

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

Rusk 7T: Part 6 of 6

Dean Rusk, autobiographical sketch told to Richard Rusk  
circa 1985

The complete interview also includes Rusk 7O: Part 1; Rusk 7P: Part 2; Rusk 7Q: Part 3; Rusk 7R: Part 4; Rusk 7S: Part 5

DEAN RUSK: --going to the University of Georgia to teach international law in the law school, a friend of mine at the Harvard Law School wrote me a little letter of welcome into the profession, and he told me a story which he said I could use if I needed it. He said that former President Harry Truman had come up to the Harvard Law School to talk about constitutional law and during the question period one of the Harvard law students raised his hand and said, "Mr. President, do you know anything about constitutional law?" and Harry Truman said, "Hell yes, I made a lot of it." So in a sense I can say that I helped to make a good deal of international law along the way. Once during the Truman administration, Mr. Truman received a long and unpleasant letter from Prime Minister [Jawaharlal] Nehru, about three pages of it, and Mr. Truman was pretty mad about it but it fell to me to draft a reply for Mr. Truman to send back to him. I took my draft reply and my copy of the Nehru letter over to see Mr. Truman and he got out his copy and I found that he had made a good many marginal notes on this Nehru letter, some of them pretty indiscreet, such things as "What does he want me to do, consult Mousie Dung." But anyhow, we went over the draft reply and he made certain changes and I went on back to send it off, but as I was leaving the office, he said, "Is there anything else I can do for you?" and in just more or less fun I said, "You can give me your copy of that letter."

He laughed and said, "No, I won't do that but if you send me over your copy, I will put these same marginal notes on it." Well, that was a pretty indiscreet thing for him to do because if these marginal notes became public, all hell would have broken loose, so I just ignored that suggestion of his. Well about ten days later, I got a little note from him saying, "Damn it Dean, I told you to send over your copy of the Nehru letter." So I did and he put on the marginal notes and sent it back to me with a little note saying, "I want you to have this for your memoirs."--misspelling "memoirs." Well, given the hot character of that particular piece of paper, I paid some money for many years for a safe deposit box in which to keep it, but that was entirely characteristic of Harry Truman. Harry Truman was quite remarkable in that he knew how to make decisions. Almost all of the problems that get to a president are extremely complex and almost none of them have any really good answers. If they had good answers, they would have been handled down below long before.

But Harry Truman would look at a problem which had dozens and dozens of secondary and tertiary questions all mixed in, one can think of a heap of jackstraws and where the jackstraws are all tangled up and pointing in different directions and cutting across each other, interfering with each other. Harry Truman would listen to all the briefing on all the complications and then he would pick that particular element out of the pile and make his decision and go home and never look back. In other words, he was capable of that necessary oversimplification at the

moment of decision. It is a trait that not all men in high office have. For example, although I enthusiastically supported Adlai [Ewing] Stevenson's candidacy in 1952 and 1956, I have wondered since what kind of president he would have made because Adlai Stevenson was so imaginative and so intelligent that he could always see the disadvantages of any line of action and found it very difficult to come to a conclusion.

He used to complain to friends about all the instructions he received for the State Department while he was our representative at the United Nations, but actually, I am quite sure that he was very pleased to receive most of them because he did not want to have to make up his mind on some of these things. By the way Richard, remind me to let you have a copy of a book review I did on a book called *Our Man at the United Nations* because I reflect upon the position of the person up there and his relations with a secretary of state and a president. Many people sometimes forget that almost all foreign policy decisions have to do with the future, trying to nudge events in one direction rather than another. But Providence has not given us the capacity to pierce the fog of the future with complete accuracy, there is always the unexpected; there is always the unknowable. So the policy officer who knows his business knows that his decisions are taken in the conditional mood, hopefully, possibly, if things work out right.

Now these decisions are evaluated on the basis of hindsight, this aspect ratifies in many directions. I made some spot checks on my press conferences while I was Secretary of State and found that about 80% of the questions I got at press conferences were about the future. Well, I couldn't stand there in front of 600 reporters and a battery of television cameras and answer 80% of my questions by saying "Damned if I know." So I would do my best to deal with their questions and then if two months later things worked out about the way I said I thought they would, it is all forgotten; but if things worked out differently, that is one of those small contributions to something called the credibility gap. I mentioned that some things are simply unknowable. In a certain Tuesday night in August 1968, Soviet forces marched into Czechoslovakia. We thought we learned later that they had handled that decision on the previous Saturday night, three days before. Now when we asked our intelligence people a week before whether the Soviets would move into Czechoslovakia, there is no way on earth they could have told us because the Soviets didn't know.

There was just a piece of information that was not present in the real world. And so our most expert advisers on Soviet matters told us in August 1968 that the Soviet forces are there, they have their maneuvers, they have the capability of moving in but whether in fact they will move in, we don't know. I think a good many intelligence studies, produced by the intelligence community, should begin with the line, "Damned if we know, but if you want our best guess, here it is." Because the false sense of certainty in the intelligence reports tends to mislead the policy officers when they are reading what the intelligence community has to say. When I was Secretary of State, I realized that one of my jobs was to keep President Kennedy and President Johnson informed about what we were doing so that they wouldn't be caught by surprise, read something in the newspapers or hear something from some senator or congressman that they were not aware of. Every day the president would have on his desk a wrap up of the more important incoming and outgoing diplomatic telegrams and that was one way he could keep informed, but at the end of each day I would send over to the President a page or two of very

brief notes, maybe two or three lines each, on important decisions or actions that had been taken during the day and important decisions and actions which were coming up in the next day or two.

