

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER LIBRARY



Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of
George V. Cooper.

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I George V. Cooper, of New York, New York, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recording and transcript of personal interviews conducted on February 25, 1977 and November 8, 1977 at New York, New York and prepared for deposit in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

(2) The tape recording shall not be available for use by researchers during the donor's lifetime. After the donor's death, access to the tape recording shall be for background use only, and researchers may not cite, paraphrase, or quote therefrom.

(3) During the donor's lifetime the donor retains all copyright in the material given to the United States by the terms of this instrument. Thereafter the copyright in both the transcript and tape recording shall pass to the United States Government. During the donor's lifetime, researchers may publish brief "fair use" quotations from the transcript (but not the tape recording) without the donor's express consent in each case.

(4) Copies of the open portions of the interview transcript, but not the tape recording, may be provided by the library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the interview transcript, but not the tape recording, may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.



George J. Hooker
Donor

October 19, 1979
Date

Acting Walter W. Steadler
Archivist of the United States

October 29, 1979
Date



INTERVIEW WITH
George V. Cooper
by
Dr. Thomas Soapes
Oral Historian
on
February 25, 1977
for
Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

This interview is being conducted with Mr. George Cooper at his home in New York City on February 25, 1977. The interviewer is Dr. Thomas Soapes of the Eisenhower Library. Present for the interview are Mr. Cooper and Dr. Soapes.

DR. SOAPES: Mr. Cooper, will you tell me first--

MR. COOPER: Yes, one day I got a call from Columbia, from Mr. McCann.

DR. SOAPES: Kevin McCann.



MR. COOPER: Kevin McCann. Would I come up and meet General Eisenhower? So I went up and went in to see the General. We talked and he said, "Mr. Cooper, I have a job I'd like done. And around here they tell me that, 'Get a hold of George Cooper. He's the man to do it for you.'"

So I said, "Well, General, what's the job?"

He said, "We need a complete reorganization of our alumni clubs around the country. Would you do this for me?"

I said, "Wait a minute, General, I work. I have a job. This means an awful lot of travel around. I don't see how I could do it."

We talked about that for a while and he said, "Well, I understand your position, really." He said, "I'm a little

disappointed; I'd hoped really that you would do it." He said, "I understand you're going to be made president of the Alumni Association."

I said, "Yes, I've been told that, and I really couldn't do both."

So I started to go out and he says, "Well, I'm sorry."

And I turned and I said, "General, are you really?"

He said, "I really would like to have you do the job. I don't know where to turn now."

I said, "General, I'll do the damned thing for you, really I will. The heck with the other one, I can not say "no" to General Eisenhower."

He said, "Will you?" And I'll promise you some fun."

About two or three months later he called me up and he-- I used to meet him, by the way, about once a week and we'd go over letters and I talked to him about Columbia matters. I had nothing to do with his other affairs. But he said, "George, how'd you like to take a trip with me? It's going to take about three months."

I said, "Wait a minute, General," again.



He says, "Oh, I don't mean all at once. We'll be gone for about a week at a time, be back. Then we may go off for another week or ten days." He said, "I'm going around the country to talk about the American Assembly."



My boss was quite understanding--happened to be a cousin--and so he said, "You go ahead."

So we started off, presumably, to talk American Assembly. And in each city we went we used to have a luncheon of about fifteen or twenty people, not the politicians, more the brass of the town--the bankers, the industrialists. And we would talk, presumably, about the American Assembly. But after a week or so I began to wonder if we were talking about the American Assembly or about the presidency of the United States. Because invariably, after two or three minutes, the American Assembly was almost forgotten. And I have here a list of many of the places we went with all of the names of the people we met at the different meetings, which I saved for some reason.

SOAPES: It's a very interesting list of people.

COOPER: Which is part of what I have for you.

SOAPES: This mentioning of the presidency of the United States, this was a subject that the people you met brought up on their own?

COOPER: Mostly, of course, yes. We never brought it up really.

SOAPES: Did you get the idea that he was responding favorably to the idea?

COOPER: Oh, yes, of course; he couldn't avoid it.



SOAPES: He was very definitely interested in it.

COOPER: Yes, I'm sure.

SOAPES: And this was about 1948, '49?

