

Oral History Interview
with
AMBASSADOR PHILIP D. SPROUSE

U.S. Foreign Service officer with service in or related to China from 1935 to 1949. Foreign Service clerk, Peiping, 1935-38. Appointed Foreign Service officer, 1938; language officer of the Embassy, Peiping, 1938-40; vice consul, Hankow, 1940-41; 3d secretary of the Embassy, Chungking, 1942-44; consul, Kunming, 1944; International Secretariat, U.N. Conference on Organization, San Francisco, 1945; consul, Kunming, 1945; at Executive Headquarters, Peiping, 1946; 2d secretary of the Embassy, Nanking, 1946; assistant chief, Division of Chinese Affairs, U.S. Department of State, 1947; member of General Wedemeyer's mission to China and Korea, 1947; chief, Division of Chinese Affairs, 1948; director, Office of Chinese Affairs, 1949; 1st secretary of the Embassy, Paris, 1950, counselor, 1952; counselor of Embassy, Brussels, 1954-58; Foreign Service inspector, 1959-62; appointed career minister, 1959; Ambassador to Cambodia, 1962-64. Retired Foreign Service officer, 1964.

Orinda, California February 11, 1974
by James R. Fuchs
Harry S. Truman Library

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FUCHS: Mr. Ambassador, we might start by your relating a little of your background and something about how you happened to come into the area of the Foreign Service.

SPROUSE: Well, I graduated from Washington and Lee University in '28, and at this point I thought I would have an academic career in the field of romance languages, French and Italian. I went to France and studied one summer, came back to Princeton, did a year of graduate work in the bottom of the depression in '29 and

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'30. I went back home then and worked for my father who was in the tobacco business. At some point I decided this was not the profession that I really wanted to be in. I got interested in the Foreign Service, wrote to a professor friend of mine at Washington Lee University, got a reading list of books that I should be studying for entrance into the Foreign Service, and was all set to take the exams when they stopped them. I think it was at the beginning of the Roosevelt administration, about '32, '33. When Roosevelt came in everything was stopped because of the depression. There was a retrenchment in Government expenditures.

So, in '35 I got a letter from the Department asking me if I would be interested in a clerkship. They pointed out that when the

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exams were resumed I could take the Foreign Service exams at whatever post I was sent to as a clerk.

I had no knowledge of typing or shorthand, but I felt after all I'll try this; there's some chance of getting in and this will enable me to get a background of experience before I take the exams, which obviously will be of some value later in the Foreign Service.

So, I applied for a clerkship, and to my dismay, in a sense, was sent to Peking. My whole interest had been in Europe, and in France specifically. My first year in Peking was devoted to thinking about when I get through in Peking I want to end up in Western Europe. They resumed the exams in the fall of 1937. I took the written exams in Peking,

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passed them, and then returned to Washington, at my own expense I might add, to take the oral exams. I took the oral exams in Washington in the spring of '38, passed them, and was given an appointment in the Foreign Service that following summer in 1938.

I immediately applied for assignment as a Chinese language specialist. In other words, that lotus-eating quality of Peking had gotten under my skin at that point and I had no desire to return to France. I wanted to spend my career as a specialist in Chinese affairs.

FUCHS: You had no knowledge of Chinese before you went to Peking?

SPROUSE: No. Neither knowledge nor any particular interest. My knowledge really consisted largely

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of the background that any person who grows up in a small town in this country has through donating pennies for the missionary work in China. And I had never met a Chinese except, I think, there might have been one or two students at Washington and Lee, and there were some graduate students at Princeton when I was there. I knew that their language was read from top to bottom and from right to left, unlike ours; and that was about all I knew. I might have had a few Chinese meals in addition.

So, I applied for Chinese language study, and committed myself to a career in Asia.

FUCHS: You did this study in Peking?

SPROUSE: We had assignments for two years in Peking studying the Chinese language, studying the

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history of the civilization and culture, and treaty relationship with foreign countries. After two years -- and at the end of each year, I might add, we took a very difficult examination -- we were assigned to posts in the field, for consular work, chiefly.

After Peking, I was assigned to Hankow as a vice consul. This was in the fall of 1940. I must say that I had fallen so much in love with Peking at that point, that when I left Peking all I could think of was I'd rather stay in Peking as a code clerk, which I had been up to that point, than to go out as a vice consul and have a future in the Foreign Service; I was particularly sad at leaving Peking and going to Hankow.

I came home on home leave in the late summer and early fall of 1941 and got back

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to San Francisco in December 1941, December 6th to be exact, preparatory to sailing on my return to China on December the 8th. Needless to say because of Pearl Harbor, I didn't sail; and so, I went back to Washington and the following April, I took a Pan-American clipper ship from New York, down through the Caribbean, South America, across the South Atlantic, and then over to Africa, through Africa up to Cairo, and then proceeded to return to China by the back door, over the Hump, through India.

I stayed in China during two years of the war period and came home on leave at the end of '44. I was on my way back to China the following winter when I was suddenly taken off this assignment and sent to San Francisco to be a member of the international

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secretariat of the founding conference for the United Nations.

This was an assignment that lasted about three months, and then I returned to China and flew over the Hump just as we had dropped the atomic bomb in August of 1945. Then I had a succession of assorted posts, briefly; Kunming, Chungking, and then back to Kunming. When General [George C.] Marshall came out in December 1945 I was assigned to Chungking to be

there during General Marshall's mission, which I thought would be brief. I ended up being sent by General Marshall to Peking with Walter Robertson, who headed the American section of what was known as the Executive Headquarters during the Marshall mediation mission. It consisted of one National Government representative, one American representative, and one Chinese Communist representative

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at all layers of this headquarters. I was sent up as Robertson's political adviser.

This lasted about the first six months of 1946 and then I was brought down to Nanking, where General Marshall was by that time, to work in his office. My job was to write the report of his mission to China. He had originally expected to have a ranking Army colonel and a group of people writing the report of his mission. When this came to the attention of the Department the Department recommended that I be a member of this group, and it ended up -- I was never quite sure exactly how the decision was made -- but it ended up that I wrote the report alone. There wasn't any group, there was just one person. And this to me was in some ways maybe the high point of my career, because I knew nothing

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about General Marshall. I knew he was a great military figure but this is all I knew; but in that period of six months that I worked for Marshall and later in close contact with him when he was in the State Department as Secretary of State, I sensed that here was real greatness, greatness in a way that I never had seen before. I might return to my Washington and Lee days when I grew up in the shadow of the spirit of Robert E. Lee, and you somehow had a feeling that this man combined the qualities of Robert E. Lee of selflessness, and integrity of character, with a simplicity and avoidance of publicity -- a combination of Robert E. Lee and Abraham Lincoln. I'm not addicted to hero worship as you always see the feet of clay when you get too close to the great.

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This man was real greatness. It was an experience which I will never forget to my dying day. Everything in history, I think everything this man ever did, shows it. Then when General Marshall came back as Secretary of State, by this time I was assigned to the Office of Chinese Affairs in the State Department in Washington. Within a year I became the director of that office during a very difficult period, because this was during the period that the National Government was going down the drain. The Chinese Communists were moving in to take power in China and this was during a period when General Marshall was Secretary of State, and then later Dean Acheson, who was also a great figure in my view.

Then came the [Joseph R.] McCarthy period, and after this assignment as the director of

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the Office of Chinese Affairs for almost four years, I was assigned to Paris; and I never again during my entire career touched China or Chinese affairs. Because all the China specialists of that day (with maybe one or two exceptions) were exiled and never were allowed to touch Chinese affairs again. We were all caught up in the McCarthy period.

Then after four years in Paris, I was assigned to Brussels, again still in exile. I was what was known as the Deputy Chief of Mission and Counselor of Embassy in Brussels, that is the number two. I stayed in Brussels five years and then was assigned, still as an exile from China, as a senior inspector in the Foreign Service Inspection Corps. They assigned officers to this inspection corps, fairly high ranking officers, to inspect the operations of

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our embassies and consulates throughout the world. I had this assignment for three years and then, following that time, I was named the Ambassador to Cambodia. This was something that would never have been possible, I think, under a Republican administration, because the names of the China specialists were never sent up for nomination as ambassador to anywhere. I was on the verge of retiring when Kennedy became President, when in rapid succession I think there were three Chinese language specialists whose names were sent up for confirmation as ambassadors. I think I was the third of those three.

FUCHS: Who were the first two?

SPROUSE: The other two were [James K.] Penfield, who was Ambassador to Iceland, and the other was

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[Fulton] Freeman, who was Ambassador to Columbia. Freeman, incidentally, had been my deputy in Chinese affairs -- a very good and close friend of mine. He later succeeded me as the number two in Brussels, and he went from Brussels as Ambassador to Columbia and ended up his career as Ambassador to Mexico. He had a very distinguished career. Now he lives down at Carmel. He's president of a small college down there.

I spent two years in Cambodia, which were quite a trial in many ways because we were hoist on the petard of Vietnam -- Indochina.

