (2) the academicians and the youth of the country were opposed to militarism. Combined with that was the deep hatred that the Japanese operations had engendered in all the countries of southeast Asia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, etc.

Matloff: You expressed before that you felt that these forces in Japan and Germany were going to be rebuilt; that you wanted to rebuild them, but without the touch of Hitler and of the militaristic element in Japan.

Ridgway: It was very interesting that I had that same very frank talk with Yoshida, the Prime Minister of Japan, and later with Adenauer, the Chancellor of West Germany.

Matloff: That's a rather unique experience, I would think. There aren't very many officials that have had that.

Ridgway: I told them that the differences were very pronounced. One fundamental difference was that in Germany, particularly, the individual officer took a personal oath to Hitler, but our allegiance is to the President of the United States, and those who may succeed him in power.

Matloff: We mentioned yesterday something about the European Defense Community proposal of amalgamating West Germany closer to the Western defense community by having a common European army. Did you as Chief of Staff get drawn in on those discussions?

Ridgway: No, I wasn't drawn into that at all.

Matloff: Lets come now to some of the area problems that arose. You've already touched on Indochina. I'd like to come directly to this because there are some questions that still linger. During your tenure as Chief of Staff there occurred the Dien Bien Phu crisis, and, shortly thereafter, came the communist takeover of northern Indochina as a result of the Geneva conference. What were your impressions at the time of the significance of those developments for American security interests? There was, for example,

a rather widespread feeling on the part of United States officialdom that communism was on the march and putting the free world generally on the defensive. Did you share that feeling at the time?

Ridgway: I personally never subscribed to the domino theory, that if one falls, they all would. I don't today. I think that the rulers of each one of these governments are going to decide in their own interests what they want to do. That's not to preclude the possibility that it would happen. For example, as in Central America today, with people who have been denied the basic elements of life for centuries, who are ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed and have no medical attention of any kind, you're always going to have a group that is seeking power. They go through the same process. Usually they proclaim that they want freedom for their people and because of that they draw the support of such middle class and business people as there may be. But in the back of the minds of these leaders is, "When we get control, we're going to exercise authoritarian rule." And that's what happens.

Matloff: Let's talk about the Dien Bien Phu crisis in the spring of 1954, which has come up here on a number of points. Were you consulted about possible U.S. help during that crisis? What advice do you recall giving? There were discussions in the Joint Chiefs, and apparently meetings with the President, too. You mentioned Admiral Radford's desire for an atomic strike. What position did you take at that time?

Ridgway: I opposed entry into Indochina in the first place very strongly. Going way back--I've forgotten just when it happened--but we had an ambassador

who had just been designated to be the ambassador to Indochina, Philip Bonsal, and he came to me when I was the NATO commander, or maybe when I was Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army. In effect, he wanted to know if I had any comments on the job he was about to undertake. I said, "Yes, I certainly do. I think you've got a hell of a tough job to take over there." I can only say that from the very beginning I was strongly opposed to intervention in Indochina. When it was first brought up to me (I think I was taking Collins' place when he was off somewhere) by the State Department, who wanted the view of the Joint Chiefs on X number of hundreds of millions of dollars to the French, I said, "I think that you're throwing good money after bad. As far as I'm concerned that's kind of out of my field but I think that you are just wasting your money." That was the beginning of my opposition, and I opposed it all the way through. When we were overruled (I'd long since retired before we put combat forces in there), my reaction to our sending in a Marine contingent as the first combat element into Vietnam was, "Don't you learn anything from Korea?"

Matloff: It was the Korean experience that made you feel that we should stay out of Indochina? Was that the basis for the feeling?

Ridgway: The main thing, even before I sent that group of senior experts, quartermaster, medical, signal, engineering, and combat arms, over there to survey the theater on the ground, was that there was abysmal ignorance in the whole Defense Department of the nature of the theater there. I put it in writing: "It will take a major national logistic effort to prepare the facilities that an American force requires, if you're going into Indochina."

