

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

Rusk BB

Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk, Thomas J. Schoenbaum, Martin Hillenbrand, and Loch Johnson

circa 1985

RICHARD RUSK: This interview is another installment of the "Tom and Rich Show" with Ambassador Martin Hillenbrand participating in this interview with Dean Rusk. We are talking about the various cooperation and competition among the competing agencies and bureaucracies of the federal government, with respect to foreign policy. Loch Johnson will be joining us in a little bit later. Okay.

HILLENBRAND: One of the noteworthy things about the first meeting of the former Secretaries of State held in Atlanta late in 1983 was the way all four present responded to the question put by the moderator, Edwin Newman, about relations to the National Security Advisor to the President. No one could have any doubt after hearing those responses that Newman had touched a sensitive nerve. During the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, when Mac [McGeorge] Bundy and Walt [Whitman] Rowstow held that position, did you have anything like the problems that subsequent Secretaries of State had with Henry [Alfred] Kissinger, [Zbigniew] Brzezinski and Richard [Vincent] Allen? What conclusions do you draw from your own experience about the appropriate role of the National Security Advisor, vis-a-vis the Secretary of State?

DEAN RUSK: We should begin, I think, with the fact that a Secretary of State has a five-foot shelf of statutory law organizing his department and setting many of the main policies which he is expected to pursue. That's not true of the National Security Advisor. It's the Secretary of State who goes down to Capitol Hill many, many times. I went hundreds of times to appear before committees and subcommittees of the Congress and ask for legislation or appropriations or both. That's not true of the National Security Advisor. The Congress delegates, specifically by statute, various powers to the Secretary of State! A small example: the power to issue passports. Now it is understood in our constitutional system, but in carrying out those powers delegated by law, that the Secretary of State acts under the general supervision of the President.

RICHARD RUSK: Let me interrupt just for a minute. Keep talking. I'll be right back.

DEAN RUSK: It's the Secretary of State who goes to international meetings, meeting frequently with foreign ministers of other countries, gets the kinds of briefings which don't come out of the general apparatus of government very often. And he's the one who goes around the country making speeches and taking questions from people in different parts of the country. In other words, and not just by law, but also by almost two hundred years of tradition, the Secretary of State has been the spokesman for the President if the President himself is not speaking on foreign policy matters.

None of these things is true of the National Security Advisor. He's a member of the White House

staff. I feel, of course, and I may be biased about this, but I feel White House staff should never be intruded into the chain of command between a President and his cabinet officer. When that begins to happen, or when the President is guarded with regard to access by a cabinet officer by some White House staff, then things begin to go wrong. During the sixties, you can search the news media diligently and I doubt that you will find any rumors of feuds between, say, McNamara and myself, or between either one of us and McGeorge Bundy, or Walt Rostow. One of the reasons for that is that we respected each other's position. We spent a good deal of time with each other, a lot of time with each other. And we were conscious of the fact that we were all working for the same President, the same country. And we did not allow personal differences of view, as there were occasionally, to become matters of personal hostility or personal rivalry.

Now during the early sixties, McGeorge Bundy had about a dozen people over there in the staff of the National Security Council. That meant that you did not get any of the bureaucratic syndromes operating: for example, the necessity for demonstrating that you are earning your pay by doing something, by tinkering with something. They were there to facilitate the President's participation in the foreign policy process. They organized the stream of papers that came into him every day. They helped work out his schedule for distinguished visitors coming here and for the President's trips abroad. They helped him on his statements and speeches that he would make. In the case of John Kennedy, it was [Theodore Chaikin] Ted Sorensen who had the primary speech writing responsibility. But McGeorge Bundy did help a great deal in the preparation of those speeches. Let me say that there is one thing that the State Department has not learned to do and that is to send over to the President finished products, in terms of messages to Congress, or important speeches, or things of that sort. Somehow the bureaucracy of the State Department just cannot do that. I've asked the Inspector General of the State Department more than once to ask his colleagues who were visiting all over the world, visiting embassies and interviewing a lot of people, to keep their eyes open for a very articulate Foreign Service officer who was good at speech writing. It's a very difficult thing. And we could never come up with anybody who really was able to send over a finished product to the President.