I might explain, as an aside, that during my assignment at Paris, my chief job for four years had been following the situation in Indochina and maintaining contact with the French. So, I felt I knew something about the area, although I never served in it. This was a very difficult period, because

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you were convinced that the Vietnamese -- that is the three Indochinese states -- were sooner or later going to be independent, that the French days were numbered and it never entered my mind for one minute that the United States would step into this morass, a swamp from which the French were being ejected. If anybody had told me that during the early fifties, when I was working on that area, I would have said he was an utter fool. But, of course, we did get in it, which was, I still think, a great error on the part of both the Republican administration, first, and then the Democratic administration.

FUCHS: Do you have further remarks about the "morass," as you termed it, that we got into in Vietnam?

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SPROUSE: No, but of course, Mr. [Richard M.] Nixon got us out of it; although why it took four years to get us out I can't tell you, because it seems to me this is just about the length of time it took us to defeat Hitler in Europe. I'm sure that he could have gotten out of there the first year he was in office, which I think he should have done. But at least we're out, belatedly.

FUCHS: Did you think initially that our purpose in going in there was laudable, that we were attempting to again contain communism; or did you just immediately recognize it as futile?

SPROUSE: Well, as I said earlier, I think we should never have been in there. It was all right to give economic aid, or give some form of military aid in terms of equipment, but to get

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us involved with ground troops in Asia, to me was absolutely foolhardy, almost absolutely unthinkable. And you know, there were people, very powerful groups in this country, who would have had us involved in the same thing on the mainland of China at one point as the National Government was being weakened and was going down the drain. To think what we would have encountered if we had involved ourselves in that country of what, 500, 600 or 700 million people, when you think of what happened to us in terms of our involvement in a small nation of only 25 or 30 million. It's horrible to think of.

FUCHS: We see this now. Mr. Truman, of course, recognized, as he noted in his *Memoirs*, that the American people wouldn't have stood for this in China in '45. Do you think this was

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generally the feeling then of the Foreign Service?

SPROUSE: As a resident in China for eleven years and then with an additional four years, say, in Washington -- fifteen years in all on China -- I think I am fairly aware of the attitudes and viewpoints of the Americans in China, either in the field as U.S. Government officials or as missionaries, educators, or as businessmen. I would say that the overwhelming majority, roughly 75 to 90 percent of the Americans involved in China, were convinced that we should never have gotten involved in the China scene any deeper than we were. I don't know of anyone who really knew China, except a handful of people such as Walter Judd, and maybe Senator [William] Knowland and Henry Luce -- that

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is prominent and well-known people -- who would have gotten us more deeply involved than we were. Because if we had been this would have been like Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby, you got your foot stuck in one hole, and you got your foot stuck in another one, and pretty soon you would have been up to your neck in the whole thing. It would have been an impossible situation.

As it is, of course, we later had a period when our policy toward China was so rigid and inflexible that it wasn't until Nixon made this famous and historic visit to Peking that the policy was turned around. And the great irony of this is that it might well have turned around (and I think it should have been) much earlier, but for the opposition of the same group of people. I would say that if I were

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singling out one person who made the turn-around impossible, it would have been Richard Milhouse Nixon. Because if the turnaround had come during a Kennedy or Johnson administration, I'm sure that they would have been bitterly castigated by Richard Nixon as being soft on communism and selling out to the Communists; because his whole career was on this basis. But when he did it, his credentials were impeccable, of course. He could do it with impunity and I give him full credit for doing it; but I still think it's ironic that it might have been done ten years earlier, but for Richard Nixon and the viewpoint that he represented.

FUCHS: Strange how events go.

SPROUSE: Isn't it?

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FUCHS: Did you hold any hope when Chiang went to Formosa, that he would ever be able to return to the mainland?

SPROUSE: Oh, no, no, impossible. Many people felt that the end of the National Government had come early during the war. By 1943, you could see the handwriting on the wall. I felt that there was a chance even toward the end of the war, but the end in China came much more quickly than I had anticipated. The National Government started folding in '48 in Manchuria, and by '49 all the cards in the deck were in, you could see the end in one short year.

I remember talking with a very distinguished Chinese educator, the president of a leading university, a man educated in the United States, and very close to the Generalissimo and T.V. Soong, the top level in China. A very distinguished

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man. And when I was in China as a member of the Wedemeyer mission in 1947, I called on this man, and I remember his description of the situation.

He said, "Don't feel too pessimistic about this." He said, "You've got to remember that you Americans and the Europeans educate Chinese in a very effective way to run administrations, to be bankers, to be government officials, to be industrialists, but you don't create revolutionaries." He said, "The real revolutionaries in this country during this period are educated in either Japan or China, or a handful in Soviet Russia." He said, "I'm a product of a western education and I can no longer take mud floors and the living that would be necessary to live in a revolutionary atmosphere. I like my plumbing, I like to

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live well." He said, "This isn't a revolution that the Chinese Communists created. It's the impact, really, of the 20th Century West on this country, on the semi-feudal, semi-medieval society." He said, "The Chinese Communists are riding to power on the crest of this revolution, but, they didn't create it. But, they realized it was in the wind and have given it leadership now through the peasants. When the end comes in China as happened in the late twenties when the Generalissimo came to power, it comes very quickly." He said, "The armies will fold," -- as they did -- "but rest assured that what comes out of this will not be a Russian regime, they won't be puppets of Soviet Russia, because what will come out of this will essentially be Chinese." He said, ".Another 75 to 100 years it will be even more

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Chinese than it is now, but don't think this is going to be a puppet of Soviet Russia."

And this is a very interesting viewpoint because so many people felt they were nothing in the world but puppets of the Soviet Union; and, of course, the break in this monolithic structure came later, but this man knew it, he was a great student of Russia, a scholar and an intellectual.

FUCHS: Would you care to say who he was?

SPROUSE: The name was Chiang Mon-lin, and a very distinguished educator. He was a John Dewey disciple at Columbia at one point, and at one point he was the head of the Chinese Red Cross. He was a top ranking official in the government at one point as the president of the Executive Yuan and very close to the Generalissimo and

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the leaders in China. But he was a very able man and a very honest man; a decent man, who told the truth as he saw it.

FUCHS: How did you go about writing the report for Marshall?

SPROUSE: Well, I had complete access to his files. I dealt with it in the chronological periods of his mission. Every time I would finish a section, I remember very clearly, I would show Marshall, in draft, the section that I had finished. Marshall would pencil in corrections, additions, subtractions, whatever he saw fit to do to correct my draft. This continued from, say, July 1946 until about February of the following year, 1947, when he came back to Washington to be Secretary of State. I think I finished the last section after he became Secretary of State. He okayed

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this, and I'll never forget, when I went in to give the last draft to him to look over. He finished the draft and then turned to me and said, "Now, what are you going to do now?"

And I said, "I'm being assigned, General Marshall, to the Department as the Assistant Chief of the Division of Chinese Affairs."

He said, "Is this a good job? Do you like it?"

And I said, "Yes, sir," I said, "this is commensurate with my background, experience and rank in the service."

He said, "Well, I will be very pleased to have you here, it'll be nice to have you around, because you knew exactly what I was trying to do in China and you are familiar with the situation there and what I was trying to achieve."

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FUCHS: Were the files of Marshall fully consonant with your thinking about affairs in China at that time? In other words, did you agree with his conclusions as dictated by his files?

SPROUSE: I think almost totally, because I think he himself knew that this was an almost impossible mission, but it was worth the effort because the alternatives were so horrible for China and for the world at large. He brought to this task an objectivity and an impartiality and honesty which really couldn't be questioned by either side. I am convinced that Chou En-lai was aware of this, although toward the end the Communists became very critical of General Marshall; and they were always critical in the period after that when we gave any aid of any kind to the National Government.

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And at this time an American Government would certainly have been bitterly criticized by, I'm sure, the overwhelming majority of the American public if we had not continued to give aid to the National Government. We continued to give economic aid, and we also had a program of military aid which came into being through a device dreamed up by Senator Vandenberg, because the administration of that period had not asked for a military aid program. I think General Marshall sensed that this was full of dynamite, and he obviously had the agreement of President Truman, because there was sympathy and understanding and respect between those two men. So, General Marshall, in going up for the hearings on the China aid program, did not ask for a military aid program; and Senator Vandenberg tacked onto the economic

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aid program a grant of, I think, 125 million dollars to be given to the National Government to use for whatever purposes it saw fit, because it was clearly understood that the National Government would use this for the purchase of military equipment. In the eyes of the Chinese Communists, I'm sure, there was no difference to them whether he used that 125 million as a grant to buy military aid or whether we gave it directly in terms of equipment. We were equally, I am sure, criticized by the Chinese Communists on either account. It might have been straining at the gnat and swallowing a camel on this sort of thing, but at least the administration refused to ask for a military aid program. Later, when the National Government was defeated, the American military man, who in that day was in the best position to describe the situation that existed

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in China, General [David Goodwin] Barr (who was the head of our military advisory group) gave significant testimony. General Barr stated categorically that defeat at the hands of the Chinese Communists at that time was not due to any lack of arms or ammunition or equipment, but due

basically to what he could only characterize as the world's worst military leadership he'd ever seen.

FUCHS: Was there any agitation for assignment of U.S. leaders to Nationalist troops?

SPROUSE: Well, not to lead, but there were pressures, of course, for us to send out military advisers into the combat areas as we had with the National Government troops during the war against Japan. I'll never forget to my dying day a meeting that took place in General

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Marshall's office in, it must have been '48.

