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**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**

Office of the Secretary of Defense 5450552  
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS  
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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

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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

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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

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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 Habu 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?

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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

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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?

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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?



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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 recommended 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,

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"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

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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 must 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.

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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



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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.

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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

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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 Napoleon'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 Indo-chinese 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.

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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

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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: Now 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

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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 bailiwick?

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.