I told them, as a result of the study we had made in the Plans Division under General Gavin, "If you go in there, you're going to wind up with a force of some half a million troops." Radford's position was that it could be done by air and navy at the beginning. My opposition was dead set against that. If we committed air and navy, we were going to have to follow up with ground troops, and I wanted no part of it.

Matloff: Let me introduce a question here by my colleague Dr. Richard Leighton, who has written in the U.S. Army in World War II series and is working on the OSD history in this period. He asked me to raise this point with you. In studying the period he finds that some of the writers, Bernard Fall, Melvin Gurtov, and others, have recorded your strong opposition, during the siege of Dien Bien Phu in the spring of 1954, to Admiral Radford's recommendation for an air strike to help the French at a critical point in the siege, in response to a French appeal. They've written that that recommendation of yours was decisive in influencing President Eisenhower to turn down the Radford proposal, and that you were convinced that the intervention with air and naval forces would lead inevitably to deploying large ground forces to Indochina. These writers have also written that during the same spring you had sent a team of logistic specialists to the theater to examine its capabilities--ports, roads, railroads, airfields, and the like--for supporting large gound operations, and that that mission had discovered that the capabilities were minimal.

Ridgway: Absolutely non-existent, I would say.

Matloff: Does this tally with your memory?

Ridgway: Absolutely.

Matloff: Here is the historian's problem, quoting Dr. Leighton: "I have been unable to find evidence that such an army mission was in fact sent to Indochina in the spring of 1954, although your opposition to the deployment of large ground forces to the theater is, of course, well documented."

Ridgway: Tell him to look up my memorandum of 17 May 1954, which refers to the report of this mission. I don't have a copy of that here. This is when I briefed first the Secretary of the Army, and then President Eisenhower in person. I think that was decisive, but that's purely opinion on my part. Let me refer to your friend Leighton for a minute. With reference to port facilities, there wasn't any place where you could unload, except a minimum of tons, and if you could get it off the ship, you would have to put it in a rice paddy. The telephone system and the electrical communication system in the country were practically nonexistent. The roads were wholly inadequate to support the population. And as I said again, "If you go in there, it's going to take a major national logistic effort to do it." It did. We poured billions of dollars into developing Cam Ranh Bay, Danang, and those places--not millions, but billions of dollars. The Russians are using them now.

Matloff: On the question of your recommendation to the President at the time of Dien Bien Phu, Dr. Leighton was asking if you personally advised the President not to order a carrier air strike against the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu at any time before April 29, when, according to a writer on

Indochina, Bernard Fall, the issue was seriously considered for the last time.

Ridgway: I don't recall that I made a personal recommendation to the President. Whatever recommendation I made would have gone through channels.

Matloff: Can you recall whether it was before April 29?

Ridgway: No, I could not do that.

Matloff: Dien Bien Phu actually fell on May 7. Is there anything more that you would like to say on this crisis in Dien Bien Phu that we have not touched on?

Ridgway: No, I don't think so.

Matloff: The recommendation of Radford's for an atomic strike--was it in addition to a carrier air strike, or using the atomic weapon from the carrier?

Ridgway: It was to be from a carrier. The atomic weapons were in the Philippines, as I remember, aboard a carrier at the time. These were the nearest available, and were the ones that Radford wanted to use. Dulles went along with that. Dulles and Radford were trying to persuade the President to do this.

Matloff: One of the by-products of the problems in Indochina was the founding of the SEATO alliance. That was one of the offshoots when Dulles was looking to do a repair job. Did you get drawn in at all on that?

Ridgway: No, not on SEATO. I want to reinforce something I said on Dien Bien Phu. I think Eisenhower might have gone along, this is surmise on my part, but the sine qua non was that Britain go along and probably France. But the British said that they would have no part of it.

Matloff: Are you minimizing your influence on him in this decision?

Ridgway: No, I don't think so.

Matloff: Did you think that it carried weight? It must have had some influence.

Ridgway: I couldn't even say that. Eisenhower was a professional career soldier and the report of this group of experts [the May 17, 1954 memo] would have been conclusive to him, overwhelmingly so. As a President and controller of the immense power of the United States, he might have decided to go in if Britain went along, but Britain wouldn't go along.