This is reported in the white paper on China. This was a meeting called by General Marshall as Secretary of State, and attended by the Secretary of the Army [Kenneth C.] Royall, General [Omar] Bradley, who was chairman of the Joint Chiefs, I think, at that point, General Wedemeyer, who was one of the foremost exponents of all kinds of aid, military included, to the National Government. It included the people in the Department chiefly concerned with China, including Assistant Secretary of State [W. Walton, Jr.] Butterworth, and I was present. General Marshall brought up this very question of our stationing military advisers in the field with the National Government, and it was interesting to see the way that he made this specific point, particularly with the presence of General Wedemeyer there.

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General Wedemeyer agreed that we should not, because once you got our people into the combat areas you began to accept not only responsibility but a sense of involvement, if things went wrong; and there was no assurance that you could have the authority that you needed to insure that your recommendations were carried out. Because at this time General Barr had been authorized to give military advice to the Generalissimo at the top level, strategic advice, and it was clear that the Generalissimo ignored the advice unless it was palatable to him. He was masterminding campaigns in Manchuria without really being on the ground, and appointing generals to top commands whose chief distinction was that they were loyal to him, and who had records of known incompetence in their field. One of them who

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was appointed to command the approaches to Shanghai and Nanking, earlier had been in Manchuria, and General [Joseph] Stilwell had recommended during the war that he be cashiered completely because of his incompetence; and yet he was given this most important command in China because he was loyal to the Generalissimo.

FUCHS: What good results, if any, came from the military advisory group in China under General Barr?

SPROUSE: They were able to, one, to recommend at certain earlier periods during our military aid program what types of equipment they needed and where it could be used; and they were able to deal with the reorganization of the Army. Part of General Marshall's mediation mission had been devoted to a reorganization of the

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Chinese armed forces, because General Marshall was convinced that not only were the armed forces enlarged beyond any measure of common sense, but they were a terrific economic drain on the country that their economy couldn't stand. So, General Marshall was recommending a reorganization of the forces, and an amalgamation of the Nationalist and Chinese Communist forces in a way that would reduce them to a size commensurate with Chinese needs but no longer an overwhelming economic burden to the country; and the end result would be a small but much more competent military force, and the removal of these forces from positions of power where it would lead to involvement in the political affairs of the country. So, our military advisory group was definitely involved in these plans for the reorganization of the forces,

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supply, training, and every other thing that goes to make up a modern military force.

FUCHS: How much of the 125 million of the China Aid Act of '48 that was tacked on, as you have shown...

SPROUSE: I see you were very familiar with the thing.

FUCHS: ...went, do you feel, down the drain?

SPROUSE: This is also an interesting item, because I remember at one point we were faced with the likelihood that all of this equipment that came from this 125 million would sooner or later fall into the hands of the Chinese Communists. I remember on two occasions in '48 and '49 at the instigation of the State Department -- and this was by Butterworth primarily, the Assistant Secretary for Far

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Eastern Affairs -- the question was posed to the National Security Council of the strategic importance of Formosa to the United States. And the Joint Chiefs of Staff came up on each occasion with a finding that while it was important to the United States it was not vital, and that they weren't prepared to fire one bullet to prevent the Chinese Communist occupation of it; and they urged that all possible political and economic means be taken to keep it out of the hands of the Chinese Communists. At the same time all the strategic estimates of that period -- and this was the combined intelligence estimate of CIA, State, and Defense -- were that by the end of 1950 the Chinese Communists had the capability of occupying Formosa.

So, at this time we faced the probability

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that all this military materiel that we were shipping under the 125 million grant would fall into the hands of the Chinese Communists.

I remember at this time, Mr. [Robert] Lovett, again a man for whom I have great respect, was Acting Secretary of State when General Marshall was abroad on some kind of conference, and at

the recommendation of the Department, President Truman had a meeting at the White House of the Republican and Democratic leaders of -- certainly of the Senate, and I'm not sure whether there were Congressmen present or not. Mr. Lovett went over, thoroughly familiar with what was going on, and he brought up this question of whether or not we should continue our aid or discontinue it because of the inevitability of this materiel falling into the hands of the Chinese Communists.

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Mr. Lovett presented the State Department's recommendation that we continue it regardless of its ultimate fate because to do otherwise would be to put yourself in the position of pulling the rug out from under the Generalissimo's feet at the last minute. The consensus at this meeting, attended by all these leaders, and I particularly remember Senator Vandenberg, was that this was the proper recommendation. So we continued the aid, at that point being reasonably certain that it would end up in the hands of the Chinese Communists. This, of course, was before the attack in Korea in 1950.

Years later I noticed in a biography of Senator Vandenberg, edited, at least, by his son if not published, that Senator Vandenberg claimed that in a meeting in the White House,

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if it hadn't been for his recommendation this aid would have been stopped and that he was responsible for the decision made to continue the aid to the National Government. So thus is history written.

I remember, also, during this period that when the Chinese Communists occupied Peking and Tientsin after the earlier occupation of Manchuria, the ECA aid mission headed by Roger Latham and Allen Griffin, recommended that we continue our economic aid to those areas. The State Department recommended that we not attempt to do so, and the State Department's position was upheld by President Truman at that point. We felt that you couldn't possibly extend aid to the Chinese Communist areas, particularly in view of the bitter hostile reaction they had to everything that

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we were doing.

This, again, was sort of interesting because here you had this so-called Communist inspired group in the State Department, recognizing something which was really hostile to the Chinese Communists instead of being pro-Chinese Communists. It would be interesting if you ask Allen Griffin himself, if he remembers this particular recommendation. Of course, it's very clear in my mind. Well, I think this is also in the China white paper.

FUCHS: Yes. Well, as to the aid that was tacked onto the China Aid Act of '48, the time lag dictated that that be sent to Formosa.

SPROUSE: Yes, because they had withdrawn to Formosa. It was never discontinued; it was continued and directed at Formosa after the withdrawal from the mainland.

FUCHS: What about the economic aid portion of that China Aid Bill?

SPROUSE: That continued also, but it was continued to Nationalist Government areas and later to Formosa itself.

FUCHS: Was quite a bit of that expended in China proper?

SPROUSE: I'm sure it was, because it started in '48 and they didn't withdraw until the end of '49.

FUCHS: The military equipment that really went down the rat hole, so to speak, was all prior to this '48 act?

SPROUSE: Well, the military equipment that went

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down the drain, of course, started the minute the Chinese Communists occupied Manchuria.

Tremendous amounts of American military aid went down the drain then. Every time they occupied an additional area in China, I'm sure that the American supplied equipment, obviously, ended up in the hands of the Chinese Communists.

FUCHS: Ambassador [John L.] Stuart in his book wrote that Marshall made a tactical error by returning to the United States, I believe it was in March of '46. Do you recall anything about that?

SPROUSE: Yes, in 1946, in March, if I remember correctly, General Marshall returned to the States in an effort to obtain appropriations or loans from the Export-Import Bank to extend

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economic aid to the Chinese Nationalist Government. By this time agreement had been reached between the Nationalists and the Chinese Communists, first for a cessation of hostilities, and then the reorganization of the militia armed forces, and the integration of the two into one national force. And General Marshall felt that at this time economic aid was badly needed to start economic recovery in this country which had been at war for many years against the Japanese.

The minute that General Marshall left the country, of course, his hand was off the helm and psychologically this had an effect; but I am by no means sure that this was the decisive factor, because when General Marshall came back, the situation had not deteriorated to the point of no return, if there had ever been

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any hope at all. While I think this caused a setback, his absence from the country, I don't think this was the decisive factor in the breakdown of his negotiation and the negotiated settlement that

he had reached. This, of course, is a personal opinion. I think General Marshall himself realized that perhaps it might have been better had his hand been on the helm during this period; but I don't think this was the decisive factor. He came back too quickly after the beginning of the breakdown, first in Manchuria, for his absence to have been the decisive factor that led to total loss on his negotiations.

FUCHS: Do you think maybe John Stuart overemphasized the importance of this thing?

SPROUSE: I think he did, yes. I think it played

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a part, but I don't think it was decisive.

FUCHS: What are some of the other thoughts you have about Ambassador Stuart? Do you think his appointment was a good one?

SPROUSE: I do, because he'd brought to General Marshall's assistance a knowledge of China, things Chinese, Chinese psychology, Chinese thinking, and an influence with both the Nationalist and the Chinese Communists that no other living American, I think, could have had. And his reporting, during that period, after Marshall left, through '47 and '48, reflects all of the goodness and the decency of Dr. Stuart and his intimate, sort of emotional involvement in China, and his hopes and yet his realization of a hopelessness at the same time. You get it all through his reports.

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And there's one very long telegram that went out from Washington at one point -- it must have been '49 or late '48 -- which really carries the Marshall imprint, showing why we could not really get ourselves fully and directly involved in the China scene at this point, because of the hopelessness of the situation, in a sense, because of the Generalissimo's unwillingness, really, to take advice and do the things that he alone could do. It shows, also, a realization on our part that the decisive factor in China was no longer American aid or what the Americans can do, but it was really what the Chinese Nationalists could do to help themselves and to do the things that they alone could do to restore competence and restore the balance. Ambassador Stuart's telegrams through that period reflect all of this. So,

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Ambassador Stuart was torn between two points of view and was still trying to rectify the situation, saying that it wasn't too late and yet on the other hand quite often saying it was too late, because there was nothing that we could do which could offset their weaknesses. It was a great tragedy.