That gave the President a chance to keep in touch with what was going on and also to inject himself into a particular problem if he saw something that was about to happen that he wanted to be in on. But the President's schedule is such and his responsibilities for the entire Executive branch of the government are such that he simply cannot follow the mass of business that is involved in the conduct of our relations with some 160 nations of the world. But most presidents will look upon foreign policy as one of their primary responsibilities. As President Kennedy once said, "Domestic affairs can only defeat you, but foreign policy questions can kill us all." Now of course, a president or a secretary of state may inject themselves into some questions being handled down below, because after all, they too read the newspapers and get a pretty good idea of what is going on in the world. But a president and a secretary of state have to come to some informal understanding as to the types of things which a president will want to look at and which kinds of things can be handled below his level.

I might go into a little more detail about the circumstances in which John F. Kennedy asked me to serve as Secretary of State. I had never known John F. Kennedy either as a senator or during the campaign. As a matter of fact, I knew the Kennedy group so little that when I received a telephone call from somebody called Sergeant [Robert] Shriver [Jr.], I thought that that must have been a military aid that had been given to Kennedy for some purpose. In early December 1960, after the election, I was at Colonial Williamsburg at a meeting of the board of trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation and various people on the board were called out to telephone calls-- [Clarence] Douglas Dillon, Chester [Bliss] Bowles. Then I was called out and it turned out to be John F. Kennedy and he said he wanted to talk to me at his little place in Georgetown there two days later. So I went by Washington on my way back to New York and went to see him there in Georgetown. We talked for about an hour and a half about various names that might be considered as secretary of state.

We spoke of David [Kirkpatrick Este] Bruce, for whom we both had the highest regard, he had been a distinguished ambassador in Paris and in other services. We spoke of Adlai Stevenson, but Kennedy brushed Stevenson's name away rather promptly--I never knew quite why that was so except possibly the circumstances at the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles when Stevenson was one of the irritants from a Kennedy point of view, and it may be that Kennedy felt that since Adlai Stevenson had been the Democratic standard bearer in 1952 and 1956 elections that he, as Secretary of State, might somehow upstage Kennedy himself. In any event, it was clear that he was not going in that direction. I suggested the name of Robert [Abercrombie] Lovett, who had been undersecretary under George Marshall and later secretary of defense; one of the truly great American public servants.

But Robert Lovett had a health problem which made it impossible for him to take on public service. We spoke about Senator [James] William Fulbright at some length. It was clear that Kennedy was attracted to Fulbright, but he was concerned that Fulbright had signed the Southern Manifesto on the subject of civil rights and that his appointment might bring objections on the subject of civil rights and that his appointment might bring objections from a very large liberal wing in the Democratic party. I told Kennedy that if he wanted to appoint Fulbright and then

appoint Adlai to the United Nations and Chester Bowles as undersecretary of state that the presence of those strong liberals at two important positions in his administration would, I think, not cause the Fulbright matter to be any problem to him. And he reflected on that I suppose. I never knew whether or not Kennedy had discussed the matter with Fulbright and might have indeed offered him the position.

Neither Kennedy nor Fulbright ever commented to me on that. But in any event, in this discussion there was no mention whatever of my name or the possibility that he might ask me to do it. So I went on back to the Rockefeller Foundation in New York and told my colleagues up there that I would be staying at the Rockefeller Foundation, that the press speculation that they might have seen could be disregarded, there was nothing to it. Well then, the next day, Kennedy called me and told me that he wanted me to take the job. And I said, "Now wait a minute, Mr. President, there are a lot of things we ought to discuss before you make that decision, we didn't talk about that at all," and he chuckled a bit and said, "all right, come on down to West Palm Beach tomorrow morning and we will talk it over." So I went on down to Florida and spent the morning of the next day with Kennedy. I got there quite early in the morning and when I was ushered into the living room to wait for Kennedy, there was a copy of the *Washington Post* on the table with a big, black headline saying, "Rusk to be Secretary of State."

Well when Kennedy came in and saw that headline, he just hit the roof. He asked me if I had talked to anybody and I said, "No, I talked to my wife about it, but I am sure that she hasn't talked to anybody nor have I." Then he telephoned Philip Graham, the publisher of the *Washington Post*, and blasted him for this headline. Of course, I could only hear one side of the conversation, but apparently Philip Graham told Kennedy that he, Kennedy, Kennedy, had told Graham that the night before, and I heard Kennedy say, "But that was off-the-record," and apparently Philip Graham must have said, "Well, you didn't tell me it was off-the-record." But anyhow there was the headline. Well, we talked about a number of things. Some main lines of policy and matters of that sort. I urged him strongly to do his best to get Adlai Stevenson to take the United Nations job. I thought he would be an admirable representative at the U.N. and would greatly strengthen the administration.

And so, he telephoned Adlai Stevenson then and there and succeeded in getting him to agree to become the United Nations ambassador. I also recommended that Chester Bowles be designated as under-secretary. I had known Chester Bowles somewhat while he was a congressman, but I had known him better as a fellow trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation and thought that he would be a good Under-Secretary of State. There are at least twenty positions in the Department of State as well as all of the ambassadors who are presidential appointments. He provides the names to the Senate and the Senate decides whether it will give advice and consent to their appointment. Now, usually a president will give very great attention to the suggestions of the cabinet officers about those positions, but at the end of the day, the president is entitled to have his wish on appointments which are by law for the president to make.