Matloff: Is this the mission that was headed by General Gavin, that you mentioned earlier?

Ridgway: No, Gavin was the head of my Plans Division. I mentioned Gavin in the connection that if we did go in, the Plans Division of my staff estimated what forces would be required. It would take around half a million men. That's what we finally sent there and still didn't do the job.

Matloff: It was a very accurate prognostication, as it turned out. Let me turn to the crisis in Quemoy and Matsu, which followed the one in Indochina. Did you feel it important to support the Chinese nationalists in connection with the problems that were rising in the Quemoy-Matsu affair? How far would you have gone to defend those islands?

Ridgway: I wouldn't have gone at all. On the map, if there was a line between the promontories sticking out, a good part of those islands would be almost within the line. They were clearly a part of the mainland there, and I didn't think we had any legitimate reason for trying to permit the Chinese forces on Taiwan to take those islands. Here again, Radford and I

had opposite points of view. He thought so, and I didn't.

Matloff: Did any other trouble spots arise in other parts of the world? This was also the period in which the Guatamalan crisis came up. Did you and the Army get drawn in at all on that one?

Ridgway: No, not at all. The President briefed us one time on that Guatamalan situation, just after Arbenz was overthrown.

Matloff: You weren't drawn in on that?

Ridgway: No, I wasn't involved.

Matloff: Any other crisis areas that occurred during your years as Chief of Staff?

Ridgway: I don't believe so.

Matloff: Let me ask you a little about manpower, weapons and equipment. What was your view of the relationship between nuclear weapons and the need for manpower for the Army? Obviously some people were arguing that with the coming of nuclear weapons you might have a bigger bang for a buck and need fewer men.

Ridgway: This was Dulles's argument always. This was the basis for his brinkmanship and the New Look and massive use of the A-bomb. Our conclusion in the Army was that we would very likely need more people in a nuclear war, because you would have to disperse them not far from these remunerative targets where you could have terrible losses from a single nuclear weapon. Then we hit into that, and I still think so today.

Matloff: Did any questions come up during that period as Chief of Staff or at other times about UMT? Did you have feelings about that one?

Ridgway: Not while I was Chief of Staff, but long before that. After World War II General Marshall led the fight to get universal military training, but Congress would have no part of it at all. It had Truman's support but the Congress was just adamant against it and the whole country was also.

Matloff: Would you have favored it?

Ridgway: Absolutely. We worked hard for it.

Matloff: How about questions of the draft versus the volunteer army?

Ridgway: I opposed the latter, and I still think that it's a great mistake. There was a very fine article in the Wall Street Journal yesterday (the 18th of April) which I would commend to you, "The Folly of Our Manpower Policy." It was written by a major in the Marine Corps Reserve. You haven't got a backup. You're going to have enormous casualties in the very initial stages of a war today, whether A-bombs are used or not, and we don't have the backup, the trained manpower.

Matloff: You would have favored the draft over the volunteer army?

Ridgway: Absolutely. Not only that, but you get a cross section of America, if it's properly and fairly implemented, and there's no question but that it can be. There were so many exceptions made during World War II; that's where most of the criticism came. But if it's fairly implemented, you get a cross section of every stratum of American society. Two years' service is a great benefit to a young man. It gives him a little discipline. Any number of times since I've been here, in the almost 30 years since I retired, as when our Vietnam War was at its height, parents would come in and moan, "My son is ordered to Vietnam, drafted. My wife is going to go crazy." I

thought, "You're lucky. He'll come out a better man than he was before." Then, almost every time it happened, they would come around and say that it did him a world of good.

Matloff: Obviously the Eisenhower defense policy had an impact on the Army buildup program during the period when you were Chief of Staff--the budget and manpower cuts.

Ridgway: I protested that. Right after I retired, I was called before a committee of the House--Mahon was the chairman, it's in the congressional record--and I was asked, "Will you disagree with the President?" I said, "I do, and these are my convictions. He's had a lot more experience in some lines than I, but nevertheless these are my views."