FUCHS: I believe it was George Sokolsky who criticized Ambassador Stuart as having an indecisiveness to a great extent. Do you think that played any part?

SPROUSE: No, that played no part whatsoever, I think. As a matter of fact the last person whose opinion I would respect on China would be George Sokolsky. I've even forgotten about him. I think he was a White Russian out of the Harbin area. A completely biased and

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non-objective observer of the China scene.

FUCHS: I believe Stuart took a little exception to the white paper on China. At least he felt that, for one thing, there was no recognition even that the Chinese Nationalists came into power in 1928. Do you have any observations about the white paper? Did you play a part in writing that?

SPROUSE: Yes, I helped in drafting it. As a matter of fact, the China white paper was originally designed not for publication at the time it was published. It was really thought up by Butterworth, who was an extremely able man, and Butterworth's idea was that we would do this China white paper so that you would have an objective story of American policy during this period, an objective picture, an honest

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picture, which had to stand up historically. The idea was that this would be published only well after the event, that is after the National Government's defeat and the Chinese Communist takeover. And Butterworth issued specific instructions that this thing had to tell the whole story objectively, hide nothing, because it had to stand up historically. It couldn't be a partisan, political, apologia for the Democratic administration of that day.

At one point, in a meeting in the Secretary's office, when Dean Acheson was Secretary of State, if I remember correctly, this began to get into the political mill. And for political reasons, I'm convinced -- I can't prove this -- it was decided to publish the white paper earlier rather than later. I think one of the reasons it was done,

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was that the situation in China was being used in a very partisan way by the Republicans to belabor the Democratic administration and to charge them with responsibility for the loss of China to the Chinese Communists. So the Chinese white paper was published earlier than it was expected to be when we were writing it, and earlier, I think, than it should have been published. This was a tremendous shock, I'm sure, to the opposition.

The opposition before long realized that the thing was so detailed and in such volume that the American people as a whole just couldn't absorb all of this.

So, after being initially stunned and shocked by this exposure, they began to reverse their field and start the attack again and then began to try to paint the picture of the China

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white paper as a whitewash. Some academicians have taken this up at some point, but I still am convinced that it was not. I know that it wasn't intended as a whitewash, because Dean Acheson as Secretary of State, also said it was to tell the whole story and not to be a partisan picture of the

period. I know of nothing in the China white paper that can be used to justify the charge of it being a whitewash; and I know of no omissions in the China white paper, except one thing.

The only thing that has turned up later, which was not known during the period we were writing the paper, was the effort of Chou En-lai and Mao Tse-tung to solicit an invitation from Washington to come to Washington in 1945. And the reason this wasn't included in the white paper was that none of us had ever heard of this

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overture. The overture was made directly, I found out just last year, through an OSS man in our small mission to Yen-an, the Chinese Communist capital, who in turn passed it on to General Wedemeyer. General Wedemeyer in turn passed it on to General [Patrick Jay] Hurley and it never saw the light of day in Washington; or if it did see the light of day in Washington it was buried so deeply in the files as an "eyes only top secret" matter that the people working on Chinese affairs during my period in Washington never heard of the existence of such a paper.

I never knew anything about it until it turned up in the hearings before the Senate about a year or so ago.

So, to say that this was covered up is really an unjustified charge, because even the Foreign Service officers such as [John S.] Service and

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[John Paton] Davies who were part of Stilwell's staff, as his political advisers -- and Service, particularly, was involved in this thing, because he was a part of the mission to Yen-an -- had never heard of the existence of this recommendation. But by this point, when the overture was made by Chou and Mao Tse-tung, Service was not at Yen-an. He got back to Yen-an, I think, later, but it was never revealed to him. So, no one in the State Department, so far as I know, except, obviously, the person who put it in the files at some point, knew about this. This is the only instance of anything pertinent and really relevant and important in the story of our relations with China, which did not turn up in the white paper.

FUCHS: Why do you think this happened?

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SPROUSE: Well, Hurley, of course, was such a "bull in the china shop" and such an absolute disaster. Hurley was really the decisive force in our policy toward China in those days, and he accused all the China specialists of those days who had served on his staff or served on Stilwell's staff, of being pro-Communist and espousing the Communist cause rather than the Nationalist Government. The State Department itself had no power, no authority, and apparently President Roosevelt had given Hurley pretty much of a free hand, because he ignored the State Department. I remember distinctly, at one point, in March, 1945, the embassy in Chungking headed by the charge d'affaires, George Atcheson, a China specialist, sent a long telegram to Washington in which they recommended the arming of the Chinese Communists to participate in the

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attack on the Japanese at the time we were on the verge of making a landing on the coast of China.

This was done on the basis that this would serve the war effort, and, again, I think what all these people had in mind was to prevent the "Chinese Communist capture" by the Russians. In other words, this would give us a point of influence with the Chinese Communists, and contact with them, and this was justified, in a sense, in an effort to get Chinese participation in the attack on Japan at the time of our landings. They recommended the arming of the Chinese Communists. They recommended that this be considered by the Department and the White House at the time both General Hurley and General Wedemeyer were back in Washington.

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So, this was an honest, open and above board recommendation. This infuriated Hurley because he felt that the embassy was going behind his back. Well, of course, the embassy was not going behind his back, but the embassy was obviously sending a telegram which would never have seen the light of day if Hurley had been in Chungking. So Hurley discussed this recommendation back in Washington -- this isn't very clear in the China white paper, but the telegram itself is quoted in full in the China white paper -- after the telegram arrived and was considered both by the State Department and presumably at the White House, because the China white paper ended up by saying that Hurley carried the day, his views prevailed and this recommendation was not accepted. And this is a historic

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turning point, in a way, because at this point they were saying in effect let us have some contact and try to achieve some kind of modus vivendi with the Chinese Communists and use them and their military capabilities against the Japanese at the time of our landing on the coast of China. This might have changed the course of history; I don't know. But anyway the recommendation was ignored and not accepted. This is something that is in the China white paper. Hurley, to my mind, was an absolute disaster, because this man was ignorant, he was arrogant, he was bombastic, he was a fool in some ways, and you wonder why FDR ever appointed him to China to begin with.

FUCHS: How did he happen to replace, I believe,

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Ambassador Gauss? I believe Hurley was appointed around '44, November of '44.

SPROUSE: He came out in the middle of '44, really to mediate the differences between Stilwell and the Generalissimo, I think. This was his reason to come out as a special representative of the President. When Gauss submitted his resignation, sometime in the fall of that year of '44, again, Hurley was appointed as Ambassador to succeed Gauss. Hurley was the one who really took the initiative in injecting Americans as the mediators between the National Government and Chinese Communists. He struck right off for Yen-an at one point, and Gauss who was still Ambassador, told him that we had had contact with the Chinese Communists, but we had not involved ourselves in the position as middleman, negotiator between the two. Hurley

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in effect told Gauss that, "I have authority from the White House to do whatever I think is necessary in this situation, and I'm going to do it." -- off he went to Yenan; and at one time brought Mao Tse-tung back to Chungking on his own plane.

So, Hurley was a bull in a china shop and he ignored the State Department because he thought they were sort of leaning towards the Chinese Communists; and the State Department, as I get the picture, supported the Embassy's recommendation in that famous telegram in 1945 on establishing some kind of a modus vivendi with the Chinese Communists and arming them for use against the Japanese at the time of our landings.

FUCHS: Why did Gauss retire?

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SPROUSE: I think Gauss realized that his position was becoming increasingly difficult with the number of special representatives that President Roosevelt was sending out to China, and I think Hurley was sort of the straw that broke the camel's back; because Hurley ignored Gauss and Gauss was having the ground cut out from under him in terms of his influence and authority vis-a-vis the National Government to which he was accredited. They realized that Gauss had no real say in our policy at this point, and they ignored Gauss. The Nationalist Government would go over his head right to the White House. They were able to do this through T.V. Soong, the Generalissimo's brother-in-law, who was a very able man. He was at various times Foreign Minister, Prime Minister, and very, very closely associated with groups

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in Washington. A very able man, with access to the White House.

FUCHS: Was Ambassador Gauss in your opinion a capable man?

SPROUSE: Ambassador Gauss was one of the most capable men I have ever known. A man of sterling character and integrity. A hard rock, conservative Republican. A man of great courage, who feared neither man nor God, and he would tell the State Department exactly what he thought with a great deal of courage. He had the interest of the United States very much at heart in all our dealings with the Chinese, because he always refused to open the doors of the Treasury to those wholesale raids which were encouraged or sought after by the so-called "China lobby" people. And

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this didn't make him popular with the advocates of unlimited U.S. aid to the Chinese Nationalist Government, nor did it make him at all popular with the Nationalist Government who resented his what might be called parsimony, because he had the interest of the United States and the American taxpayer at heart. Again, he realized, after a career of, say, 30 years in China, that in the final analysis the answer to China was Chinese performance and not external aid. And once you began to encourage them to lean on the external part of the picture the desirability of their own performance was lessened.