COOPER: No, no. '49 or '50.

SOAPES: '49 or '50, right before he went to NATO.

COOPER: Yes, yes. As a matter of fact when we came back from one of the trips we got into his office at Columbia and Washington was calling him.

And there's one other time, I'll tell you about this, too. We started off, and after a while I began to wonder a little bit about myself. We'd get on the train every night; you couldn't go to bed right away. We'd been visiting each city; we'd have the luncheon; then somebody would always take us around the town and visit the universities or the factories or some institution. Then generally there was a big dinner in the evening, five hundred people, a thousand, depending on the size of the town. Then we'd get aboard the train and we'd go off again. We had the private car by the way and that would be attached to some train going to the next city. There'd be generally nobody on the car except the President. Bob Schulz was along and the train crew and myself. Stimulated, in a way, by the day's activities, you just couldn't really go to sleep and we would sit up and talk. And the General would start telling me stories. And, Mr. Soapes, you're looking at the stupidest man you ever met in your life. I never took down any of those stories; I remember some, and afterwards I thought, why didn't I? And then I thought, also in justification, he's talking to me in confidence--as a friend--maybe I shouldn't do that. So I never put down any of the



stories, but I do remember some of them.

One night we'd been away for about ten days and I was getting a little bit uneasy about what was happening at the office, and I said to him, I said, "General, you know, this isn't right."

He said, "Now what's eating you?"

I said, "Here are all the papers. They show General Eisenhower accompanied by George V. Cooper of New York. Doesn't mean anything, nobody should know George V. Cooper, no reason to. It should read General Eisenhower was accompanied by a name that everybody knows."

He says, "Well, got anybody in mind?"

I said, "Quickly I can think of people like Bill Donovan." I said, "or Bob Patterson." Patterson then, I think, was the assistant secretary of war. "Jock Whitney." I mentioned a few names like that.


I think he knew I was a little uneasy because after a few minutes he says, "Look, the name George Cooper is good enough for me." He says, "Look, I don't want any competition." [Laughter]

I says, "General, you win. I'm sticking." I never forgot that one.



And one night I said to him, "How does it really feel to be in command the way you were with millions of men? How can you really sleep at night sometimes."

He said, "Well, it took me a while to get used to it, of course, George." He said, "But I remember more than anything one particular night when I didn't sleep for two or three nights." He said, "We were in a situation one time and I was advised by everybody to send out a reconnaissance detail. We needed some information and my aides all thought the thing to do would be to send out a detail." He said, "Somehow I didn't want to do it, really, but I finally said yes, and we sent out three hundred men." He says, "None of those men ever came back." He said, "And for three nights I couldn't sleep over that particular thing. In my heart I knew I shouldn't have done it." He said, "That's one of the things you go through."



But we covered pretty much of the country at that time and the procedure was similar in each city, of course. There'd be the brass--and again that's going to be yours--you have a complete list of every place we went to and all the people we met. Fascinating people, too, many of them, of course, and

very understanding.

SOAPES: One of the stories that we've heard about Eisenhower when he was president of Columbia was that he really didn't enjoy fund-raising for the university.



COOPER: Oh, no, no. Well, we never really got into the matter of fund-raising. Now I have a few details in there of some of the people who gave something for the American Assembly. I think more or less as a token that--well he came here principally to talk American Assembly and so some support was given to him of course.

[Interruption]

SOAPES: You were just telling me that it was very, very difficult for General Eisenhower to be president of Columbia.

COOPER: Yes, as we were sitting in his office at the very beginning, talking really about American Assembly and everything else, he never really could be president of Columbia because call after call would come through from Washington to him and he'd have to excuse himself, or there'd be somebody from Washington there. And much of the time we never really had a complete meeting.

[Interruption]

COOPER: We were scheduled at a club in Chicago for a big dinner, and while we were in the office I got a call from one of the men in Chicago who was supposed to be on the committee arranging this dinner. So I said to him, "Al, we're going to see you there, I'm sure, aren't we?"

He said, "George, don't be silly. Of course you're not."

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "You know where you're going they don't like to have Jews or colored people. And they're very careful who's getting tickets to the dinner."

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "Just what I told you."