RICHARD RUSK: Why was that, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: Partly because Presidents have their own unique styles and unique ways of getting at things. And somebody like a Ted Sorensen could interpret that, put that down on paper, much more easily than someone working at a greater distance. After all, Ted Sorensen had been with Ted [sic] Kennedy for a long time. But also, bureaucratic writing, per se, is faulty. Every time we had a foreign visitor in Washington, I would usually give him a lunch or a dinner. And I would have a black book of briefing material ready for me before each visit. And in that black book would be a proposed toast that I would use. Well, I had a couple of hundred of those prepared for me. I never used a single one of them because those who wrote them didn't bother to stand up and read them to four or five people to see how inadequate they were in terms of spoken English. And so I improvised almost literally all of my toasts at such occasions.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you any more effective than your staff in writing speeches, either for yourself or--

DEAN RUSK: I don't know. Lyndon Johnson, to illustrate this problem, used to complain that I

sent him all the junk and kept the best stuff for myself. (laughter) That was because I spoke extemporaneously most of the time. And we sent over to him the bureaucratic product, which was not very--And I couldn't spend my time writing speeches for the President. That wasn't my job. But there are some things that the White House staff people can be critically important for. There is one other thing which a White House staff man, like McGeorge Bundy or Walt Rostow, could do. If there were differences between the State Department and another department of government, Defense, Treasury, or Commerce, sometimes they could play a very useful role in working out those differences behind the scenes. In our government, it's almost *infra dig* [*infra dignitatem*], unworthy, to defer laterally. That is, to defer to another cabinet officer. Because there's just problems with that in one's own Department. You only defer vertically. That is, to someone who is your boss. The White House was sometimes in a position to find reconciliation of the divergent views of different departments. And that was a pretty useful role.

SCHOENBAUM: Let me ask a follow-up question to Martin's. You spoke about the five feet of statutes that the Secretary of State has to administer. Of course, these come from the Congress, and the Secretary of State's in a kind of unique position--

DEAN RUSK: Congress and the President, remember.

SCHOENBAUM: Well, yes.

DEAN RUSK: All right. Go ahead.

SCHOENBAUM: But the Secretary of State's in a unique position because, on the one hand, the Secretary of State is administering statutes that are passed by the Congress. They may be proposed by the administration, but they are passed by the Congress; they are from the legislative branch. And their delegation is from the legislative branch. But on the other hand, the Secretary of State is also, in effect, participating in exercising the constitutional foreign affairs powers of the President. Do you see those as running into each other?

DEAN RUSK: No, because the organic legislation establishing the State Department makes it clear that the Secretary of State is to do just that. That he is to direct the conduct of our foreign relations under the general direction of the President. So there is no particular problem on that. Now bear in mind that many, many questions of legislative and constitutional interpretation come up in the State Department. The legal advisor's office is very busy practicing constitutional law and statutory law, as much as international law. There are often genuine problems that arise. On one occasion President Kennedy asked me to make an expenditure. I forget now what it was for. And we, in the State Department, could not find any appropriation that would seem to authorize such an expenditure. Well, I called the then Attorney General, Robert [Francis] Kennedy, and all he said was that if I went to prison my salary would continue while I was in prison, which wasn't very helpful. But I went back to President Kennedy and said, "I can't make this expenditure because we don't have any appropriations which would enable us to do it." He did not press the matter. The matter was dropped. But, in any event, the Secretary of State and the National Security Advisor are in two very different positions within our system. And that points toward a staff officer in the White House not being injected into the chain of command because he simply does not carry the same kind of responsibility.

RICHARD RUSK: Could I just follow up on one minor point here while we're on the general area? Pop, who wrote your speeches? Yourself? Did you write your own speeches? I know you said you spoke mostly extemporaneously.

DEAN RUSK: There were people in the Department who would send up first drafts. Ernest [K.] Lindley, for example, did a number of first drafts. He was a former newspaperman who was in the Department at my time. The assistant Secretaries would occasionally send up drafts of speeches. Once in a while I would get one from the policy planning staff. But I did a lot of work on them myself before I actually delivered them. So I tried to be sure that they were my speeches when I gave them.

RICHARD RUSK: And when you took a speech, would you read from it on a formal occasion or would you go into that one extemporaneously?

DEAN RUSK: Most of the time I would read from the text. I tried to develop a certain skill in reading, so that I didn't just hunker down over a podium, doing nothing but mumbling while I read a paper. I would try to speak from it.