FUCHS: What would have been the actual mechanics of this overture from Chou En-lai and Mao Tse-tung through Hurley? It wasn't a cover-up, I realize, on the part of the State Department, but how was it kept out of the regular channels?

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SPROUSE: I don't know. You see I haven't seen the message yet that was sent, but it was a message from Chou and Mao seeking to come to Washington to discuss the overall situation. I'm not sure what they really wanted to discuss. Obviously it had something to do with their contacts with us, maybe extension of aid, or looking into the picture for the future. They wanted to come to Washington to talk with the President, as I get the picture. You should be able to find this message in Washington, because it was discussed in hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about a year or a year and a half ago by a young man named -- what was his name -- who had been in the Office of Asian Affairs at some point. He was in Research and Intelligence earlier, and then came over into the Office of Southeast Asian

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Affairs, the Office of Chinese Affairs, and he is now a professor of political science at the University of Michigan. I think he was originally an academic type who came into the Department at some point in Research and Intelligence. I can't think of his name now. I met him once, but I don't know him at all. And he brought this whole question up in the hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I remember this man distinctly because he in effect criticized Dean Acheson for the whitewash of the white paper, and he presented no proof at all that it was a whitewash except, referring to this particular message from Chou and Mao. I wrote him a letter at the University of Michigan because I resented so bitterly the criticism of Dean Acheson -- that is unjustified criticism such as this -- a man

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of such real greatness and honesty and integrity and courage. And he denied his statement, saying that he really hadn't criticized Dean Acheson for the cover-up and so forth. But the words are there; he really did. At least you can go to the Department and get that message, I'm sure, because he saw it.

FUCHS: Do you think that President Truman's policy was consistent towards China in this period, that is in regard to "no aid" unless they reformed themselves and so forth?

SPROUSE: Well, I don't think the point was ever reached where there was no aid, because there was always aid, always uninterrupted economic aid. The only thing that was stopped, at any point, was the deliveries of military equipment. They were stopped by General Marshall

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during his mediation mission in an effort to stop the hostilities, because the Generalissimo was ordering attacks on the Chinese Communists. I won't say the Chinese Communists also weren't involved and responsible for some of the hostilities, but the basic responsibilities at this point lay with the Generalissimo, because he was telling General Marshall that in five months they would cease to exist as an organized military force. "I'll defeat them."

General Marshall was pointing out to the Generalissimo that he was entirely wrong. General Marshall did this with great respect, and after all he did speak with some authority and some knowledge of military affairs in view of his own position. General Marshall pointed out to the Generalissimo that with his extended lines of communication and with his forces holed up in

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cities as garrisons, that the Chinese Communists with their superior mobility, their guerrilla tactics, could strike him at points of their own choosing, interrupt his lines of communication and bleed them economically if not eventually militarily.

So General Marshall stopped the deliveries of military equipment under our aid program, from a time at some point during his mission in '46 until sometime in '47 when they were resumed. But General Barr later in his testimony made the point that at no time, to his knowledge, were any of the defeats of the National Government ever due to the lack of military supplies and equipment. The only suspension of aid ever involved, had nothing to do with economic aid -- it was this suspension during the period of the Marshall mission and immediately following,

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because at one time Marshall made a great effort to insure the extension of aid from all the vast stores of equipment, which was of both civilian type and military type, which were shipped to the Pacific islands during the war.

FUCHS: Mr. Ambassador, I was wondering about your views on Mr. Truman's consistency. Some people thought he was inconsistent in that he reiterated that China should not get aid unless they reformed their government, and at the same time aid was continued, and people have brought this out. They felt that he was inconsistent in what he was saying and what he was doing. Do you think this is true?

SPROUSE: I don't find any inconsistency in this because we should remember that every effort

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was being made from the Washington viewpoint to influence and pressure the Chinese Government to carry out the reforms which in the final analysis were the decisive factor in their ultimate fate. And unless they carried out these reforms -- and only they could do it, it could not be done by the United States Government -- inevitably they would lose the battle against the Chinese Communists. And to give them unlimited aid, without performance in this field of reform, would be in effect to insure that they wouldn't carry out these reforms.

As an example, of this, I remember quite an argument I had with General Wedemeyer during the drafting of the report on his mission in Hawaii in 1947. I argued with General Wedemeyer that we should decide ourselves on

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the actions that the Chinese Government must take in the field of reform to insure its survival and ultimate victory, because these would be the decisive factor and not external aid. And I said

that if we extended aid in a new program in accordance with General Wedemeyer's recommendations without any performance by the National Government, we would in effect be going down the drain with our aid, whether it was a billion or two billion, along with the National Government; and that the only hope to insure their taking these actions, which they alone could take, would be to hold up our aid until they had done it and to make it clear that implementation of our aid program depended upon their taking these actions.

Wedemeyer's answer to me was that if we

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waited for them to take these actions we would never give any aid. And I said, "Well, this proved my point, then; I would recommend no aid in that case."

And so in effect we continued our aid program all along, but always with every effort made to insure that they would take these actions for which their very survival depended. And I think some of our efforts were defeated, in a way, by the influence of the China lobby type actions in this country. We sort of had a feeling, in a way, that the Nationalists were always being told in Chung-king to ignore these recommendations of the State Department and the Embassy, you were never going to get their aid anyway. I think these actions tended to help defeat our efforts to get effective reforms by the

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Nationalist Government.

FUCHS: Why was policy in regard to China not bipartisan as it was with most of the rest of our foreign policy. What was it about China?

SPROUSE: I think in a sense it was bipartisan in many ways because of Senator Vandenberg. Senator Vandenberg, a very influential and responsible member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, went along with our policy pretty much.

I remember distinctly when we were coming up to the China aid program in 1948 that it was Senator Vandenberg's idea which led to the inclusion of that 125 million dollar grant which was to be used by the Chinese Nationalists for whatever purpose they saw fit.

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Senator Vandenberg clearly stated in the hearings before that committee that he realized that we couldn't commit ourselves to underwrite their survival. And in those hearings Senator Vandenberg's own statements clearly reflect pretty much of an acceptance of and a concurrence with the policy. I think you'll find his testimony outlined briefly in the China white paper, and of course, it's a matter of record what he said and thought. I'm not sure that that reflected the Republican political policy as typified by Senator Knowland, for instance.

I remember at one point when Roger Latham and Allen Griffin, who were the director and deputy director, respectively, of our economic aid mission to China, came back to this country, in '49, perhaps. They saw Senator Knowland. They were two staunch Republicans who agreed

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pretty much with what we had been doing, and they recognized the weaknesses of the National Government and the efforts that were being made and the hopes for reform, and they had a long session with Senator Knowland to give him some of the facts of life. Senator Knowland recognized the accuracy of their views -- he knew they were correct -- but he went right along with the line he had been taking earlier, because politically it paid off. This was one of the ways the Republicans could lambaste the Democrats.

And I think later this in part contributed importantly to our involvement in Vietnam. I don't think any administration, Republican or Democratic, after the debacle of China and the effect it had on the Democratic Party -- being accused as being responsible for the loss

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of China -- wanted to be in office when another country in Asia went down the drain to a Communist movement. So, consequently, you had the effect in the Kennedy days and you definitely had it in the Johnson days. And you've got to remember that it was during the Eisenhower administration that, when the French negotiated their withdrawal from Indochina at the Geneva Conference in 1954, John Foster Dulles, moved right in to draw up a SEATO treaty, which in effect contained an umbrella protocol at the end of the treaty providing for at least consultation and the possibilities of action by the signatory powers, if Vietnam or the Indo-Chinese states were threatened by either external attack or internal subversion. This was the vehicle which was used later as an excuse for our

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involvement in Indochina. Although if you read Dulles' testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during that period it made clear that there wasn't any automatic involvement, that this simply meant that the signatory powers would consult, and proceed according to their constitutional processes, which in our case should have been congressional action.

FUCHS: Do you consider the China white paper one of the prime sources for studying this era of U.S.-China relations?

SPROUSE: Well, I think it's an important source, but the ultimate source has to be the documents themselves of the State Department and other official documents of the government on which the China white paper was based. An effort

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was made to insure that the China white paper would cover honestly and objectively the whole period, but, obviously you couldn't quote every document, and use every document. There had to be some selectivity involved in it, so I think that ultimately historians, academic people, will have to not only read the white paper but also go back and see the files of the Department. You are now getting increasing large distribution of knowledge on that area through the publication of the *Foreign Relations* series, which is put out by the Department every year. I've just read one recently which covers the aid hearings in 1948.

FUCHS: Yes, I think that was published just last month. You mentioned earlier that there was one individual who felt that the policy, or

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position papers, should have been included in the Chinese white paper. Do you care to remark about that?

SPROUSE: Oh, yes, that was Jack Service's monograph in connection with the Amerasia papers. Jack Service mentioned, listed, and described, I think, maybe eight or ten documents which were largely State Department policy or position papers in 1945, and he said that these were omitted in the Chinese white paper and should have been covered.