So I probably looked disturbed because the General said to me, "What's the matter, George?" And I told him. Mr. Soapes, that man got red as a beet and he got up--I made a note of this--and he said, "Look, George, who the hell do those people think they are to call Jews, the niggers, the dagos? They should have been with me to see these guys going through the mud, through the dirt, and they are going to call them names?" He says, "I'm giving you an order. I want that dinner cancelled." We cancelled the dinner under my name--I



caught hell for it, of course, But the dinner later was scheduled and they were giving the tickets to all people. I never got over that. He really got so irritated.

SOAPES: That's similar to a story I've heard about when he was President, and, once he learned that ambassadors from Africa were barred from coming into certain establishments in Washington, he took some action.

COOPER: Let's go ahead. You can turn that off.



[Interruption]

COOPER: We were due into Cincinnati with the President and we were at Indianapolis, and we had planned to fly to Cincinnati. It stormed and it stormed and it stormed and I was with Paul Hoffman--do you remember?

SOAPES: Yes.

COOPER: So I said, "Paul, I don't like this one damned bit. I'm going to take the train."

And he said, "I can't go; I have to stay here."

I said, "Well, I'll go on anyhow."

So I took the train, got into Cincinnati. And Paul couldn't get out no matter how he tried. He tried his damndest to charter a plane. And he couldn't get out. So he called me and he said, "Look, you'll have to take this meeting over."

I said, "Paul, I can't, I can't talk to a meeting."

But we did. We had the big meeting at Cincinnati and I had to get up and I didn't talk politics. All I did was talk about the President as I knew him as a man and that was the best thing I could have done. So I had to introduce that to Cincinnati.

SOAPES: Do you recall what you said about Eisenhower?

COOPER: Not too much, but I just told them as I knew him, stories about him just as I've told you. Not quite the same stories, but in those days I didn't have so long a time to forget things as I do now.

But there's one other story I must tell you, too. We were in Cleveland one time and we had a meeting of the Cuyahoga County Republican Club. And we were having lunch at the home of Mrs. James A. Garfield, whose husband was the



grandson of President Garfield. And he was ill and in bed, Mr. Soapes, but somehow he heard the name Eisenhower and he was as nervous as could be. His wife, much younger, said to me when we got there, she says, "Mr. Cooper, won't you please go up and say a word to my husband? He knows that something is going on; he knows it has something to do with Eisenhower. Won't you please go up."

I said, "Of course, I'd be delighted."



And I went up and here's this poor, frail little man in bed and I walked to him and his hand goes out and he says, "General Eisenhower, you have honored my home. I am so happy and pleased." What would you do?

I said to him, "I am indeed happy and privileged to be here." I couldn't do or say otherwise. He was so excited, so agog, I just had to go through with it that way. Really, really I couldn't do otherwise. That's the only time I've ever really, in any way, used the name.

SOAPES: It's a good story.

COOPER: Well, we went to the meeting with the women, and

sitting on the side was a little old lady in a wheelchair. And they made me talk about Eisenhower, too. And as we left --we were in a hurry to get going--I had to go by her wheelchair to get out and she stopped me and she said, "Mr. Cooper, thank you. You will hear from me." I heard from her a few weeks later with a nice check, signed by her secretary, Mrs. Marian Green. The little old lady was Dave Ingalls' mother.

SOAPES: Oh, my!

COOPER: Do you remember--and he was Taft's manager.

SOAPES: Right. And he was his first cousin.



COOPER: Yes, yes. I'll never forget that as long as I live, "You will hear from me." And the letter came, "Mrs. Marian Green," of course, "secretary". And, "You will understand why I am writing the letter." I met Dave Ingalls at the White House one time and I said, "Dave, I'm giving this to you."

SOAPES: That is a good story. That was in the '52 campaign, we're talking about.

COOPER: Yes, yes.

[Interruption]

SOAPES: Okay, we're talking now about the 1952 campaign.

COOPER: Yes. I traveled a lot: I was vice chairman of what was called "Citizens for Eisenhower". And most of my work was done in the Middle Atlantic states and the Midwestern states, although really not confined to any one place. And I went out and would address the local committees at each place. And, again, I talked most of the time about Eisenhower as a man, not as a general or anything but just as a person. And I was told at the end of the campaign that I got more money than anybody else. Really. We collected, in those days, for the committee, about three million to four million dollars--it's in there. After the convention when we had to go to work again, of course, we did about the same. Now I always used to get into trouble with the local and state Republican committees because they thought we were taking away money meant for them. But it worked out all right in the end.