Matloff: Let me raise some questions that Dr. Leighton has given me here in this connection, and see how you react to them. Did your opposition to the manpower cuts imposed on the Army by the President at the end of 1953 cause you to give serious consideration to resigning as Chief of Staff? There were press reports at the time that you were considering this.

Ridgway: No, never. I deplored the fact that any senior officer would resign because of a disagreement with a policy, unless it was a policy so repugnant to him morally, and then he always has the option of saying, "I will not go along with that, and you can have my resignation."

Matloff: Let me raise another one, along the same lines, in connection with your testimony during the hearings in the Senate on the Fiscal Year 1955 Defense Budget--you were testifying early in 1954 about the 1955 budget. This testimony shows that you were very mindful of your professional

duty to support the lawful orders of your civilian superiors--the Commander in Chief; the Secretary of Defense; the Secretary of the Army. Dr. Leighton has asked how you reconciled in your own mind your later opposition in articles and speeches, for example in 1955, a few months before the end of your tour as Chief of Staff, to the manpower and budgetary cuts imposed on the Army?

Ridgway: The distinction was clear in my mind. Up until the time a decision is made by a properly constituted authority, you not only have the right, but you have a duty to express your views. You are legally a military adviser to the Secretary of Defense and the President. If these are your carefully considered views, and you give the supporting reasons, then it is your duty to say so before a member of the Congress. I have said in that connection, and I would repeat it now--I have before recommended though I don't think it has ever been agreed to--that I think that the Chiefs of the services should have the prescriptive right by legislation that any time a matter is of sufficient importance in their considered view they have the right to appear before the proper committees of the Congress (for example, the Armed Forces Committee), not just the Congress as a whole, and state their views. This was following the time that I referred to before, when the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff would elect to speak for all the services. No man in my opinion is likely to have such a complete command of the facts relating to one of the big services more than his own service. He has spent 30 years acquiring that. If you have a man like General Marshall, all bets are off because he was so broadminded that he

could see the whole picture, and, as a matter of fact, he dominated the Navy in this whole thing. But you don't find men like him but once in a generation.

Matloff: Let me ask a few general questions about cold war policies. With reference to containment, which was the buzz word of the day and has been ever since this first came into view in the 1940s--did you believe that containment was a realistic policy?

Ridgway: I don't know what I thought then. I would say today that it probably was the only realistic thing you could do--try and check their expansion. I was probably fully in accord with that. Check their expansion as far as you could, without going to war; prevent their extending their control.

Matloff: How about the problem of military aid as a tool in the cold war? How effective do you view it on the basis of your experience?

Ridgway: Military aid to other countries?

Matloff: Yes.

Ridgway: That's always a two-edged sword, too, because you always have a chance (which has happened before) that conditions will change, and all the military aid you poured into there will be turned against you. We've got this today--we poured billions of dollars into building these tremendous logistic bases in Indochina, which are now occupied by the Russians.

Matloff: It works well in some places, and not in others?

Ridgway: Yes, the same argument has been used through my whole career, not just as Chief of Staff, but as a young officer in the Latin American field.

I had extensive experience with the Latins. Nicaragua is another example. Sure, we give them military equipment, but you never know what is going to happen in the end; it's a gamble.

Matloff: What was your view toward arms control and disarmament? Did you play any role in this area during your tenure as Chief of Staff?

Ridgway: No. It's an illusion; there's no such thing. Man is the most dangerous predator on earth. It is bred in his bones. He has had to fight for a living since time immemorial, and he always will. That's human nature and it's not going to change. So this business of disarmament is just a figment. I think that the word should be abolished. There is never going to be disarmament. If there were, and if you abolished every weapon, you would fight with sticks and stones.

Matloff: How about arms control?

Ridgway: That's a fine thing to do, but how do you treat with leadership, such as the Soviet Union has. They will violate anything. Their secrecy is an openly employed method. It's been a secret society for hundreds of years, and no less so today than it ever was.

Matloff: Let me ask now some general questions about your perspectives on the OSD organization and management. How do you see the roles and relations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and its chairmen? Do you see any need for changes there?