I differ with Jack on this. I said the principle involved in connection with these position papers is exemplified in that famous telegram covered by the white paper. I'm referring to the telegram sent by the embassy in Chungking in March 1945, when both Wedemeyer and General

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Hurley were in Washington, which had to do with the arming of the Chinese Communists and establishment of some kind of modus vivendi with the Chinese Communists. I said, "That telegram poses the very issue which is involved in all these position papers, in that they weren't really the policy that was carried out in China. The policy that was carried out in China during that very period was decided by General Hurley and not by the State Department. The State Department policy papers did not represent the policy that was being carried out, it was simply position." I said, "We didn't in the China white paper in every instance -- although we did in this instance -- describe the varying, differing points of views of everybody involved in our policy decisions. What was really important was what

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was the policy that was carried out, and that's what we attempted to describe.

FUCHS: Were you glad as an Assistant Chief in the Division of Chinese Affairs to be assigned to the Wedemeyer mission? Is that customary or would you rather have stayed back on your own assignment?

SPROUSE: No. I was brought in at the beginning of Marshall's period as Secretary of State as the Assistant Chief of the Division of Chinese Affairs, as it was known then. The Wedemeyer mission was either John Carter Vincent's idea or General Marshall's idea. John Carter Vincent was director of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs at that point. But when the Wedemeyer mission was organized General Marshall's idea was that I go along. I'm sure

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that General Marshall, not Wedemeyer, was influential in my appointment, as what was known as the political adviser. There was an economic adviser for the State Department; a political adviser, I, for the State Department; a financial adviser from the Treasury Department; a military man from the Navy -- an Admiral whose name I forget now; and sort of an executive officer,

another military man, who is now a two or three star general, named Claire Hutchin, who had also worked in the Marshall mission in China; and a public relations man, a first-rate man named Mark Watson, who was an outstanding correspondent who had covered the Pentagon for the Baltimore *Sun* for decades, one of the finest men I've ever met.

So, I was along simply because I had been

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tied up in the Marshall mission and worked on China; and I enjoyed it. It was a fascinating mission, very interesting.

FUCHS: Is there anything that stands out in your memory about it other than this incident when you were writing the report in Hawaii and differed with Wedemeyer?

SPROUSE: Well, one thing that stands out in my mind, is that everywhere I went in China I was sought out, by people who obviously knew something of my background -- some of them I had known before, many of them I had not known before, never heard of them -- and invariably their theme was that (these people were pro-Western and pro-American) your people have got to put pressure on the Generalissimo to do these things, because only you can do it. He won't

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do them unless you put the pressure on him, and that's the only hope for salvation in China, otherwise the Communists will win. I remember distinctly a group, that I think had come up from Hong Kong, saying how much better off the Japanese were and that it was too bad the Chinese hadn't lost the war and been enemies of the Americans. They said, "Look, what's happening to Japan, and look at what's happening to us." These people were Chinese Nationalists, they weren't puppets of the Americans, but they felt very strongly. Some of them were official and some of them were not official. But their only hope was that action would be taken by the Generalissimo and he wouldn't take it unless the Americans pressured him into doing it.

But the Generalissimo was a proud man;

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the Generalissimo was a great leader, there's no doubt about it. I think if you singled out responsibility for what happened in China -- much of it of course is historical beyond anybody's control -- but if one man had to be singled out, I'd single out the Generalissimo, because he alone had the authority and the possibility of doing the very things that had to be done. But he was not a product of the mid-20th Century and I think he really didn't understand the political and social forces at work within his own country, and his position became increasingly insecure, of course. He turned more or less, as Diem did later in Vietnam, to appointing people, not on the basis of their competence, but on the basis of their loyalty to him, and this is always a sign of weakness.

FUCHS: Do you think there would have been time for

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the Generalissimo to have cleaned up the government of China between, say, the time of the Marshall mission and 1949, when they lost? Could he really have reversed the course of events?

SPROUSE: Well, I don't know. It's arguable whether it was too late, whether it was possible at that point. Maybe it could have been done; it was the only hope. Many people think that that point was reached in the early part of the war against Japan, the point of no return.

FUCHS: Ambassador Stuart felt that there was no advance consultation with the Chinese Nationalists about the Wedemeyer mission. In other words, it was sort of foisted on them. Do you have any views of that?

SPROUSE: I'm inclined to agree completely with

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Ambassador Stuart. This is the way Washington operates too often. We just informed the Chinese we were sending a fact finding mission, and we sent a fact finding mission. Which can be offensive to a proud people with a great sense of their own independence and so forth. But it wasn't done with any malice or anything. It was done in an effort to be helpful. Obviously they had to agree to accept it, but it wasn't that. Stuart would have gone and discussed this with the Generalissimo and I'm inclined to agree that the Generalissimo would have given an affirmative answer, for two reasons: one, the very fact that the mission was headed by Wedemeyer, gave them all the hope in the world that it would be a favorable mission, as it was, on the most part; and, two, that if it were rejected the chances of getting

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aid would be lessened. So on all accounts I think they would have received it affirmatively regardless of the circumstances under which it was announced. But I think Dr. Stuart was right. There was no effort to sit down and discuss it with him. He was just told we would send one. Obviously we had to get permission, but it was almost a fait accompli at that point.

FUCHS: Wedemeyer himself wrote about his speech to the people when he left China, and he had some second thoughts later about whether he had done the right thing in more or less taking them to task. Do you recall anything about that at the time?

SPROUSE: Well, this again was an effort by Wedemeyer to jolt them, to stun them into doing things.

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And he talked exceedingly frankly before the Generalissimo and his leaders in an off-the-record session. But I think many Chinese were offended by this because they felt this was rude. It was offensive to them as a sovereign nation for anybody to be saying such things, and I'm not sure that they weren't right. I didn't know he was going to do it. He didn't seek my advice. I would have recommended that he talk that frankly alone with the Generalissimo, but not in a group where it would obviously leak all over the map, and of course, it made him lose tremendous face all over the world. They were infuriated with this; they were all infuriated and I think even those

who were critics of the Generalissimo would have found this offensive. But Wedemeyer thought that he could shock them

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into doing anything.

FUCHS: Did you agree that the report should be suppressed at that time?

SPROUSE: Well, there was a very good reason for it being suppressed. This was on General Marshall's recommendation basically, supported by the President, because there were things in it which, again, would have been offensive if released to the public; and, too, it had to do with a recommendation also by Wedemeyer about establishing a trusteeship, I think, over Manchuria. It required U.N. action. They felt this would be unfortunate and so forth. But there wasn't any ulterior motive because I think it would have done more damage to the National Government to have it released than anything else, and I think this is one of the things that Marshall

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had in mind.

FUCHS: I gather that your relationship with the Chinese was entirely frank and open and you had very good relationship with all the Chinese with whom you came in contact?

SPROUSE: I always had very good relations with the Chinese. I don't think you can serve in a country long (and this I think has to do with both officials and particularly with newspapermen) without coming up with a tremendous amount of liking and respect for the Chinese, as people. Sometimes it becomes overwhelmingly sentimental in some ways and you have to work awfully hard to be objective, to keep always in mind that you are representing the United States Government and not the Chinese Government. Our relations with the Chinese officials have always been very good both in Washington and in China.

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Even with some that you might know were scoundrels, in a sense. I didn't have contact with that type, although some of the military people were incompetent and so forth. As a rule they are very likeable, and I established rapport with them in a way that I don't think I have in any other country I've served in -- perhaps in Belgium, that's the only exception that I can think of. I never served in England, of course, where you have a language bond.

FUCHS: Did the Japanese offensive in '37 affect your work appreciably? Did your situation change or your lifestyle change?

SPROUSE: No. I was in Peking when the Japanese occupied Peking in 1937. The war started just outside Peking and the Japanese occupied Peking within a month. There was no actual

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fighting in the city. From then on when we were under Japanese occupation, you didn't go around the countryside quite as freely as you used to, but we still went around the countryside. I

remember, before the Japanese occupation, going off on a walking trip of about 200 miles in the mountains. We still got around because the fighting very quickly shifted out of North China into South China, and life went on inside Peking pretty much as it had been. I know when I went to my next post, which was Hankow, I had to go up river on a Japanese ship. It was about 600 miles and you didn't travel at night because they were afraid of Chinese mines on the Yangtse. We were hemmed in much more in Hankow, which was completely Japanese occupied territory, than we had been in Peking. But there were American naval

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gunboats on station, and there was always one on station at Hankow; it was changed every three months. This gave us radio communication with the outside world, but we had little or no contact with Chinese in Hankow during this period, because they were afraid to be seen with you.

FUCHS: What were your principal assignments and duties during your different periods in China?

SPROUSE: Well, in Peking, of course, I started as code clerk. Then when I passed the examination and became an officer my only duty was to learn the Chinese language and learn China, Chinese history, resources and so forth. Then I moved to Hankow where I did everything. I issued visas, I worked on the accounts, and I did political reporting, covering the

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political and military situation. I think that one thing I didn't do, I had no economic reporting responsibilities; but I did everything else. And I issued passports. This was in connection with all of the citizenship records, visas and passports and so forth.

My next job was in Chungking, and in Chungking my chief responsibility always was in the political section. Remember that the political sections do reporting on the political developments and situations in China. And at one point when we started a cultural program, I had initial responsibility to the cultural relations program of China, contact with the interested people, professors and so forth. But later, during the war at some point, they sent out a new officer to take over cultural relations as a full-time job, and, of course,

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that no longer was my responsibility and I reverted to the political scene.