For example, at the very same time that Kennedy and I were meeting in West Palm Beach, he had already announced that he was naming [G.] Mennen Williams of Michigan as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. And so that was done before I ever got there. As a matter of fact it turned out very well because Mennen Williams was a very good assistant secretary of

state for Africa, worked very hard at it. I had great respect and affection for him. In any event, he called both Adlai Stevenson and Chester Bowles, got them to serve, and then we went out and met the press and he announced that he was going to ask me to be Secretary of State. [Did you ever have a chance to really tell him whether or not you wanted this thing? It seems to be like you went down there and the thing was already set up.] I had discussed with some of the trustees of the Rockefeller the possibility that I might be invited to become a part of the Kennedy administration. They told me that the office of Secretary of State was the only position which I could not refuse.

But they also urged that if I were asked to take any other job in the Kennedy administration, that I should refuse it and remain at the Rockefeller Foundation. I did tell President Kennedy that I could serve a maximum of one term--four years--the pay of the Secretary of State at that time was \$25,000 a year. I had one child in college and two more headed for college; I just didn't see how I could afford to take the job, but at the maximum, four years. The Rockefeller Foundation provided me a termination pay, severing all of the retirement and other obligations which they might have of \$100,000 and that was put into a blind trust and was paid to me at the rate of \$20,000 a year; of course, I had to pay income tax on that so that cut down on it some. But I used that up in the first five years because you simply cannot be secretary of state on \$25,000 a year with a family and the marginal official costs of taking the job. For example, I had to buy a good many clothes that I had never had before--striped pants, silk top hat, a long-tail morning jacket and all sorts of things. Fortunately, most of those things were tax deductible as official costumes and most of them I wore only once or twice during my tenure as Secretary of State although the white tie and tails I wore more than once.

But I told Kennedy that I could not serve more than one term and that was our understanding. Later when people like Arthur [Meier] Schlesinger [Jr.] were reporting that Kennedy was thinking about another secretary of state for a second term, they didn't know apparently that my original understanding with Kennedy was that I would serve only one term. To follow that up a little bit, under the circumstances of the tragic assassination of November 1963, Lyndon Johnson called each cabinet officer in and pressed us very hard to remain at our posts. I had raised with him at that time the business of building his own administration, but he wanted to assure continuity in government at that tragic moment and he urged me to stay on and under those circumstances one could not refuse. So I stayed on.

RICHARD RUSK: Was it a wise thing for Johnson to have done given the friction that probably existed between some of Kennedy's people and Lyndon Johnson?

DEAN RUSK: Well, it depended a little on whether people were serving John F. Kennedy the person or serving him as President of the United States. In my own case, I served Kennedy as President, in his capacity as President. I was not a part of his official entourage, I was not a member of his social set. I didn't have the kind of personal ties that a number of his White House staff had with him. People like Larry O'Brien and various others: Kenny O'Donnell, Ted [Theodore Chaikin] Sorensen--people who were there in a very personal capacity. So that when the tragedy of November 1963 came along, it was not difficult for me to transfer my loyalty from one President of the United States to another President of the United States. But for those who were serving Kennedy in a very personal capacity, they simply could not make the transition,

and it was appropriate for them to leave in due course. Some of them left on their own initiative; I think one or two perhaps left at the suggestion of President Johnson.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you make a comment to President Kennedy when he offered you the post that you didn't really feel prepared for the job and his reply to that was "How do you think I feel?" Can you stick that quote into the tape for me?

DEAN RUSK: I told President Kennedy that he would have to make himself responsible for the question as to whether or not I was qualified for the job because I, myself, felt no one was truly qualified to be secretary of state. I didn't add "Or president." But those are jobs in which people have to do a lot of learning on the job. It is very hard to be fully prepared.

RICHARD RUSK: What was his response to your comment?

DEAN RUSK: He simply nodded, smiled and let it go at that. In the summer of 1963 I did say to President Kennedy that if he wanted to make a fresh start in my job in preparation for the election campaign of 1964 that he should feel entirely comfortable about doing so because it would be entirely agreeable with me. But he told me that he wanted me to stay and not to bring that subject up again. My relation with Kennedy was somewhat unusual. I was the only cabinet officer whom he always called "Mr. Secretary"--I never knew just quite why it was--he called the other cabinet officers by their first names, but someone can try to figure that out sometime. At the time of the Kennedy assassination, six members of the Cabinet, including myself, were on an airplane on the way to Japan for a joint cabinet meeting with the Japanese cabinet. We were about one hour west of Hawaii when the commander of the plane brought back to me in my cabin a one line press flash that had come over the press ticker on our aircraft simply saying that President Kennedy had been shot in Dallas.

I asked Pierre [Emil George] Salinger who was with us, Pierre Salinger being the President's press representative, to use the plane's telephone and call the White House and confirm that this had, in fact, occurred. It took about five minutes to make this call and confirm it, and so we immediately turned the plane around and headed back for Hawaii. Before we landed in Hawaii, we had received the further information that Kennedy had died. We landed in Hawaii in the middle of a full military alert because no one at that moment knew just what was involved in Kennedy's death, and we took on some additional fuel. We had communicated with the new President Johnson, as a matter of fact while he was still in Dallas, to ask whether he wanted us to come to Dallas or Washington. He told us to come on to Washington so we made a non-stop flight from Hawaii to Washington, D.C. [What were your private thoughts during that flight after hearing about Kennedy's assassination?] When we received word that Kennedy had died, and I announced it on the plane's loud speaker to everybody on the plane, each one of us took fifteen or twenty minutes with our own thoughts. It was a very grievous tragedy, genuine shock, and so each person very quietly contemplated the situation.