HILLENBRAND: One thing that you have to remember is that most of the formal speeches of the Secretary of State get published, so they have to be in some sort of definitive form to get published in the Bulletin of the State Department. They very often get published, at least in part, in The New York Times.

DEAN RUSK: During the latter part of my tour there, I would speak extemporaneously more and more.

RICHARD RUSK: Even on important formal occasions?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Although often they would be taped by my own colleagues and then put out in writing.

RICHARD RUSK: I see.

HILLENBRAND: One of the unusual features of the Kennedy administration was that the President's brother, Robert Kennedy, was a member of the cabinet as Attorney General and was used from time to time to carry out activities related to foreign policy. Do you have any thoughts about how this worked out in practice? Did Robert Kennedy cause you any special problems, either at home or abroad?

DEAN RUSK: He was very much interested in foreign policy and liked to take part in various activities. He came to meetings of the National Security Council when they met formally. Of course he was present at cabinet meetings. But he also sat on one or two committees. He used to sit with the 303 committee on CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] activities, for example. He was pretty inexperienced in foreign policy and sometimes came up with rather strange ideas, a number of which I simply had to say "no" to.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall what any of those might have been?

DEAN RUSK: On one occasion he pressed very hard that we organize American businessmen in foreign countries, with a capacity for calling out pro-American demonstrations as an answer to anti-American demonstrations. I thought that was a very poor idea indeed. In the first place, the businessmen would not accept such a role. Their business was business. Secondly, the host countries would not permit them to stay there if they were going to be involved in such activities. So I just put my foot down on that. Well, he pressed it and I spoke to President Kennedy and got a working deal with him. He said, "Well, Bobby's interested in these things, so let him take part. But if you ever have any problems with him, come to see me." So I never let Bobby sort of get in the way on anything that was really serious. He did play a useful role during the Cuban Missile Crisis because we deliberately decided to have him hold certain talks with Ambassador [Anatoly F.] Dobrynin, believing that the Russians, with their sort of conspiratorial view of the world, would pay more attention to something that came from them out of channels from the President's brother than they might if we simply gave the message to them through diplomatic channels.

RICHARD RUSK: Who made that decision, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: I was one of those who recommended it, and President Kennedy acceded to it. Bobby was an able fellow. There is no question about that. One thing that I simply do not know is whether Bobby Kennedy had back-channel relations with the CIA. If he did, then it is entirely possible that people in CIA would suppose automatically that he was speaking for the President. I am quite sure that on a number of things that was not the case. Because he would do things on his own. I simply don't know what Bobby's back-channel relations with the CIA might have been.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you have any suspicions that you want to tell about or is that something you just don't want to say?

RICHARD RUSK: We got into that one off the record, to some extent. Were there any other instances, or any other of Bobby's policy problems, that you remember having to shoot down in addition to this one of organizing people abroad?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I am sure there were others. I would have to think about that. Another thing that muddled my relations with Bobby: When he was Attorney General he was very harsh on a good many personnel problems. In the first place, he wanted loyal Kennedy people in the key spots. I had some difficulties with him on such appointments as [James] Harlan Cleveland, and George [Wildman] Ball, and some others, because he assessed, quite accurately, that they were not dedicated Kennedy people. They were simply ready to perform public service. In my own case, I was serving President Kennedy as the President of the United States. I wasn't serving him as the person, John F. Kennedy. I came to have great admiration and affection for him, but it was an official relationship. Well, Bobby wanted Kennedy loyalists to be in as many places as possible. And also, he did not want personnel problems that might cause irritations with Congress. There were two or three loyalty and security questions where I was quite clear myself that the person checked out okay and should remain at his post or be given a similar post, where

Bobby was all for getting rid of the fellow, and I had some tough fights on some of the personnel matters.

RICHARD RUSK: Would you care to get into names?

DEAN RUSK: No. I wouldn't.

HILLENBRAND: How about some other members of President Kennedy's entourage, such as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Ralph [Anthony] Dungan, who fancied themselves as capable of giving advice to the President on foreign policy issues? Did you have any particular problems with them in recall?

RICHARD RUSK: Martin, could you identify Ralph Dungan?

HILLENBRAND: Ralph Dungan was one of the special assistants to the President. He came from New Jersey. He was the one, you may recall at the last session we had, it was he in whose safe the missing document was locked up when he went off on leave for ten days.

