

Notes 122N, Copy 2

Maj. Gen. R. L. Maxwell

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Interview with Gen R L Maxwell at office in Washington and Capitol Hill Club, Oct 6, 1960, by F C Pogue.

(Monaghan present). Second interview

(During lunch he said you notice I am the hero in all of my stories)

Says he thinks Army officer should have one-third teaching, one-third staff; one-third command. Staff man has hardest job; must adjust teaching to command.

Praises Moseley again. Says tireless. All right until he got a grievance. Poisons him.

Roosevelt wonderful to work for. I was made administrator of Export controls; held it for 18 months. Wonderful example of jealousy which developed. Roosevelt finally said he didn't want to spend time deciding between Commerce and State on this control. Said get an army officer. Told Hopkins. Pa said you will be a leg man and keep people happy. Better go up and talk to Harry. I went through front door of White House and upstairs where Hopkins was stretched out in bed. Spent 22 minutes. Stettinius and Harriman called. Ed was bringing Harriman in to introduce him. Hopkins told Stettinius what President had decided I was to do. Hopkins told Harriman to be liaison officer with Lt Col Maxwell. (Harriman pleasant but dumb). He said we will have a meeting at my office a 2. I said I should have a piece of paper if I am going around to cabinet officers. He said write it. His only change was to add several officers I had left off.

Meeting took place and someone began by saying some squirt of an army officer (Bill Batts said this) has been named. When they got to me, I said I am that squirt. Beginning of friendship with Bill Batts. I had been picked by Pa Watson asking Orlando Ward to send some names. Was offered to Walter Weaver. He didn't want it. Pa said recommend somebody and he suggested me. So I was in.

(Says his selection to Middle East mission was made by Stettinius)

I wanted the job to go to the vice president. Jesse Jones backed me up. Gave job to Wallace as chairman of Board. Then that board, Wallace as head, shuffled things around. Finally threw me out without Roosevelt knowing it. People would go in and get him to sign things. I reported directly to the President. If Morgenthau went to see him at Hyde Park we would get ready for a new order on Tuesday and try to be prepared to make him eat his orders. President would write me a chit to get opinions of Hull and Jesse Jones. I would clip this on to the original. He would say now what? Everything would be straightened out. Roosevelt wonderful to work for; in the period July 1940 to Sept 1941 did he repudiate anything I did.

Hopkins had the closest grasp of what was going on of anybody--especially the logistical thing. In the beginning he was Secretary of Commerce. He once asked if I wanted to be assistant secretary of commerce; I said no. He said he didn't think Commerce could handle the controls.

Morgenthau wanted to run everything. Would send Treasury boys to our policy meetings; they were usually just hecklers. Would finally tell them you have used up your allotment of time. Some didn't do it--Oscar Cox who wrote the Lend-Lease Act--became an ally instead of heckler.

I was given five points of contact with State Dept. I would pick one I could use and let him fight others. Henry Grady, assistant secretary for economic affairs, helpful. Joe Green, head of division of controls, another. State was already issuing licenses for arms, ammunition and implements of war. Judge Hull was a wonderful man. He would say, Joe don't you think we are going at the wrong end of this. We signed "treaties" with various people. Remember after we signed with Hull, he said I think you would like to have Major Smith in your organization. Father was a wonderful constituent of mine. I found that two things can ruin you--no office space and patronage. Patronage pressure runs from cabinet officer to bat room friend. I decided to deal on people through Army-Navy Munitions board.

I told Marshall I would tell him when things I did involved him. He said I am not a suspicious man. I recall once a luncheon at his place for about 16 people. Marshall took me off and said I have a complaint against you. I said I'm not surprised. He said he met Acheson and Acheson complained that he couldn't make you mad. I said I hoped you said you couldn't either. This was Acheson's method. Acheson wasn't in at first. Came later. I would go to see him and there was always a Hiss around- he or his brother (Said they weren't with him. But I always saw one. Says he thinks Acheson told Hiss what story to tell. I gave first priority to Acheson. He succeeded Grady after about four months. I would orient him. Many hours with him.

Skips to Middle East. Churchill invited me in Feb 1942 to go to Moscow with him. Only room for one--I wanted to take several of my staff--Loy Henderson had been wanting to get in. I took my own aircraft--was like Churchill's. Took my aide and my son Bob as a tail gunner.

On ride to club we talked of Hiss. Said he did not think there was a conspiracy here or in China. Said Hiss intelligent, bright, good looking young man. If he had said, I got into bad company, married one of the Communist bitches, I shouldn't have given information. Thinks he would have been forgiven. But perjured himself. Thinks Acheson persuaded him it was thing to do to stop criticism. Hiss was goat. Says he doesn't believe there was a conspiracy. Things don't work like that. Not bright enough to figure out. Bureaucracy can't plot that well. Neither can business. Found they were just as dumb and bungling and wasteful in business.