But then the other cabinet officers gathered with me in the forward cabin of the plane with some few other high officials, and we spent the rest of the time on the way back to Washington talking about what needed to be done under those circumstances to keep the public business flowing, to keep government going. Kennedy had died, but the nation lived, and we knew that Kennedy,

himself, quite apart from the new President, would expect us to do what we could to see that this tragedy did not paralyze the government. I was in touch with George [Wildman] Ball, who was then the acting Secretary in the State Department, to be sure that all of the procedures and arrangements were going forward having to do with the death of a president and they were. There is a kind of standing operating procedure known to the State Department to cover such matters because it had happened before in our history. But we talked more about how to continue the business of the government than our private, personal matters. We didn't feel that we needed to discuss with each other our personal reactions to the tragedy, for we all understood that wasn't a matter for group discussion.

The next morning after we arrived in Washington--

RICHARD RUSK: Very early in the morning, very late at night?

DEAN RUSK: --and after a very few hours sleep, I was called over to see President Johnson. It was customary under those circumstances for all of us who were Presidential appointees to tender our resignation to the new President so he would be free to make whatever arrangements he wished to make. But Johnson urged me to stay on and put it to me in terms of duty and underlined that he was going to try to maintain the continuity of the policies of the Kennedy administration and that we all needed to pitch in and keep the country going during this moment of great tragedy.

RICHARD RUSK: If I could back up just a little bit, what were your private thoughts when Kennedy offered you the position? What did it feel like to be offered a job like that? I can recall how you looked when you returned from Florida or Williamsburg, wherever it was, you were as pale as a sheet when you walking through the door.

DEAN RUSK: Well it was prospectively a very heavy responsibility, something that I never had any idea that I would ever be doing. For example, I had developed no personal staff of the sort that people in public life usually gather around them. I was entirely happy as president of the Rockefeller Foundation; it was one of the most interesting jobs in the world. So it came as a genuine surprise that he would turn to me, but there was a sense of duty. There is the question in my mind as to whether or not--if a president asks one to take on a job of that sort--one is really entitled to say "no." There are those who do say "no"--the idea that there are long lines of people with the appropriate qualifications aching to take those top jobs in government is just a wrong impression. A president must recruit people to take those jobs and my guess is, I don't know how one would check on it, that for every person who says "yes" a president had received a "no" from just as many people. I don't want to sound self-pitying or self-serving but when you take one of those jobs you make some personal sacrifices in the ordinary case.

My salary came down to about a third of what it was at the Rockefeller Foundation. You lose your privacy, your time is no longer your own. It is very tough on the families of people in public life to have the father of the family away almost all of the time; it is tough on the children of people whose names are in the headlines all the time. The office of secretary of state was usually a fifteen or sixteen hour day, including the diplomatic dinners we had to attend as a matter of relationships. My appointment books could help with this, my appointment books are

down in the LBJ Library, but it is my impression that your mother and I had a chance to have dinner at home with the family on the average of about once a month for several years so the children had to grow up like weeds on their own. You asked if I offered to resign to President Kennedy more than once. No, I didn't, because at the time we discussed my appointment, I told him that as far as I was concerned my resignation was always on his desk. I did not believe in what had come to be known as "New Deal resignations." I did not believe in harassing a president with false resignation or anything of that sort.

My view was that if I wanted to quit, I would just quit; we don't have slave labor in this country and you don't have to serve if you come to a point where you don't want to. But no, that was the only time that I specifically spoke to Kennedy about leaving before the end of his term although we both knew that I was going to leave at the end of his first term. In my long talk with Kennedy at West Palm Beach, we did not talk so much about the content of policy as about the way the Executive branch should be conducted with respect to foreign policy. I knew from what he had said in the campaign that his views and mine were very compatible on matters of foreign policy so that we didn't get into that very much. There had been various task force studies prepared for him while he was campaigning and as President-elect and we didn't pay too much attention to those after he took office. Because foreign policy is just too complex to cover in any adequate way in a conversation of that sort. There are bound to be differences from time to time between a secretary of state and a president on questions of foreign policy. The president is in a very different political position than is a secretary of state, particularly a president who has in mind running again.

And a secretary of state tries to deal with foreign policy in terms of what makes sense to the nation and pays somewhat less attention to the effect of each policy on the strictly political position of a president although a secretary of state must try to take those things into account because he has to help the president think like a president on such questions. But at the end of the day, under our Constitution, it is the president who has the constitutional authority to make the final decisions as far as the Executive branch is concerned and anyone who takes the job of secretary of state must be aware of that and must respect that constitutional view. I did wrestle with President Kennedy at times over some ambassadorial appointments. At any given time about seventy percent of our ambassadors to other countries will be Foreign Service officers and there will very likely be another fifteen or so who are professional people although not career people, but they are not political appointments in the usual sense--a man like David Bruce in London, or a man like Edmund [Oldfather] Reischauer as ambassador to Tokyo, or people like that.