DEAN RUSK: My relations with Ralph Dungan were primarily on personnel matters and presidential appointments: ambassadors, key officials in the Department of State, and things of that sort, because he sort of worked for the President in that field. There were times when we had some differences. There will be times when a President will want to appoint somebody to a post for which a Secretary of State would think he is not qualified. So there will be some wrestling between the two on that matter. But at the end of the day, it is the President who has the constitutional responsibility for making nominations. So when push comes to shove, it is the President's view that will prevail. So Ralph Dungan was involved in a good many of these discussions about appointments.

Arthur Schlesinger was in a curious position. His office was over in the east wing of the White House along with the social secretaries. He was not in the central flow of business from where he sat. But he came up with quite a number of ideas and would come in from time to time. He usually sat along the wall there in the back row of the meetings of the National Security Council and of the cabinet. I think he helped work on speeches. He also read a lot of articles and books and called to John F. Kennedy's attention some things he thought the President might be interested in. He wrote a very strong and sensible letter, to my judgment, opposing the Bay of Pigs. We were not always sure about how talkative he was around town. We had the impression that he liked to talk to newsmen and others around town. I was a little nervous about how secure our conversations were that were held in his presence. Once in a while we would give him a special job. For example, during and after the Bay of Pigs one of his functions was to hold Adlai [Ewing] Stevenson's [III] hand up in New York and try to keep him pacified and on the team. I remember on one occasion when I was with President Kennedy and Arthur came in and made some suggestion about foreign policy, which I thought was a little weird. But after he left the office, Kennedy turned to me and said, "You know, sometimes Arthur is very interesting in the Rose Garden." But he was a kind of in-house intellectual. And Kennedy liked to have that kind of person around him.

Kennedy liked ideas. He liked to chew over ideas. So I think Kennedy felt that Arthur played a useful role. There was one Issue on which he pressed pretty hard. And that is whether the United States should use pressure to press the Italian government on a move to the left in their political system. [G. Frederick] Fred Reinhardt, our Ambassador in Rome, and I felt that the Italians had grown up. They had survived a war. They were rebuilding their own nation. Whether there should be a move, "an opening to the left," I think they called it at that time, was for the Italians to decide. So I stonewalled Arthur on this and left that matter to the Italians. He got pretty insistent about this particular point. But he didn't get his way. Later on the Italians made their move, opening to the left, but not through any pressure from us.

RICHARD RUSK: Schlesinger clobbered you pretty hard in his book as I recall. It seems that it was almost a degree of personal animosity between you two, and perhaps you towards him for his talkative ways and he towards you for your style of doing things. Did you feel that things were really strained?

DEAN RUSK: There were a number of points in his book that he could easily have straightened out, had he been in touch with me in any way, shape, or form in the preparation of the book. For example--

RICHARD RUSK: Did he call you at all?

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall that he did. For example, when I first joined President Kennedy, I told him that I could serve for only one term. In the first place, I didn't know how I was going to finance it for more than that. The pay of the Secretary of State at that time was \$25,000 a year and I had three kids in or headed for college. I knew that about \$100,000 of private savings that I had put aside would be lapped up in four years. Therefore, I would have to go out and look for a job. Well, that was my understanding with Kennedy, but in Schlesinger's book, he tried to indicate that John F. Kennedy was somehow fed up and was going to have another Secretary of State in his second term. Well, hell, that was my arrangement with Kennedy. And I mentioned that to Arthur later. And he said, "Oh, I am sorry. I didn't know that. I would have handled that differently." But there a good many things like that--

SCHOENBAUM: He did apologize to you?

DEAN RUSK: No, he didn't apologize. He said, "Sorry. I didn't know it." I don't know. Sometimes I wonder what John F. Kennedy would have thought had he known that Arthur Schlesinger was sitting back there putting things together for a book the moment they left office. Now Schlesinger's book on Kennedy was a very readable book. But it is not as accurate as Ted Sorensen's book called *Kennedy*. I just make that point for the future historian that Ted Sorensen's book is much more accurate.

HILLENBRAND: Reading Schlesinger's book one would get the impression that he played a much greater personal role in decision making than your description of what he actually did would imply.

DEAN RUSK: That simply means that we are all humans. For example, if you got the sixteen

member of EXCOM [Executive Committee (National Security Council)], each one to write his own account of the Cuban Missile Crisis, you would have sixteen quite different stories because each one saw it from where he lived. And I suppose everybody involved, with the possible exception of President Kennedy, thought that he had had perhaps a larger role in Cuban Missile Crisis than in fact he had.