Then, of course, back in Washington later, as Assistant Director and then Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, it was everything across the board. There was nothing that you didn't get involved in because you had overall responsibility for the work of the Division, and the Division was a fairly large division and we must have had at least 12 or 15 consular offices under us, some of them big consulates in China, all reporting to Washington. So the flow of paper over your desk from the field and the number of problems involved, included hearings before congressional committees, National Security Council meetings, meetings of the Policy Planning Staff, the aid programs, and the protection of American

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interests, and of course, contacts with the Pentagon. It was sort of 70 and 80 hour weeks every week. I mean there was no escape from it.

I remember walking out one Sunday night around 11 o'clock and there was a nice policeman on duty and I'd seen him a lot. He was from Alabama, and had a nice Alabama accent. And he said, "Mr. Sprouse, I think you and General Byroade" -- Byroade at that point was working on either Germany or Asia and was on loan from the Pentagon -- are the hardest working people in the State Department, because you are always coming out of here at night."

I said, "Well, I'm not assigned here permanently; you can do it for a few years, but I wouldn't do it as a lifetime job." Of course, you're always in crisis on China.

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FUCHS: How large was the Policy Planning Staff?

SPROUSE: Not awfully large. Of course, there was one man who represented each specific area; there was one Far Eastern man, there was one man on Germany, one man on Eastern Europe. [Edward E.] Rice, for instance, at one time in the postwar period was the Asian man on the Policy Planning Staff, who again, I say, is a man who survived the thing without ever getting smeared.

Davies was the Far Eastern man at one point when George Kennan was the director over there, and Davies was the companion piece, in a sense, to Jack Service, being smeared and fired by Dulles as a controversial character, again. But he was cleared, just in recent years, while Dean Rusk was Secretary of State. He was finally cleared after all these years.

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Sad, because here again was a first-rate man. But Hurley of course was bitterly fighting with both Davies and Service. They were his two chief enemies, he thought.

FUCHS: Have you any observations about George Kennan or Paul Nitze?

SPROUSE: Well, George Kennan in my mind is almost sort of a knight in shining armor. This man is intellectually maybe the most superior man the State Department had in my day. His two books reflect it, I think. He was a very tremendously impressive man, intellectually very superior and fearless, and with a great deal of influence on our policy of containment during that postwar period. Although George Kennan himself points out that the policy of containment that he was seeking didn't

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involve military containment around the globe as it came to be later.

FUCHS: How was morale in the Department when this began with the China lobby, Service, and Carter Vincent, and all those? How was this accepted from day to day?

SPROUSE: Well, during these days on China in the late forties, when the China lobby was particularly active -- this was in the days before the real rise of McCarthyism which came in the fifties -- I think you were so busy you were buoyed up by the sort of belief in what you were doing. And you were buoyed up also considerably and importantly, and decisively maybe, by the fact that you had people like Marshall and Acheson as Secretaries of State and a President in the White House that was willing to stand up

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on these things, which was Truman.

So you've got to give Harry Truman a great deal of credit on this. Later in the McCarthy days when you had Eisenhower as President there was almost a surrender to this whole thing, and, particularly, when Dulles was Secretary of State, as he just opened the State Department wide open for McCarthy. Morale obviously plummeted, and then we were shipped out of the Department, divorced completely and exiled forever from Chinese affairs from then on. This meant of course, that not only did the State Department lose, but the Government lost in a sense, by divesting itself of what expertise it had in an important area. Here you went into new areas in which you were not an expert, in which you may have an interest, but I never felt the same about my career

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afterwards, because I was in China while I was learning and as a fairly senior officer. Later you were never in the same position as in China where, for example, when someone would mention a name, you would know the man's whole background. You knew everything about him. I ended up in France later, but -- although I was tremendously interested in France, had studied in France, and French had been one of my majors in college -- I didn't have the knowledge of the modern political scene and the internal setup in France as I had in China.

My job chiefly in Paris, of course, was following the situation in Asia. I was the Asian specialist and at one time it was mainly Korea, because we were involved in the war in Korea. Then, of course, it became Indochina and I was increasingly in contact with the foreign

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office and the French Ministry of Associated States, which dealt with Indochina; not at the ministerial level, but at the second level of these ministries.

FUCHS: I have read that by the early fifties out of something like 22 what might be called "old China hands" there were only two still concerned with Chinese affairs.

SPROUSE: In the 1950s there was Drumright -- Rice at this point was in Germany I believe, he was out of it unless he was back in the Policy Planning Staff, so he might have been the other one -- and there weren't any others.

Now, sometimes they mention China specialists who really weren't China specialists, but had just served in that area. For instance, Walter McConaughy, now ambassador to the Chinese Nationalist

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Government in Formosa, served a tremendous number of years. he was consul general in Shanghai at one point and he's been in Formosa for God knows how long, but he never studied Chinese. He was never a China specialist, although he obviously has a tremendous knowledge of China by now. He doesn't speak Chinese and is not properly speaking a Chinese specialist, but he's had tremendous service in the area.

FUCHS: How did you happen to be assigned to the international secretariat to the U.N. Conference of organization in '45?

SPROUSE: The State Department decided to name liaison officers from the various geographic areas to each foreign delegation under the international secretariat. In other words, I was the only liaison officer with China. I am sure there was only one with the U.K.,

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only one with France. I think for the smaller countries you would have one assigned, for instance, to maybe Benelux, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg. I was the contact with the Chinese delegation, and the executive director of their delegation (I believe he was called "executive director") was a good friend of mine from the Chinese Embassy in Washington.

Liaison had to do with everything, every problem they had -- with hotel rooms, when they needed extra sugar, something extra for a reception they were giving, when they needed extra limousines, extra copies of documents, anything. We were representatives of the international secretariat, you see. This meant that you had to be on constant beck and call and always be of service to them in everything they wanted. Well, this was easy for me because I knew all

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their people from Washington, practically all of the members of that delegation before. I always had had a very pleasant relationship with them, and that included three Chinese Communists who were made members of that delegation at the insistence, I think, of the Americans. General Hurley started this. They were staying at the same hotel, and I'd known them in Chungking during the war, and had had a lot of contact with them in Chungking. So this was a case of knowing all the members of the delegation. I remember getting either a dentist or an eye specialist for one of them at one point. I think that is the only specific service I remember performing for them.

FUCHS: Did you have aides or were you the sole liaison?

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SPROUSE: No, I have never been an empire builder, I had no aides. I'm resentful of people who have to have aides. I was telling you earlier about that one officer being sent out from Washington to take over as a full-time job the position of cultural affairs officer, which I'd been doing as a part of my job, when I was concentrating, really, on political reporting but also doing other work. It wasn't long after this man arrived as the cultural affairs officer that he asked for an assistant. This sort of thing I'll never get over until my dying day.

FUCHS: Did you think that we had an overly large delegation to the U.N. organization conference?

SPROUSE: We always do. I was in Paris on at least one occasion -- and I was four years in Paris

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when the U.N. General Assembly had its meeting in Paris and I remember somebody from the French Foreign Office telling me at one point, "I have never seen anything like your delegation. When a new problem comes up," he said, "we have to deal with it, but you trot out a completely new team that has the ball." Of course, I could see signs of that, because I'm convinced that the staff in the American Embassy in Paris was larger than the French Foreign Office.

I fought this as an inspector. I was an inspector in 1959, '60 and '61 and I headed a team of inspectors that inspected our embassies at Rome, Paris, and was scheduled to do London. I remember distinctly my views that I held at Paris on the size of that embassy and some of our operations on which I never got any support, because the administrative

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people obviously wanted to build empires and weren't interested in cutting down anything. I particularly resented our setting up on the Place de la Concorde, this great historic place in Paris, what in effect became a supermarket shopping center with PX and commissary operations and a restaurant. I brought up in the Ambassador's staff meeting one day that I was bitterly critical -- I thought it was absolutely inexcusable -- of our running this operation on the Place de la Concorde. I said, "When some foreign ambassador comes in to call on you, likely as not he will walk right through the Embassy courtyard, on the Place de la Concorde, and here will be the housewives with the trunks of their cars open loading in all sorts of PX things, Kleenex, Kotex, brown paper bags, God knows what else; or there will be somebody sitting on the steps

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there with big brown paper bags in his arms waiting for somebody to come pick him up." I said, "I think it is absolutely disgraceful." The Ambassador was shocked.

The following week the administrative people who were in charge of this operation added frozen steaks and frozen chicken. They just couldn't possibly have the American people eating this god awful French food (which I think is the best food in the world). So, it was a losing battle. When I came back as an inspector -- I headed the team of six inspectors inspecting this operation -- I thought, "Boy, now I'm going to do something about it."