No conspiracy on Pearl Harbor. Was in Hawaii short time before attack. Short was there; Kimmel at sea. Short not in good health. Bothered with asthma. His main idea was how to get routes open to Australia. No bother about attack.

Says he was lucky. Met Casey at luncheon for new ambassador from Australia. Next to Lothian. Lothian asked me my topic--I said Embroidered zero. Was amused. I talked of period in Coblenz after first war--first experience with English speaking union--this dinner given by that Union. Casey was in Middle East while I was there--he succeeded Lyttelton. Helped me.

Somervell. I knew him at West Point. Ate at same table. Get to know people that way nearly as well as at roommates.

When I got ready to go to Middle East, I read directive which they had given John Magruder. I said you are in a hell of a fix. Diplomats have you by the nuts. I made a few changes. (1) You will keep diplomatic agents in your area advised to extent you deem necessary. Nobody knew anything about the geography of Middle East, so I added to the countries named as being under me and such other countries as you may deem necessary. My first operations were in Eritrea which was included in the original directive.

Alexander Kirk one of the soundest diplomats.

(In here he got off on McCoy--said talk to his widow. His aide Maj Gen William S. Biddle, deputy chief of staff, Hq Fifth Army, Chicago, could help.)

Knew Bedell Smith liked to go to White House. I would give him messages--top secret--to hand carry. One day Pa showed me a drawer full unopened; said you better take these important messages back.

One day Marshall called and said you have 20 minutes to get a one page memo on extra \$150 million we want from Congress. Pa Watson's office wanted it to put in President's message to Congress. I put in it one phrase which President kept: "after the incredible events of the past two weeks following the fall of France." Only one copy.

McNarney--I said once not ice water in veins but anti-freeze; not affected by hot or cold.

Never heard of Bryden making a decision. Nice man.

In 1944 they said they wanted someone in G-4 to stand up to Somervell. R C Moore mentioned my name. There were 13 officers and 2 warrant officers and a few secretaries. The executive could pick good looking secretaries. They expected a quick fight. I said when a man is pushing like this he will stub his toe. And he did. They put too much starch in George Marshall's pajamas. He called Quartermaster General who said I don't control the post laundry. Marshall sent to me. I issued Circular 272 and took back the post laundries. Then suggested that other technical services issue similar things. Called this the Restoration period--began in 1943. Didn't see much of Marshall. He called me once and I went to see him once. Sent me a Christmas note in 1943 and one in 1944. I took it as a vote of confidence.

Somervell let me have some things to take pressure off CANOL.

Going back. I was supposed to go to G-4 in July 1939. Marshall said you don't have to go. I said I had better. Was under Tyner. Man who ran things liked he had learned in Spanish American War. Nothing new since. Worked with Walter Robertson, Geoffrey Keyes and Chamberlin. Talk one day with Tyner about whether would go for new 105s or try to work with older guns. I said question is whether we are fighting last war or this one. He began to explode. Robbie got me out. Later as he started home, Tyner said thank God someone talks back to me. George had been chief of staff for my father in law. He thought all you needed was a picket line and a spigot. Worried about what would happen when we substituted auto tires for wagon wheels on guns, if

one tire went down. I said General let air out. Wanted jacks under wheels so guns would stay still. We took photos and showed that they didn't move around on tires.

Kept talking about getting the 1st Division down. Only about 2400. Was getting ready to go out in muffler to Walter Reed. Just then fire truck sounded outside--Keyes said "there goes the 1st Div." Made him sad (mad?). Robbie told us next day he had written and torn up 9 court martial papers. Only Reason he didn't press, he said, was because didn't know which one said it.

Judge -----*(Judge!) was a dummy for Somervell. Had me in one day with Somervell. Later said he would like to see war end with last clip fired, shoes just worn out, last sandwich eaten. I said save one bullet for man who suggested idea. Patterson shocked I would talk that way. I said continue production awhile.

Truman tells about that fellow persuading him to stopping it. Ships turned round. Wouldn't have had to have Marshall plan if this had been continued then. Great cost of starting up again.

Somervell an empire builder. Produced things. Got results. Just moved in on everything hanging around.

I asked about Brereton. Said he was senior to me. When he came to Middle East, I thought I could handle by suggesting he have his air force elsewhere. He came on. I organized USAMEF (US Air Force Middle East). Brereton began to act superior. I cabled--Am I in command. Washington said yes. So I told Brereton his duties. He said I intend to cable. I said OK if I endorse. We had a very cold luncheon. I sent word that if attitude wasn't changed by noon I would relieve. Marshall spanked him.

I asked for a staff. Said get them there. I made Bonner Fellars deputy C of S. He went around sending own messages. Sent one criticizing the British which British and Italians decoded. He leaked; didn't use our means. I asked one day what he wanted to do. He said serve with MacArthur. I said they would depend on MacArthur. Suggested he go back to Washington. He just stayed around. Wanted to organize a Foreign Legion. He and a lot of the others bet on Rommel and figured there was nothing for them in Egypt. Wanted to go elsewhere. I saw him in Japan.