But then there are always ten or fifteen percent who are just plain old-fashioned political appointments and on those the secretary of state had to wrestle with the president a bit because otherwise some dogs creep into the diplomatic establishment who have no reason to be there. I did counsel against the Bay of Pigs but I did not do so publicly; I did not say so publicly after the Bay of Pigs debacle. But no two men handle so large a number of diverse questions in exactly the same way, so that it is inevitable that there would be differences between a secretary of state and a president.

RICHARD RUSK: Did it turn out that you fellows were in agreement on the basic goals and objectives of American foreign policy?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I think that Kennedy and I and later Johnson and I were in basic agreement on the major objectives. But after all, foreign policy is bipartisan in character. American foreign policy in this post-war period has been pretty well established along predictable lines. A country with the size, power and wealth, momentum of the United States can't go flitting around like a hummingbird sampling every little tempting flower. It has to be predictable by both our friends and by our adversaries, otherwise we ourselves could inject the screaming meemies into the world situation. It was not difficult to find agreement on the main goals of policy. President Kennedy was a very pragmatic kind of person.

During the Eisenhower administration, there was prepared for President Eisenhower a rather thick booklet called "U.S. National Security Policy" and this surveyed the world situation and tried to set forth American policy on a wide range of matters and President Eisenhower had approved it. So in the first months of the Kennedy administration people on the policy planning staff and various others set to work to revise this major document on American policy. And they worked on it for some months and finally got the clean draft finished, but, to their dismay, President Kennedy and I would not approve it. President Kennedy said that he did not know what these generalizations meant tomorrow morning at nine o'clock if a particular question arose.

My problem was that I was afraid that if we approved this thick document that people would think that we had determined policy whereas the generalizations were so sweeping that they simply were not very helpful in terms of deciding what you do about particular problems in the real world dealing with real countries in an exact moment of time. I think working on such documents can be very useful to those who work on them. It is a good exercise for people to go through, but it is not the way to make policy. There are general directions of policy that one can discuss, of course, but one should not exaggerate the ability of those general statements to really help very much when the moment of decision comes because at moments of decision there are always many, many complications that are involved in that particular problem which simply cannot be caught up in these sweeping generalizations. Another problem with such approaches is that very, very, seldom do you have a chance to make a choice between right and wrong--white or black because you find that good principles of policy are in conflict with each other in a given situation. It involves a weighing, an adjustment of factors which point in different directions and so policy is much more complicated than can be set down easily and simply in a volume of that sort.

RICHARD RUSK: Were the philosophical ends of policy often or ever discussed or were they more or less taken for granted when and if you fellows were more or less speaking on the same philosophical level anyway?

DEAN RUSK: Some people try to pretend that ethical and moral values have very little to do with relations among states. My old friend Hans [Joachim] Morgenthau used to make that argument. But I never accepted that point of view. I reject the philosophical tradition beginning with Plato and coming through the German romanticists and some of the modern social

psychologists that the group, in this case the state, is a being quite different from those who make it up and that it is governed by laws and principals which are not the same laws and principles that we use in our everyday lives. I rejected that. When I became Secretary of State, I did not find something called a state in my desk drawer or in my clothes closet. I found a number of actual men and women, breathing human beings, who had been designated by their fellow citizens, under our laws and Constitution to act for all of us in certain respects. Now those ordinary human beings are influenced by and have to take into account ethical and moral considerations.

On a very pragmatic level, one must take into account the fact that people all over the world base their own action, to a very considerable extent, upon their own ethical and moral judgments about the world and about the situation and that if you are trying to influence their conduct in one way or another, you must take those considerations into account. But on the other hand, we didn't wear those values around on our sleeves. We did not very often bring them up in debate because we all knew they were there, but it isn't customary to get into the practice of preaching sermons at each other that are based upon such considerations. Therefore, the official record will show relatively little in terms of reflections upon their underlying moral and ethical and philosophical considerations. But they are there. For example, no President can pursue a major policy for very long without the understanding and support of the Congress and the American people, that alone means that moral considerations are necessarily a part of judgments made by people in high office. There was never any question in my mind or in Kennedy's mind that he was President and that if push came to shove it would be the considered views of the President that must prevail within the laws and the Constitution.

**RICHARD RUSK:** The question I raised was about the time you initially talked with Kennedy in Palm Beach about the operational way of conducting foreign policy. Did you have a thorough understanding then, specifically, were you aware to the extent to which the White House would conduct policy and make policy right out of the White House and did differences develop between you and Kennedy or the White House about these operational means?

**DEAN RUSK:** We had very little discussion about relations between, say the Secretary of State and members of the White House staff, because this was before the period when the White House National Security advisor assumed the kind of role that Henry Kissinger assumed in the 1970s. Staff at that time were looked upon as being staff, not people in the chain of command and with line of responsibility in any way intruding between the president and the Secretary of State. You can search the news media throughout the '60s and you will find very little gossip of any sort about feuds between myself and the Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, between myself and anybody on the White House staff including the National Security advisor. [Richard makes reference to Schlesinger book and his reference to problems between the White House and State Department.] Now there were times when I had a little trouble, problems with Arthur Schlesinger. Arthur Schlesinger was Kennedy's egghead in residence, living over in the East Room of the White House with the social secretaries, and he would try to intrude into policy matters at times.