HILLENBRAND: During both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, did any other members of the cabinet try to get involved in foreign affairs. You have already mentioned Bob McNamara. But did he ever cause you any problems, for example, through his handling of the offset problem with the Germans?

RICHARD RUSK: What would the offset problem have been?

HILLENBRAND: When the United States, and this started in the late Eisenhower administration, found that its balance of payments situation was deteriorating rapidly, the decision was made to ask the Germans to offset some of the expenses of our military presence in Germany.

DEAN RUSK: In foreign exchange terms.

HILLENBRAND: In our currency. Either by purchase of treasury bills or treasury securities or by direct transfers which would benefit our forces there. And this continued for a long time until actually in 1975, when the program was terminated. But McNamara personally identified himself very strongly with this, and made a number of visits to Germany, and was involved directly in the negotiations with the Germans.

DEAN RUSK: Every department and agency of government, almost without exception, finds that in order to carry out its own statutory responsibilities it must go beyond our national frontier. It's not just State, its Defense, and Treasury, and Commerce, and Labor, and Agriculture, and the Social Services, Social Security Administration, and the Veterans Administration: all sorts of people. The Secretary of State has to be aware of the proper interests of all these, other governments and agencies in our relations with foreign countries. That coordination among such departments is a very important part of the State Department's work. There are some people who think that foreign policy is something that is left over after Security, Agriculture, and Treasury, and all these other concerns are taken care of, but that's not true. The State Department has to be aware of and supportive of the obligations of all the other agencies and departments in the government in foreign policy. Sometimes there are people in the State Department who don't fully understand that. Yes, there are times when there were interferences, partly because handling foreign policy matters and making foreign trips is a matter of prestige and standing in many of these other departments and agencies. They love to go off on various trips and get involved in some of these problems with other governments. And one has to watch that. When David [K.E.] Bruce first took over our embassy in London for President Kennedy, he found that there were more officers in our embassy in London than there were in the British Foreign Office. He found also that there were some forty-three different departments and agencies of the United States government represented in his embassy in London. And that only about twenty-three percent of his personnel were from the Department of State.

END OF SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

DEAN RUSK: One important step which President Kennedy took was to write a letter to each one of our ambassadors telling him that the ambassador was in charge of and responsible for the activities of any official Americans in his country, whether on the embassy staff or not; he was the President's alter ego in that country, which is the proper interpretation of an ambassador; and that the ambassador would have access to all communications from anybody working in his embassy or any official activity on the part of the United States back to Washington. Now, some ambassadors exercised that. Perhaps some didn't. But that, for example, gave the ambassador access to the output of the CIA people, back to the CIA back in Washington, for example. That was an important step. Another factor that one must bear in mind is the Secretary of State typically controls communications with foreign governments. If you go through the State Department code room--And there were times when I would simply go ahead, and tell the others around town that I was going ahead, leaving it up to them to appeal the question to the President if they felt like it. Most of the time they wouldn't even try, wouldn't even feel like it. I think in this respect the Secretary is *primus inter pares* [translation: first among equals] as far as communication. On the whole, that worked out pretty well. There were differences within the cabinet on certain things. For example, my dear friend, the late Luther [Hartwell] Hodges who was Secretary of Commerce, was much more negative on trade with eastern Europe than we were in the State Department. He was more of a cold warrior than almost anybody else around town on that subject. We had to wrestle with him on that. I must say that Bob McNamara and I had long talks with each other almost literally every week. And he handled these problems within the Pentagon himself. I didn't have to confront the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for example.

SCHOENBAUM: What was the forum? Did you meet regularly for breakfast?

DEAN RUSK: We would meet on Saturday or Sunday mornings, usually in my office. We would usually meet then because there were not many people around to get in our way or to interrupt us. We would talk out a lot of things, and I found those one-on-one talks with McNamara extraordinarily useful.