Ridgway: Rather than try to answer that, I'm going to give you a copy of this document. It answers this in detail. [Letter, Gen. M.B. Ridgway to Neil S. McElroy, Se/Def, 6 Feb. 1958.]

Matloff: How about relations between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense? You've probably reflected on this over the years. Do you see any need for changes in this connection?

Ridgway: My views probably aren't up to date, because I lack the facts today. In this paper I wrote to Secretary McElroy, I said, "You have far too many assistant secretaries of defense." But I think they have more today. I don't know what the organization is today. Each one tends to dabble in the affairs that were the prerogative of his seniors in his own office of Secretary of Defense and not for him personally.

Matloff: Have you given any thought to questions about the need for changes in structure or working relations at the top levels in the OSD?

Ridgway: I think that's pretty well covered in this document.

Matloff: I would like to go down this list again and get your impressions of some of the people with whom you came in contact at the top levels in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The general question is: How would you characterize the styles, personalities, and effectiveness of the Secretaries of Defense and other top officials in OSD and JCS with whom you worked? We've already touched on Secretary of Defense Wilson. I have a series of questions about him, some of which you have already answered. How would you characterize Wilson as administrator of the Department of Defense? Do you consider that on balance his administration was effective?

Ridgway: Very poor. They wound up with a $12 billion deficit during Eisenhower's first term, as I recall. It got completely out of Wilson's control, and he was Secretary of Defense.

Matloff: So you don't get the feeling of a strong manager, of a strong Secretary keeping an eye on all the pieces?

Ridgway: My opinion of Mr. Wilson--his abilities, his personality--is very low.

Matloff: Did he choose able subordinates and associates?

Ridgway: I don't know how many of them he personally picked, but he picked Roger Kyes, who was one of his chief men when he (Wilson) was head of General Motors. I think Kyes may have been an able administrator--I don't know. But he was not the type of man that draws willing cooperation out of people. It's a bulldozing, bulldog effect. Now, Bob Anderson was the type that would elicit your cooperation and get it.

Matloff: Did you get the impression that Wilson shopped around for advice, or did he rely on just a few trusted advisers?

Ridgway: I would think the latter.

Matloff: Did he develop an understanding of the complexities of national security policy and problems? Was he implementing merely what the President was directing, or did he rise above that to make his own creative contributions?

Ridgway: I couldn't answer that.

Matloff: How would you compare Wilson's influence over the President with that of Admiral Radford? Who was the more influential?

Ridgway: I think the President accorded both of their views very serious consideration on all occasions.

Matloff: Would you add any other impressions of other Secretaries of Defense with whom you came in contact, people like Forrestal, Marshall, Lovett?

Ridgway: To my mind there's nobody that even equals, much less surpasses, Marshall. I will put Lovett at a very high place, because he imbibed the working methods and basic character of his chief.

Matloff: Any other impressions of Forrestal, with whom you had some dealings?

Ridgway: Forrestal I didn't know too well, because our acquaintance was quite brief. But I had the highest regard for him. I think that he was a man of the highest integrity and character and I think that's what killed him.

Matloff: We've already spoken about Roger Kyes and Robert Anderson. We've touched on McNeil. How about Radford, anything more you want to say about him?

Ridgway: I didn't have much contact with McNeil. I've told you all I can about Radford.

Matloff: You had a favorable impression of Robert Carney, as I remember.

Ridgway: Very, and a very warm feeling of friendship toward him which exists today. With Nate Twining, likewise.

Matloff: How about Stevens, you mentioned before that you had a high regard for him?

Ridgway: A man of unimpeachable character and integrity and a gentleman. The door between his office and mine was always open. I could walk in to him unannounced at any time.

Matloff: This was a rather close partnership, then.

Ridgway: Very close.

Matloff: Let me ask a general question now about the Eisenhower presidency. There has been a considerable changing of views by writers on the subject

of the Eisenhower presidency. Some historians, who don't agree with the earlier accounts, have been portraying an activist president, and some scholars, what we in the trade call "revisionist historians," are talking about the "hidden hand leadership"--that he was really more active than people on the outside originally thought. Did you have any impressions of how activist a president Eisenhower was?