For example, the question arose in Italy as to whether or not the Italian government should shift toward the left and bring about a broader coalition with some the parties on the left and Arthur

Schlesinger was very anxious that the United States nudge them in that direction, that we urge them to make that move to the left. Well, our ambassador in Rome, [G.] Frederick Reinhardt, and I, Secretary of State, felt that was not our job, that was a matter for the Italians to decide, and I simply refused to take part in any attempt to influence the Italian government on that kind of point. I remember on one occasion I was talking about something with President Kennedy and Arthur Schlesinger walked in and made some, I thought, wild-eyed proposal about something involving foreign policy. The President thanked him and Schlesinger left the room and Kennedy turned to me and said, "There are times when Arthur is very interesting in the Rose Garden." But we didn't have problems of that sort. Now there is one point that I was aware of and this is that the Department of State can't seem to find the kind of talent that is needed for that kind of help to a president. On more than one occasion, I talked to some of our inspectors of the Foreign Service who traveled all over the world interviewing Foreign Service officers and ambassadors and people like that.

And I would urge them to scour the Foreign Service looking for people who are articulate and who could help on things of that sort. So presidents, at least President Kennedy and President Johnson, needed somebody over on the White House staff who could take the materials that were sent over by the Department and shape them into something which that particular president personally would be comfortable with and use. This applied to me also. Every time an important foreign visitor would come to town, Virginia and I would usually give him a luncheon or a dinner. In preparation for his visit, I would be furnished with a big, black, loose-leaf book with all sorts of information about that country and that person and our policies and so forth and in this black book there would always be a draft toast for me to use at the end of the luncheon or dinner. I was never able to use any of them, because the people who wrote them didn't even stand up before a half dozen people and read them out loud to see how silly they sounded when you spoke them orally. So I would look these things over and then improvise toasts and you will find a good many of those little toasts in the book *The Winds of Freedom* that was published. But the department is not a very good drafter and partly because committees are not good drafters so that Ted Sorensen and McGeorge Bundy did a great job for President Kennedy in putting what he had to say in final form. Of course, he always went over it himself, but they were invaluable help, and there may have been times that some people in the department thought that in carrying out that part of the job that Sorensen or Bundy were, in fact, interesting. Now we did wrestle a little with the White House staff at times on appointments. Although I must say that I was surprised at the relatively few applications for appointments in the State Department or as ambassadors that came through political channels.

The political people by and large didn't seem to be very much interested in the largest posts like London, Paris, Rome, Tokyo, and so forth and that was because they had to work too hard on those posts. They weren't interested in most of the far off small posts because a lot of these places are a long way from home and uncomfortable and health conditions are bad and some of them even dangerous. So that your political people tend to concentrate on nice little countries like Switzerland and Denmark and Ireland and places like that. But even so, we had occasional wrestles with some of the people on the White House staff who were responsible for helping the President with appointments.

RICHARD RUSK: I have heard it said of Kennedy that he saw himself as being a strong executive who pretty much wanted to be his own Secretary of State. Again, were you aware, when you fellows first signed on with each other, how he felt about this and did you discuss this thoroughly when you talked about the operational way that policy should be made at the beginning and did you feel comfortable about the way things did work out during the first three years?

DEAN RUSK: This notion that a president can be his own secretary of state is one of those slogans largely picked up by the news media. The Constitution puts the president in charge of the Executive branch of the government and specifically in terms of foreign policy. But a president has a full time job just being president. He can't be both president and secretary of state because of the mass of business that has to be transacted. On every working day throughout the year some 3,000 cables go out of that department to our posts and to governments all over the world. Of those, perhaps seven or eight may be seen by the secretary personally before they go out although all of those cables carry the secretary's signature; and the president may see one or two of them. The conduct of foreign policy requires delegation of authority and responsibility literally to hundreds of officers, otherwise the day's work simply could not get done. On any working day the United States is attending somewhere in the world at least a dozen multinational, international meetings, ranging in subject matter from the control of nuclear weapons to the control of hog cholera.

Now you have several hundred of these meetings going on every year, some of them lasting maybe three days at a time but some of them lasting throughout the year. And each one of those requires that a delegation be assembled, that instructions be prepared, that negotiating positions be framed, and during the course of the meeting they have to be followed so that if there is any revision in instructions required, those instructions can get to them in a timely fashion. So, the president has a full day carrying out that part of it which is his, the secretary of state has a full day carrying out that part, but then the secretary must give special attention to insuring that all those officers who are authorized to get on with the day's business understand the policies which the president and the secretary of state want them to follow. Now, I will put a figure in your mind and you don't have to believe it, you can just leave it dangling there if you want to. During my eight years there something over 2,100,000 telegrams went out of that department with my name signed to them, and I had seen only a fraction of one percent of them before they went out. But I can remember only four or five telegrams out of all that mass that had to be called back and turned around and rewritten because those who had sent them out had missed the point of policy that the President or I wanted them to follow. That is an extraordinarily professional job. There was one little practice that I used in the Department of State that helped in the matter of keeping lines of responsibility straightened. If some staff officer over in the White House called somebody in the Department of State and told him the White House wanted him to do this or that, my colleague in the Department of State was supposed to ask "Who in the White House?" because unless it were the President, my view was that I spoke for the President. I simply did not like any semblance of the notion that somehow White House staff people insert themselves in the chain of command.