SOAPES: You worked with Walter Williams?



COOPER: Oh, Walter Williams, yes. Walter Williams was chairman at that time, the first chairman. John Ames was chairman the second--I have all this to show you. Will you turn that off.



INTERVIEW WITH
George V. Cooper

by

Dr. Thomas Soapes
Oral Historian

on

November 8, 1977

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

This interview is being conducted with Mr. George V. Cooper in his home in New York City on November 8, 1977. The interviewer is Dr. Thomas Soapes. Present for the interview are Mr. Cooper and Dr. Soapes.

DR. SOAPES: Now, you've been telling me you wanted to talk about this Japanese trip, so why don't you just start at the beginning?



MR COOPER: Yes. When I was active in business, our main office was in Yonkers, New York, with a New York Sales office, of course.

DR. SOAPES: What was the name of the business?

MR. COOPER: White Swan was the--we made medical supplies and nurses' and work uniforms, and accessories, things like that. And one day the New York office phoned that there were two Japanese gentlemen there to see me. So I said, "Well, we really do no business with Japan; we don't buy anything in Japan or sell in Japan." So the girl gave the message. She said, "Well, these two gentlemen say it's urgent, and it's a personal matter." So I said, "All right, I'll be in New York tomorrow at their convenience." Well the next day I went down and there was Mr. Domen, D-o-m-e-n; Mr. Domen was head of a company called the

Ajinomoto Company.

SOAPES: Could you spell that for us?

COOPERS: A-j-i-n-o-m-o-t-o. They made a famous food additive. Oh, everybody knows a good thing. [Laughter] And he was accompanied by a gentleman from the Japanese embassy. So I went down and they said, "Mr. Cooper, we want to invite President Eisenhower to Japan. Would you please go and ask him if he would accept an invitation?" So I said, "No."

[Interruption]



COOPER: So I said, "No, because we have channels for that sort of thing. We have embassies, we have Departments of State, and certainly I'm not the one to ask the President if he would go to Japan." And I said, "Also, there are many, many friends, much closer than I am, who see him more than I do, and I think through somebody else the invitation ought to be extended." Well, Mr. Dorn said, "Mr. Cooper, we've gone down all the lists of people that know him well and we think you could do it much better than anybody." Well, I protested for awhile and then I

realized why they probably had come to me. If, by any chance, the answer was no, I thought I was so far down the barrel [Laughter] that a refusal could never be known, and a refusal to them, of course, would be a loss of face. So they did not want this public, in any sense of the word, until somehow we had talked to the President.

SOAPES: Now about what date was this?



COOPER: I'm guessing now--the fall of 1960. I then said, "All right," and I called Ann Whitman--Ann Whitman was the President's secretary--and I told her what had happened and, of course, she made a date right away. And I went down and saw the President and told him what had happened, thinking, frankly, that he would say, "Oh, no, George, it's impossible. It's out of the question." Instead, Dr. Soapes, he got up--I'll never forget it--walked all around the room in his office, and then turned to me and said, "You know, that's a nice idea. I like it; I think I would like to do that." Completely, of course, floored me. So I said, "Thank you, Mr. President, I'll now go over to the embassy, because they are waiting to see me after I've talked to you." And I

said, "But now, who do I turn this over to? Do I give it to Tom Stephens, do I give it to the Department of State, do I give it to Bob Schulz, do I give it to Kevin [McCann]? Who do I turn this over to now?" And he said, "Look, George, we're so damn busy that you'll have to handle this for awhile." If I had known what I was in for, I would have walked right out of the office. [Laughter] I said, "But, Mr. President, when do you want to go? How long do you want to spend time in Japan? Who do you want to take with you? What do you want to see? When do you want to go?" He said, "Well, you figure out for me the best time at the minute--it would be in the fall--but you handle this for the time being." Dr. Soapes, I turned our office into a travel agency. I had three girls do nothing but answer phones, take calls, write letters. What happened was, it was supposed to have been kept a secret. And then I got this letter from Ann Whitman.