Ridgway: No, I don't think I'm competent to answer that question. My feeling would be that Eisenhower's personality was such (he had a winning personality) that he could very readily use his personal influence in the manner in which you describe. But I didn't have any personal examples that came to my notice about that.

Matloff: Do you have any impressions of how he was getting his information and advice? In moments of crisis, let's say, to whom would he turn?

Ridgway: There's no question about this--that he practically gave Foster Dulles carte blanche in running the foreign policy of the United States. I gave you one example of that--Dulles wanted very much to go into Dien Bien Phu at that time, and Eisenhower put a flat "no" on that, for the reasons stated. But he certainly did defer to Dulles and let him run the State Department and the foreign policy of the United States, and that is, of course, what the Secretary of State is for.

Matloff: How about on the Eisenhower-Wilson relationship? Some people have the impression that Eisenhower became impatient with Wilson, that Wilson was always bringing him problems and letting the President decide.

Ridgway: I wouldn't know what problems he brought to the President.

Matloff: Let's talk about your leaving the post of the Chief of Staff. Would you describe the circumstances of your departure from the post, when you made up your mind that you were going to leave and why?

Ridgway: Yes, I think this is in my book, and again I commend that to you, because it was written at the time and it is accurate beyond any question. But now I can only say this: the decision to retire at age 60 was made in Paris, while I was SACEUR, long before I even knew that I was going to be Chief of Staff. My wife and I thoroughly canvassed the situation. You see, I was an Army boy. I entered the Military Academy at the age of eighteen, and had never had a residence or been able to vote in any state of the union. Not until I had been here in Pittsburgh for one year could I cast a vote. I had no roots in any part of the country. I had lived all over the United States. By "lived," I mean in places for more than a year. It's really amazing when I think back on it. The states of Washington, California, Texas, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Massachusetts, New York, Kansas, Illinois--more than a year had I lived in every one of these places. I knew the country but I didn't have any bond with any community. So Penny, my wonderful wife--and she is magnificent--and I decided that at age 60 it was going to be hard enough to get established in some community. If we waited longer, even assuming that I didn't have to retire until 64, it would be that much harder. So while I was in fine health, but not too long before 60, I let it be known that I wanted to retire. I waited until April, and then I asked the Judge Advocate General of the Army, "Do I have a right to retire now?"

and he said, "Yes, you do. All you have to do is ask for it." So I submitted my letter sometime shortly after that. I left without any rancor at all, and I would commend again my letter to Wilson that summed up my outlook on the world, which hasn't changed.

Matloff: Were you consulted about your successor?

Ridgway: No, not at all; not a word, which was typical of Wilson's dealings. He brought Taylor in--Taylor was on duty in the Far East--just a few weeks before my retirement, and he and Taylor had some meetings. Taylor, who had been my subordinate, never breathed a word about it. All I could assume was that he must have been selected, but I was given no intimation whatever.

Matloff: Was there any discussion or correspondence between you and your successor on the nature of the Army's problems and its role under the New Look philosophy and how you had fared during your tenure?

Ridgway: Yes, I'm sure that Max Taylor and I discussed that at length, and that I offered to do anything I could after I knew he was going to be Chief of Staff. We had long talks. I had known him intimately for many years. We were classmates of the Command and Staff College. He had been, first, Chief of Staff of the 82d for a brief time, then Chief of Artillery, 82d Airborne Division, and then in command of the 101st, when it was in my corps in Europe.

Matloff: In this connection I have a question from Dr. Leighton bearing on this issue about this succession. He says, "General Maxwell Taylor has told how, before his appointment as Chief of Staff in 1955, he was quizzed by Defense Secretary Wilson as to his willingness to carry out orders of

his civilian superiors. Were you aware at the time that this had occurred? that Taylor was being quizzed by Wilson?"

Ridgway: My answer is an unequivocal 'no,' but I learned about it later from Taylor.

Matloff: Did General Taylor tell you about it later?