Now these things are covered in that little Op-Ed piece that I did for the *Washington Post*, and you can look at that. There is one other piece that you will want to read and that is an article that

was published in the spring of 1960 in the *Foreign Affairs Quarterly*, published by the Council on Foreign Relations. I had given a series of three lectures at the Council on Foreign Relations called the Elihu Root Lectures. One of them was on the Department of State in foreign affairs. Well, all three were to be published but delays and other things resulted in only the first one being published--the one on the Presidency. You will want to read that very carefully because it contains my views on many of these questions at that time. President Kennedy, when I went to see him in Georgetown in mid-December 1960, had a reprint of this article on a little table at his side. But contrary to a remark that Ted Sorensen wrote in his book, Kennedy and I did not discuss this article at all, but apparently Kennedy had read it and had a pretty good idea of my views with respect to the Presidency. Now later on, I had to eat some of the things I said in that article. For example, I said I thought the Secretary of State was traveling too much, and I had to eat that. But I think we had a pretty good understanding and more important of all, regardless of machinery, the President, Bob McNamara, McGeorge Bundy and I had a personal relationship that simply didn't go for feuding, guerrilla war, at that level of government. We spent time with each other and worked things out. We dealt with each other with confidence and trust and that made an enormous difference.

RICHARD RUSK: When you talked to Kennedy in Palm Beach when he offered the position to you, did you lay any conditions regarding your employment or what you had in mind for doing the job, upon yourselves or each other, in the way that some employers and employees sometimes will?

DEAN RUSK: Not really except for the point I made earlier that I told him that I could not serve more than one term. At one point, he turned to me and said, "Is there anything about your life that I ought to know before we announce this appointment?" And I went over a few things, particularly that I had been in the middle of the road in politics all my life and that I would predict that I would be attacked from time to time, both by the extreme right and by the extreme left, which turned out to be true. I also told him, because I wanted him to hear it from me and not from somebody else, that in the middle of the Los Angeles Convention, I had sent a telegram to the head of the New York delegation, Averell Harriman, telling him not to be stupid, that he ought to support Adlai Stevenson, and Kennedy laughed about that. But then when he asked me whether there was anything about me, my life, that he should know before the announcement was made, and after I had made my comments, I said to him, "Now, is there anything I ought to know about your life before I take this job?" and he laughed. Of course, I had, in earlier years, passed several times the so-called loyalty and security investigation. As a Secretary of State, there are a good many classifications beyond "top secret," each one of which calls for its own investigation.

One of my neighbors there in Washington once told me that if people didn't stop coming around asking questions about us that he was going to think there was something the matter with me. But there were several investigations conducted in connection with all sorts of very special and high-level restricted classifications of one sort or another. But when I took the job of Secretary of State I had to fill out a very long questionnaire having to do with loyalty and security matters. One of the questions was "Have you ever tried to overthrow the government of the United States by force or violence?" I answered that "No." Next question was "Has any member of your family tried to overthrow the government of the United States by force or violence?" I said "Yes." The

next question was "If the answer is yes, name them." So I put down the names of my two grandfathers, without any further explanation. Well, apparently, that threw them into quite a tizzy until they figured out that both my grandfathers had been Confederate soldiers. I think I can say without overdrawing it that I had a good deal of experience with taking responsibility and living with the results.

Earlier in my life, I had been dean of the faculty at Mills College, acting president when Aureliea Reinhardt was away, which was often; as a company commander in the army I had to make decisions every day and take the consequences; when I was in the China-Burma-India theater my responsibilities were very considerable because General Stilwell delegated a lot and expected a lot out of us; when I worked in the State Department under George Marshall, he delegated to his assistant secretaries very heavily and one had to bear that responsibility; being president of the Rockefeller Foundation involved considerable responsibility. The Rockefeller Foundation, although a large corporation in the sense of its portfolio of funds, almost three-quarters of a billion dollars when I was there, was a fund-granting organization, and I took the view that the purpose of these funds was philanthropy and not to maintain heavy staff so that we had a relatively small group in New York dealing with the questions of making grants, maybe not more than twenty-five officers at any given time; we began, however, to expand our operations in the field in places like Mexico, Colombia, India, the Philippines, so we would have our own officers assigned overseas and that increased the payroll of the Foundation but much of that payroll was aimed at the philanthropic purpose and not toward administrative overhead.

I felt that the Rockefeller Foundation should not spend philanthropic money for things that were not necessary. For example, we did not lay on any major public relations campaign. We produced an annual report where every penny entrusted to us was accounted for. Every grant made was listed; every stock transaction was listed; but I did not think it was up to the Rockefeller Foundation to try to build an image by all sorts of public relations activities and gestures. We tried to be economical on administrative matters. Shortly after I came to the Foundation, I went around for a little tour of inspection of the two floors in the RCA [Radio Corporation of America] building where we were housed and came across a storeroom as big as an ordinary living room filled with paper towels and toilet tissue. I turned to the fellow in charge and said, "Won't our supplier send us this material, say on a monthly basis, in accordance with our needs?" He said, "Oh yes, I guess they would." "Then why do we have all this stock?" and he said, "Because in World War II we had a paper shortage," and sheer momentum or lethargy continued this stockpiling on this very expensive skyscraper floor space. I once think I startled my colleagues at the Foundation when we were having a staff meeting; I asked if anybody ever had to wait for an outside line on the telephone and no one raised his or her hand so I said, "Well that seems to me to mean that we have got too many outside lines because if we cater to outside lines for more than the maximum peak of use then we are wasting lines." So I cut back of the number of outside lines we had.