[Interruption]

COOPER: I got a letter from Ann Whitman asking me if I had seen the papers, because suddenly the papers reported the proposed trip to Japan. I told her at the time, I said, "Ann, I never said



a word to anybody." And I told her that it must have come from somebody else, and a few days later she called me back, they had traced it. The Japanese press had published it first and then it had been sent over to Washington and the papers in this country publicized it. Well, I continued then to get literally hundreds of letters, telegrams, cables, from Japan, from the Japanese government. Mr. Soapes, I'll show you some of them. Some of them are a yard long and they were setting up all kinds of programs and committees. I learned that they had to set up a committee for Mrs. Eisenhower, to take care of her; a committee for his diet; really, a committee for the places he wanted to go; and we also got word, as I'll show you--I must show you some of this mail--that a meeting of all the government officials had been held, with all the unions, and with the Zangakori [?]-that's the Japanese student body that did all the rioting--and they agreed; they would not support the trip but they agreed that they would not cause any disturbance, or any riots, in any way. So I started making reservations on the old American President Lines, because Mamie did not want to fly. And I must have reserved half a ship for every month after month, because something would always



come up that would cause a postponement.

SOAPES: What types of things were coming up? Was it the Japanese side or the American side that was causing the cancellations?

COOPER: No, the American side.



SOAPES: The President's schedule was--this was--

COOPER: Yes. Things kept coming up and he--

SOAPES: Right. This was in the middle of the election.

COOPER: No. Well, it was partially, but we were planning it after the elections, so that his planned trips would not interfere with the trip to Japan. I have here--of course, as you know, the trip was finally cancelled. And the Japanese government asked us, the Coopers, to come anyhow. But I have here much of--all the correspondence from the Japanese government, which is part of all the files I intend to send down to the Eisenhower Museum, and you can see how some of these cables came to me. These are cables.

SOAPES: Yes. I see they're about two and a half feet long.

COOPER: At least, some of them. At least, some of them. Then they had to set up, of course, programs to take care of Mrs. Eisenhower too. It's not known, but the invitations were extended every year after that, all the way through 1966. And I have the letters and the General's replies here, how he took each one. When I first went to see him--I'm thinking a little bit back now--and told him that one of the men in the back of the invitation was Shigeru Yoshida, who had been the prime minister--he said, "That's fine," because he had met Yoshida. He said, "You know, and I liked the man very much, indeed." Then in 1963, I got a letter directly from the Imperial Palace--and I've forgotten who signed it--but it was, of course, by order of the Emperor, asking again for a trip to Japan. I sent that original on--I have no copy of the letter. I suppose I should have made a copy of it. But those invitations kept coming back every year until 1966. And in here, or here, are all the General's responses. Another cute thing is, after he retired from the Presidency they didn't know quite how to address him. This is a little paragraph here. [Laughter]



SOAPES: I'll just read it into--another letter is dated March 8, 1961. "I am enclosing a draft of an official invitation to General Eisenhower, which I was asked to write. Unfortunately I've never had the opportunity to pen an invitation to such a prominent person and I would appreciate it greatly if you could advise me. Or it would be even better if we could impose upon you to write a proper invitation, which we could copy over here."

[Laughter]



COOPER: This was an answer to--.

SOAPES: Okay, this is on May 23, '63: "Dear George, it was good to see you yesterday. I thought you would like to have a copy of the letter I'm sending today to Mr. Yoshida. I'm sorry my answer must be no, but I know you understand. With warm regard to you and Bess. Sincerely, DE."

COOPER: Now, there's much more that--in here--than I can talk about. Of course, all the letters, the files are here. This story was in the Japanese papers, but then it was copied around the world. Almost every country had that picture.

SOAPES: Yes. This is, we're looking at a newspaper clipping from a Japanese paper. It's a photograph of--I believe that is you, isn't it, there? There you are--Mrs. Eisenhower, yes. And several of the--. This picture is taken in Gettysburg.

COOPER: You may want to look through some of these and see if there's anything you think belongs in here.

SOAPES: Okay, why don't I--.