Ridgway: No, I read about it in his books.

Matloff: Leighton asks, "Did this incident indicate to you that Secretary Wilson may have felt that you had been remiss in fulfulling your professional obligations?"

Ridgway: I don't know what Wilson felt. I've said enough about my opinions of Mr. Wilson. He should never have been Secretary of Defense. But Eisenhower picked him.

Matloff: I think that we've talked about how you see the Chief of Staff's role as a military adviser, unless you want to add to that. In your letter you were writing about that, as I remember.

Ridgway: I made it very clear in this McElroy letter. I think that by statute he is one of the advisers to the Secretary of Defense and to the President. There should be no question of having him cut off by edict from above. He should have the legislated prescription or legal right legislated by the Congress. You're dealing with a man who has had 30 years of service; apparently he must have had a fine record. or he would never have been chosen as the chief of one of our services. You've got to rely on that man's judgment that if a matter is of such great importance to his service and his views are not being consulted, and he is not being given an opportunity to

express them, then he should have the right to go to the committees of the Congress--the Senate and the House Armed Forces Committees--and state his views. It's like the right of the people peacefully to redress their grievances. The civilian authorities make the final decision, but they make it in the light of knowing his views.

Matloff: What do you regard as your major achievements during your tenure as Chief of Staff and member of the Joint Chiefs? Anything in particular that you look back on with special pride?

Ridgway: I think the preservation of the integrity of the office, and its acceptance as such not only by the government but by the American people. Walter Lippmann, in one of his articles about me shortly after my retirement, commented on just that, and I think that that probably would be my best contribution as Chief of Staff: to set an example of fearless, forthright expression of views, before a decision is made, and then to do your utmost to carry out the decision that you opposed, after it has been made. For instance, after the decision was made to adhere to another drastic cut in the Army's strength, which I had opposed, when the decision was announced by the President, I personally went to every one of the four Army commanders to tell them what the situation was and that we would do everything in our power to carry it out.

Matloff: On the other side of the coin, what, if any, do you regard as your disappointments or uncompleted tasks, or failure to do things that you would have liked to have done during this period as Chief of Staff? This was obviously a very trying period for the Army and for its leader.

Ridgway: I expect that was probably to be unable to stop the steady erosion of the Army's strength, just successive cut after cut. Right after my retirement, as I said before, I was called as witness before the Mahon Committee of the House. Mr. Mahon, whom I had known for many years, said, "General, you are free to say anything you want, now." And I replied, "I shall." I reiterated what I've just said to you.

Matloff: I should ask you along that line: did you feel that the Congress had an appreciation for the issues?

Ridgway: Men like Mahon did, yes. I had great admiration for Mahon. We had great statesmen there. I refer again to Senator Walter George, Senator Dick Russell, and in his early days Senator Stennis. Senator Stennis now, I'm afraid, is senile, and they've stripped him of his power. The committee chairmen had great power in the old days; they don't have it any more.

Matloff: You've been very patient, and I want to express our appreciation for your willingness to share your observations and comments with us on a very important period of history in OSD. If there is any question which I should have asked you but have not, or anything that you would like to add, please feel free to do so.

Ridgway: I very much appreciate these sessions with you. It's been a personal pleasure and, of course, a duty which I felt obliged to agree to--to say what I think. I want to repeat once more that there may be considerable variance between what I say now and what the documents might prove, but you have the right, privilege, and opportunity to check and document the accuracy of what I have said. I hope you will do that, if there is any

doubt in your mind. I say again that it's been my great honor to have served in the Army. It's been a high privilege to have had the high posts I have had.

Matloff: I'm sure that the record will show that yours has been a very long and distinguished career that will certainly have its place in history. Anyone writing about this period will have to take it into account.

Ridgway: That's very kind of you. I feel very deeply about these things. Every one of my assignments was carried out always with the principle of doing one's utmost to understand the problems from all angles, to arrive at logical conclusions, and then fearlessly to say what one thought. I would come back to that again.

Matloff: Thank you very much, General.

Ridgway: Thank you, Doctor, a great pleasure.