So, in my recommendations as to what ought to be done, the other inspectors supported me, and the Embassy agreed with this. The minister was a career man, who was a good

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friend of mine. He had been in Peking when I was in Peking back in the thirties and he had been Ambassador in Chile, was brought up to be the number two under a political ambassador. And

we recommended that the restaurant be reduced to a cafeteria, be restricted only to official personnel, and be moved to the back side of an upper floor. We recommended that the PX-commissary be closed completely on the Place de la Concorde and removed to some area out near where the Army had a PX, and we recommended that a gift shop, which was selling French perfumes and ties -- which was absurd -- be closed completely, never to be reopened, and to restore some dignity to the American official establishment. This was among many recommendations we made. When I got back to Washington I found out that the

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executive director of the Bureau of European Affairs, whose last job was ambassador in Budapest, I think -- also a first-rate man -- agreed completely with these recommendations and sent out orders that these things should be done. And suddenly he got a call from the top administrative officer, whose name I won't mention, in the State Department, who said, "What do you think you're doing?"

And this executive director said, "I'm doing exactly what the inspectors recommended, with which I agree completely, and I'm going to move from the Paris Embassy to other embassies and do the same thing."

Whereupon this top-ranking administrative officer, who of course, was one of the top people in the Department, sat down and wrote personal notes canceling these things. He

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didn't send out an official notice, because he would, obviously, have to had to clear it. He cancelled the whole thing.

I was going to strike a blow for this country. And then I did a special report at Dean Rusk's request, when he was Secretary of States, which was designed to cut our personnel all over the world, starting out with Paris. I did a special report on Paris about operations which had started out with three people and ended up with somewhere around a hundred, a hundred and twenty-five, a financial operation. I recommended sending them back to Washington; why build this up in Europe? It was wasteful and every ambassador for years had said that our overwhelming presence in Paris was really detrimental to our prestige and our position in Paris, and our relations with

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the French.

Dean Rusk wanted me to assemble a small staff and do a job for the whole world. This is a case where I needed a small staff, because we were dealing with the whole world. This was in 1961. I discovered that by the time it got up to Roger Jones, who was the chief administrative officer at that point, that the whole thing had been cancelled because they had had such a reduction in their budget it was no longer pertinent. But to my mind it was pertinent, having nothing to do with the budget as a long-range thing. And years later when [John W.] Tuthill, Ambassador down in Rio did something on his own, some way he got publicity all over the world and everybody said what a fine thing to do. Here I had done the same thing, for first Paris and planned it

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for the world, and my mission, which Dean Rusk had set up for me, and I had begun to assemble some people, was cancelled completely. At this point I submitted my request for retirement.

FUCHS: Was the work you did in France affected by the outbreak of the police action, Korean war?

SPROUSE: The Korean thing had started before I got to Paris. I left my job as the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs only about a week or two before the Korean thing broke out in June 1950, and I didn't get to Paris until the following August. So, Korea had already started by the time I got to Paris. Of course some of my job was maintaining contact with the French Foreign Office on problems related to the Korean situation, but it gradually moved more and more into the Indochina picture,

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which is really Vietnam.

FUCHS: What about the ECA or Marshall plan? Were there any of its problems that you had to get into?

SPROUSE: No, that was not my field of responsibility.

FUCHS: You remarked earlier that you did have a personal contact with President Truman?

SPROUSE: Well, this is one I will never forget, because it showed President Truman at what I considered to be his best. Sometime when I was in Brussels, it must have been in say '56 or '57, we received an instruction from the Department saying that President and Mrs. Truman, accompanied by former Ambassador Stanley Woodward and his wife, who had been chief of protocol of the Department at one

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point, and a few other people (I've forgotten how many) were coming to Europe on an unofficial private visit, tour. We were directed to do what we could to facilitate their trip and so forth. I told my ambassador immediately that he must ask the President and Mrs. Truman to stay at the residence. I had to use some pressure to get his agreement to this because he was a Republican political ambassador, but he finally agreed and sent off a message extending an invitation. President Truman came back and said, "Thank you very much," but since they were traveling with the Woodwards and there were other people involved in their entourage, they all wanted to be together and that they preferred to stay at a hotel, but "thank you very much."

We informed the Belgians immediately.

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[Paul Henri] Spaak was the Foreign Minister at that point, the most distinguished Belgian in that whole postwar period. Spaak immediately took steps to say that they wanted to send an official

invitation to President Truman to visit Belgium because they had such great regard for him. The Belgian Government in exile in London during the war had maintained contacts with the American Government.

So, Spaak invited the Trumans and Stanley Woodward and his wife for a dinner at the Foreign Office. They agreed on a date and Spaak assembled all the members of the Belgian Government who had been in exile in London that had had contact with the American Government, and he had representatives of all the political parties in Belgium except the Communists.

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At the dinner that night the only women present were Mrs. Truman and Madame Spaak. My closest Belgian contact was his chef de cabinet, his chief assistant, and Spaak had written a speech in French which his Belgian chef de cabinet had translated into English, because his English was almost perfect. His wife was American. Spaak could read English -- he could speak English, but with a very nice accent, French-type accent. So Spaak read this speech, which was quite a long speech, paying great tribute to President Truman; and he specifically pointed out the actions that had been taken by Mr. Truman as President of the United States, which had brought the United States from a position of prominence to the position, really, as the leader of the free world. And he started naming, of course, the U.N., Bretton Woods

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NATO, the action in Korea, everything, just one after another, and I must say this was very moving. Then Mr. Truman got up and this was when President Truman really showed himself at his best. He said he was greatly appreciative of the tribute that Mr. Spaak had paid to him, and he was highly honored, but he wanted to tell Mr. Spaak that the credit for these things was not due to him, but the credit really was due to the American people, because, he said, "I can do no more than reflect the will of the American people in what they were willing to do in that time in history."

Well, this was not altogether true, because after all, he was the President, he made the decisions, but it was so modest and with a proper and very commendable humility, and I must say I

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thought it was one of the nicest things I've ever heard anybody do; and I'm sure this has never seen the light of day.

FUCHS: What about Margaret, did you ever meet her?

SPROUSE: Well, this is more personal on Margaret. Margaret came to Paris on a trip while they were in the White House, and she was accompanied by Secretary Snyder's daughter. The name you may know, I forget the name now?

FUCHS: Drucie Snyder.

SPROUSE: Yes. I was in Paris at this point, and the Ambassador in Paris was Jimmy Dunn. He was a well-known and a very able career diplomat. And so the Dunn's had invited Margaret and Miss Snyder to stay at the

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Ambassador's residence. In order to entertain them, the Ambassador had called upon Freddie Reinhardt and his wife. Freddie was our liaison officer, the political adviser, out at SHAPE to Eisenhower or Ridgeway or whoever was at SHAPE at that point; I've forgotten who was there. Freddie was very knowledgeable about Paris, bilingual in French, and had a very attractive wife who also spoke excellent French. So, Ambassador and Mrs. Dunn had asked Freddie Reinhardt and his wife; had asked Martin Herz, who was a very able officer of the political section, also almost bilingual in French; and had asked me, the chief of the political section. Martin Herz and I were bachelors, so this meant two men plus another couple, three couples in all. The Ambassador asked us to come in and have dinner, and then

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to take Margaret Truman and Miss Snyder to a night club in Paris. The night club was very carefully chosen. It was not any one of these strip shows and so forth; it was going to be a very chic and elegant night club with a proper show and so forth, all as befitted the daughter of the President of the United States. Trekking around Paris night clubs is not my favorite past time, but since this was Margaret Truman and the Ambassador issued the invitation -- he was going to pick up the tab, too -- this promised to be at least an acceptable evening and an enjoyable and interesting evening. When we got there for dinner we discovered Margaret wasn't faintly interested in doing the night life in Paris; and you know, I won't say that she went up in my estimation, because this sounds as if she were down and she wasn't, but really I thought

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"what a sensible person she is."

So, we had a beautiful evening, a nice dinner, nice conversation, and at one point she went to the phone and called the White House to talk to the President. It was just family, you know, daughter talking to papa, and I must say that I thought, "This girl has a lot to be said for her that is highly commendable."

FUCHS: Did I fail to mention anything you think I should have? Are there any other high points that come to mind? I gather you were very satisfied and happy with your career generally?

SPROUSE: I never enjoyed serving in the Department, but I enjoyed the Foreign Service and I enjoyed it abroad, in spite of all the McCarthyism and disgraceful political ambassadors you used

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to see from time to time -- and I don't resent the process of appointing political ambassadors because I'm all for it as this enabled bringing the greatest talent that this country has into the field. For instance, David Bruce to my mind is one of the greatest ambassadors in the history of this country. He was ambassador to Paris when I was there and later in Bonn and London, and

now he is in Peking. Douglas Dillon was a first-rate Republican ambassador. He was an excellent ambassador in Paris. And there have been others: Ed Reischauer, the Harvard professor in Japan, is a beautiful example. Consequently the use of political appointments, instead of confining everything to the career men, obviously has everything in the world to be said for it, but when it's used to pay off a political

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debt to some cheapskate, maybe half-alcoholic, disgrace to the country, I say it's a price that the greatest country in the world shouldn't have to pay anymore; it's disgraceful, I think; but it's done under every administration. Some do it more than others. But it's a career that I enjoyed every minute of and I wouldn't exchange it. I think I was just sure lucky that I got in and managed to survive and go all the way up. A fascinating career.

FUCHS: Very good. I certainly appreciate your taping this for us.

SPROUSE: Well, I don't know whether I've contributed anything, but I've unburdened myself of a few ideas.

FUCHS: Thank you very much.

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