[Interruption]

SOAPES: You indicated the trip was eventually cancelled, and we're looking here at a letter dated May 1, 1961 from President Eisenhower to you in which he says, in part, "But I do think that in view of the off-again, on-again nature of the visit that had been contemplated, we should consider it definitely cancelled, at least until hopefully some of the unrest in the world subsides." Was that the reason that it eventually was cancelled, or were there other specific problems that can be pointed to as to why they finally decided, don't do it?

COOPER: Well I suspect there were other problems and--

[Interruption]

COOPER: I suspect there were other problems, because we got word that the students may, after all, protest even though they had promised not to. And I learned afterwards that our State Department had asked the General to cancel the visit.

SOAPES: They were concerned that these disturbances might be a problem?

COOPER: They were concerned. But the way the news was given out here, it was as if the General could not go and so the visit was cancelled. The story about the riots did not come out-- and it came out privately, later--until some time after that.

SOAPES: Now that letter that we were looking at was May of '61, which was just shortly after he left the White House.

COOPER: Yes, yes.

SOAPES: When was it clear to you that the trip was definitely off? You said the invitations kept coming for another six years.

COOPER: Oh, yes. You mean the first trip after the first



cancellation?

SOAPES: Yes.

[Interruption]



COOPER: --or the letter we saw in which he said he was sorry, he really felt he could not go. I think it was somewhere around in May--

SOAPES: May of '61.

COOPER: --of '61, yes.

SOAPES: So even though these invitations kept coming back every year, it was still--

COOPER: Oh, every year after that. Yes.

SOAPES: Okay, it was still clear to you that he was not going to go.

COOPER: And I think here, here's a letter in which they ask--

SOAPES: This is June 14, 1961. "If you think it proper, would

you kindly ask General Eisenhower to send a reply to the invitation letter from Mr. Yoshida, personally, handed by Mr. Domen. I'm wondering if the General may not have sent his reply to Mr. Yoshida, as he may still be thinking to give a favorable answer, anticipating a new turn of the situation." So they're still hoping for a change of heart, but it's really pretty clear that it's not going to happen.

COOPER: Yes. And then at one time--



[Interruption]

COOPER: Here we are.

SOAPES: This is February 24, 1961, a telegram. "My whole year has become so completely confused that I believe it would be best for all concerned to cancel all tentative plans for going to Japan this fall. In any event, Mrs. Eisenhower has decided that she could not accompany me and this would make the trip much less useful as we hoped it might be. I'm still determined to keep the period to July 1st as free of engagements as is humanly possible and this has caused a great concentration in

the later months of the year of appointments, commitments, and work. I regret reaching this decision on this question, which has been bothering me very much, but I am quite sure that we could make no worthwhile plans before June, at which time I would expect my other potential engagements or commitments to be clarified." Okay.

COOPER: Now. Turn that on.



SOAPES: Okay, it's running.

COOPER: It's running. At that time there were threats of riots, and when I got this telegram I wired him as, like that.

SOAPES: Okay. This is February 25, '61: "Dear Mr. President, telegram received. May I respectfully suggest a change in plans for proposed trip instead of cancellation. I can understand Mrs. Eisenhower's reluctance to make such a long, arduous trip and if she prefers not to go, possibly it would be wise to fly to Japan and spend there as short a time as you prefer and fly back. This would completely eliminate a whole month's travel time. As you know, there has already been so much publicity in Japan about the trip, and so much elaborate planning done, and so much work and effort put into the arrangements there,

that I fear that a complete cancellation would cause a great deal of consternation and could be seriously misunderstood and have a very bad reaction. Pending further consideration, I will not notify Japanese groups for a few days. I hope you do not mind expression of my ideas, and Bess joins me in best regards to you and Mamie."

COOPER: Then I got this.



SOAPES: Okay, this is February 25, '61. "We won't cancel but, tentatively, I think we should say nothing, but be indefinite about the exact time. I will not count on Mamie accompanying me. Eisenhower"

COOPER: I tell you why I sent that telegram to him. That time, as I said, we were getting inklings that there may be riots and I felt that I didn't want him to cancel for fear of the riots. So that's why I said don't cancel, but just postpone this for awhile until everything clears up. But there's so much, Dr. Soapes, in here and in there, as you will see when I send everything down to you, that it can be coordinated with here.