RICHARD RUSK: How would you describe your relationship with Bob McNamara? I remember when he left office, your comment was that you had felt like you had lost your very own--

DEAN RUSK: He and I were very close, and I had an extraordinarily high regard for Bob McNamara. He had come into government at a great personal sacrifice. He was a very hard worker. He would be at his desk by 7:00 or 7:30 in the morning and he would work until the night. I think he wore himself out. I think at the time he left he was just bone tired because he had expended so much energy on that job. But he also had a pretty broad view of the world that

was exemplified when he became President of the World Bank. He and I were not in a position of confrontation with each other throughout the business. As a result of our talks, we worked out a common attitude on a lot of things. And there were people in the Defense Department who criticized him for listening to the State Department too much. And there were people in the State Department who criticized me for listening to the Defense Department too much. Well, that's inevitable under the circumstances. The missions of the State Department and the Defense Department are somewhat different. But on the first day we took office, Bob McNamara and I had a talk, one-on-one. I told him that as far as I was concerned, the safety of the American people was a primary object of policy, and therefore I would be interested in how he saw things in the Pentagon. He told me that, as far as he was concerned, the primary purpose of the Defense Department was to support the foreign policy of the United States and he wanted to be as helpful as possible in foreign policy matters. We also agreed at that first meeting to encourage the multiplication of contacts between our two departments at all levels, up and down the line. Back in the days when Louie [Louis Arthur] Johnson was Secretary of Defense and Dean [Gooderham] Acheson was Secretary of State, Louis Johnson insisted that every communication from the State Department to anybody in the Defense Department come over his, Louie Johnson's, desk. That just made things almost impossible.

RICHARD RUSK: What was his position?

DEAN RUSK: Well, he wanted to be sure that there were no worms in the State Department eating in on the Defense Department. He wanted to be in personal charge of these matters as far as the Defense Department was concerned. But Bob McNamara and I felt that if there was frequent communication up and down the line, that we could avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. Now there may be differences of view, based on differences of responsibility. But if each side understood somewhat better the other fellow's problem, then we at least could avoid unnecessary misunderstandings and simply concentrate on those things where the differences were real.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember any specific differences that you had with McNamara and how you ironed them out?

DEAN RUSK: Oddly enough, it would take a lot of time to try to recall some of those. We really worked in harness pretty well.

RICHARD RUSK: (unintelligible)

DEAN RUSK: Now at those Tuesday luncheon sessions with LBJ, there was the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, sometimes the Vice President, the FCIA [Foreign Credit Insurance Association (Export-Import Bank)], the National Security Advisor, and a note taker if the National Security Advisor was not taking the notes. We could debate things out very frankly and debate with the President, because everybody at the table knew that they would not read about it in The Washington Post and The New York Times the next morning. Now, out of those luncheons came presidential decisions. Now, if you had a transcript of those, there Eire only these very sterile minutes that the note takers kept, but if you had a transcript of those discussions I think you'd find some occasions when Bob McNamara and I might have disagreed

on something. But that's not unusual when you're dealing with so many things.

RICHARD RUSK: Should you have disagreed or differed sharply on some things? Some of your critics might suggest that perhaps for the sake of harmony and team play, that you and perhaps others deferred too frequently on policy matters that really should have been sharply--

DEAN RUSK: Deferred to who?

RICHARD RUSK: In your case perhaps to Bob McNamara, to Defense. I know it's been raised in [Warren I.] Cohen's book and some other books. But how would you respond to something like that?

DEAN RUSK: If you talk about Bob McNamara personally you'd find very few instances, and I'd have to really sit down and try to think up some. But if you're talking about staff people in both directions, you'd have differences at the staff level. For example, on the multilateral force, Marty, that is a rather curious little chapter. In 1960, before the Kennedy Administration came to office, the Secretary General of NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], Paul-Henri Spaak and General [Lauris] Norstad, the American NATO commander, raised seriously the question as to the uneasiness of our European allies about having so little part to play in nuclear matters. And they pressed us to take some steps in that direction. Then, I think Secretary Christian [Archibald] Herter, at a December meeting in 1960 of the NATO foreign ministers, proposed that we place a certain amount of submarines under NATO command. Wasn't that it?

HILLENBRAND: Well, actually they were going to be--We would deploy old Victory ships, remember, on the surface, and place missiles, intermediate range missiles, on these Victory ships.