**RICHARD RUSK:** Back to the point that you were developing that you did have a good deal of executive and administrative preparation prior to becoming Secretary, but it all related to my question as to what you felt when you took that thing on.

DEAN RUSK: There is no question that I knew that I was facing a formidable responsibility. I think I lost fifteen pounds in the first two weeks after that announcement, a combination of so many things to do and seeing so many people. One thing that President Kennedy and I did discuss at West Palm Beach was the need to keep the responsibility of the president clear before and after Inauguration Day. We wanted to make it very clear that until noon of Inauguration Day, Dwight Eisenhower was President of the United States and at the moment that President Kennedy finished the Oath of Office, he would be President. So we agreed that we would not try to intrude into the conduct of foreign affairs in the Eisenhower administration prior to Inauguration. Now, Secretary Christian [Archibald] Herter very kindly provided me immediately an office on the first floor of the Department of State so that the incoming and outgoing cables were routed across my desk so I could begin to get into the swing of things; provided me with three or four staff people who could go and get information that I felt I needed and it was a period when I could just talk things over with various officers of the department who were handling some of the more important matters.

Secretary Herter would occasionally invite me to comment on a particular problem that had to be dealt with, but I explained to him President-elect Kennedy's policy on this--we would not make comment on decisions that they were facing while they were in office. For example, shortly before President Eisenhower left office, Fidel [Ruz] Castro came up with the silly notion that the American embassy in Havana would be restricted to something like eleven people. Well, this made Eisenhower mad so he just set out to break relations with Castro. We were given an opportunity to comment on that, but we made no comment because we thought it was very, very important that everybody in the world knew who was President of the United States at any given moment and that until Inauguration Day, Eisenhower was President. I think that is the only sensible way to do it; otherwise, following our election in November, we could have a couple of months of genuine confusion about where the responsibility lies; so we went out of our way. There were a lot of people who wanted to see President-elect Kennedy or myself in that month before Inauguration, but we tried our best to avoid seeing representatives of other governments.

RICHARD RUSK: Did the job materialize and develop as you expected it to or were you caught by surprise by the way things actually turned out?

DEAN RUSK: I think the thing that perhaps surprised me most was the sheer mass of our foreign policy business and the large administrative responsibilities of the Secretary of State. I had known a good deal about the department because I had worked in it before, during the Truman administration; so much of it was familiar, but the sheer mass of business, the budget. I felt an obligation, for example, to know where every dollar in the State Department was when I went down to Congress. So I would hold my own budget hearings within the department with the senior officers of the department on their own part of the budget. That took ten days to two weeks of hard work and preparation before going down because those appropriations committees were likely to ask you questions about any part of your budget, sometimes matters of great detail. For example, we, in those days, contributed fifty dollars a year to a little organization in London that was trying to complete a map of the world on a scale of one to one million and it was in the budget. I had to know about that in case I got a question on it from somebody in the Congress. In turn, when the chairmen of these appropriations subcommittees took their recommendations to their Senate and House floors, they had to be aware of where every dollar in that budget was

because there were 535 people up there on Capital Hill and anyone of them might ask a question about any part of it.

I was a little impatient when occasionally some of my own subordinates, assistant secretaries for example, would go down to meet with an appropriation subcommittee about the budget and not know what they were talking about. I thought we owed that to the Congress to know what we were talking about when we went down and asked for public money. One item about taking on the job as President of the Rockefeller Foundation: That election occurred by the Board of Trustees in their annual meeting in Colonial Williamsburg, and on the day I was elected I got an invitation from Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who was then quite an elderly man and had a home there in Colonial Williamsburg. He asked me to come have lunch with him. I must confess that I rather thought that I would go down and get my marching orders of some sort from the old man who had done so much philanthropy himself in the past. But it turned out that he wanted to say two things to me; one, he said, "Mr. Rusk, I never want to hear from you about the Rockefeller Foundation--that is an independent philanthropy. I have no desire to offer any influence, advice or anything else, so don't come to me about problems at the Rockefeller Foundation."

Secondly, he said, "If I were you I would take three or four months off in the wilderness just thinking about how you use three-quarters of a billion dollars for the well-being of Mankind. Just think about it, don't feel yourself burdened by the past of the Rockefeller Foundation; just give it your own thought." Well, that probably was pretty good advice. The trouble was that as soon as I became president of the Rockefeller Foundation, a congressional investigation of foundations in general was launched under a right-wing Republican Congressman from Tennessee named [Brazilla Carroll] Reece, and so I immediately faced hearings that were going to look into all of the grants made by the Rockefeller Foundation as well as other foundations that this particular committee thought might be questionable. And so, instead of going off and ignoring the past to the Rockefeller Foundation and thinking anew, I had to spend my first few months there going over the past in great detail and preparing myself for hearings. And you may want to read over the submission we made to that committee about policies of the Foundation. We had to battle pretty strongly for free speech, the free arts, considerations of that sort because some of these Congressmen were prepared to attack us for having made grants to organizations that they themselves did not approve of. I remember both we and the Guggenheim Foundation had made grants to the biological work of Linus Pauling, who later had become quite a controversial political figure. In his testimony before the same committee Henry Moe, head of the Guggenheim Foundation, famous for its Guggenheim Fellowships, was testifying about Linus Pauling and these people were pressing him pretty hard and he finally leaned back and said, "Mr. Chairman, a distinguished scientist has as much right to be a damned fool in politics as anybody else." I wish I had thought of that line myself; that was a great line.

END OF TAPE