SOAPES: Right. Well I'm sure the scholars who use it will be able to put what you've said on the tape together with the documents.

COOPER: Funny thing. We went, anyhow, to Japan, and this is interesting in a way, although it has nothing so much to do with the General as such. But this was the committee formed to welcome the Eisenhowers, and when the Coopers went, every man on this committee except one was there to meet us at the airport.

[Laughter]



SOAPES: This is a list of, it's about a page and a half long. That's quite a list of dignitaries. Quite a long receiving line that you have to go through.

COOPER: Yes, oh, yes, of course. When we went, we, of course, were the guests of the prime minister at that time, Mr. Ikeda. And then we had really a red carpet treatment all through Japan, at that time.

SOAPES: Did President Eisenhower ever express to you what he might hope to gain by going to Japan?

COOPER: Dr. Soapes, no, I can't say that he did. He did mention, as I said, yes, I think I'd like to go. He had been in Japan once, you know.

SOAPES: Right.

COOPER: About fifteen years before that.



SOAPES: Right, when he was chief of staff.

COOPER: Yes, he had been in Japan and he liked the country. And, as I said, he had met Yoshida and he liked him very much, indeed. Then we had arranged for a meeting with him between--now here's coming back again to '63, where they started the plans for another invitation again.

SOAPES: Did this invitation get publicized as the others had?

COOPER: No, none of them did.

SOAPES: This one did not.

COOPER: No.

SOAPES: So we did not face again the problem of potential riots

as a reason for not going.

COOPER: No. No.

SOAPES: But the President just decided not to accept.

COOPER: Yes. No, no. No, we got invitations, as I say, the first one was a personal one from the Emperor and, as I showed in my letter, I sent that right on to him instead of keeping it. I sent him the original. I wanted to keep the original [Laughter], but I thought since this was really from the Emperor, he should get it. And it's probably in his files someplace.

SOAPES: Yes, I'm sure it is.



COOPER: But we got invitations beginning in '63, '65, and '66. But, of course, the usual replies, he couldn't do it. But here, of course, again they say--

SOAPES: "The people in general will welcome General Eisenhower. There is a feeling that amends should be made for discourtesy of June 1960. The mass communication media will go all out to welcome the former President for the same reason."

[Interruption]

SOAPES: This is a letter dated October 3, 1963 from President Eisenhower to George Cooper. It reads in part: "In reference to the most recent invitation to visit Japan, on top of all this, customary pressures seem to show no sign of diminishing, and each year it gets a little more difficult, physically, to do the things that are seemingly expected of me. As you know, I dislike very much making excuses to people who are trying to show me an unusual courtesy and I feel badly about my continuing inability to accept their kind invitations."

[Interruption]



COOPER: This is a story that may not be known to many, many people--probably is. But one night on the train, and you recall I told you how many nights we'd be just alone on the private car, and he told me so many stories. I was bold enough one night to say, or to ask, "General, how were you selected to command the armies in Europe when I know General Marshall wanted it so badly?" And he told me. He said that one night while he was in Africa, in the middle of the night, secretly, he was flown back to the White House.

And at the White House with President Roosevelt and General Marshall--just the three men--and President Roosevelt talked to the two of them about who should be the one to command the troops in Europe. Both men, of course, felt they wanted it. General Marshall in particular. And he said, "George, we talked for a couple hours and finally President Roosevelt said, words to this effect, 'Gentlemen, look; we seem to have a winning team. We seem to have a quarterback who seems to be directing the team at this point very well. I would not like to break up that winning combination. And so, I'm going to say, General Eisenhower, you will continue and will be the commander of the forces in Europe.'" He said, "I was flown back that same night to Africa." And he said, "Very few people knew I even was in the White House." Now I don't know how well [known]? that story is, but I think I remember it pretty, pretty well.

SOAPES: This was told to you while you were on those train trips, raising money for--

COOPER: Yes. This was years after, of course. Yes. Dr. Soapes, I regret now, bitterly, that I thought I was doing the right



thing in not telling all what I felt were confidential stories, you know. But I never forgot that one and I thought of it after you left.

SOAPES: It's a very interesting one.