DEAN RUSK: Right. Whatever it was. Well, so when Kennedy and I took office we were aware of this movement in Europe. So we, in effect, said to our European allies, "Well, this is a problem you have raised. You make some proposals; you make some suggestions as to what changes you think might meet your needs." And about a year passed and nothing happened. Then finally some of the foreign ministers told me privately that since we were the ones who had the nuclear weapons, had the know-how and so forth, that we ought to make a proposal of some sort. So we came up with this multilateral nuclear force idea: multi-laterally-manned ships and so forth. And it was to be under NATO command and we conducted some. We had an experimental ship where we had a multinational crew on board and so forth. But as far as Kennedy and I were concerned we put this forward as a "for instance," not simply as an American plan that we were prepared to ram down the throats of our European allies. Well, at the staff level some people got to be great enthusiasts of this proposal and they took it on as a kind of crusade and wanted us to press very hard to get it adopted by the allies. And we were frank in giving what we thought were the advantages of such a proposal, but there was not agreement among the western allies on this, particularly between Britain and Germany. And we knew that we could not get the necessary legislation from Congress that we needed for the MLF [Multilateral Force (NATO)] unless it were clear that the NATO allies were unanimous and very strongly in support of it. But here Britain and Germany could not agree. And so, as far as Kennedy and I, and later Johnson and I, were concerned, we simply let the matter wither on the vine, to the dismay of some of our

own junior colleagues in both the State and Defense Departments.

SCHOENBAUM: And that was an example of an idea that came up from both State and Defense?

DEAN RUSK: That's right.

SCHOENBAUM: Quoted--

DEAN RUSK: And Defense played a very useful role in working out the detailed planning for such a possible force, and that kind of thing.

HILLENBRAND: One of the still obscure segments of history is the episode which certainly contributed to the downfall of the [Ludwig] Erhard government in 1966. You may recall that Erhard went down to Texas to visit the ranch, and he was pressed very hard by President Johnson on the offset agreement that was pending. And Erhard lost so much standing back in his own country as a result of the concessions that the press portrayed him as making--that this was certainly one of the major factors in his downfall and the replacement of the Erhard government by the [Kurt] Kiesinger government. There are a lot of disputes in Germany of what exactly happened at the ranch and what sort of pressures were applied to Chancellor Erhard. Do you recall that?

DEAN RUSK: Remember that when we first put substantial numbers of American forces in NATO in the early fifties, the problem at that time was the dollar gap as seen from Europe. And we were trying to find ways to move dollars to Europe. And, therefore, at that time we did not make arrangements for the offset of the foreign exchange costs that our having forces in Europe would mean to us and the foreign exchange advantages that they would bring to people like the Germans. Then the foreign exchange situation became adverse to us in a rather serious way. At one point, we put restrictions on foreign travel and the amount of goods that Americans traveling abroad could bring back with them customs-free and things of that sort. We were taking some drastic steps to take care of our foreign exchange problem. We thought that it was only fair for the Europeans, where American troops were present, at least to offset the foreign exchange bonus which they were getting simply by the presence of American troops. The budget aspect of it we were prepared to bear, but it seemed to be somewhat unreasonable for us to take a beating on the foreign exchange costs. Why should they get a foreign exchange bonus and we get a foreign exchange deficit in this common effort to have our troops in Europe? So we pressed the Germans particularly very hard on that because that was where most of our forces were. LBJ did press Erhard very hard at the ranch on this matter of offset. I think that Erhard did make some concessions or promised to try to make some concessions that were very troublesome for him in Germany, the details of which I sort of forget at the moment.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you at the--

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I was at the ranch the time of the Erhard visit.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember the discussions?

DEAN RUSK: Yes.

RICHARD RUSK: Was LBJ at his most forceful and vigorous best or worst?

DEAN RUSK: He gave Erhard some of the famous LBJ treatment. The same sort of treatment LBJ tried to put on [Aleksei Nikolayevich] Kosygin at Glassboro [N.J.] about getting started on the ABM [Antiballistic Missile] talks. So he was capable of that when he put his mind to it.

RICHARD RUSK: Can you describe the LBJ treatment? Have we got this on tape?

DEAN RUSK: Let's do that at another occasion. On this offset problem, I will tell you a little story to illustrate it: During the period when we were in real trouble over foreign exchange, a top German--I forget now just which one it was--dropped in to visit with me. We were talking about this problem. He said, "What do you think we Germans can do about it?" I said, "Well, you can repay the grant portions of the [George Catlett] Marshall Plan." You see, there were both grants and loans under the Marshall Plan. They had already paid back the loans. So I said, "You could repay the grant portion of the Marshall Plan." He said, "Well, that's unthinkable!" I said, "When the problem was the other way around, it wasn't unthinkable for us to make the grants. Why should it be unthinkable for you?" He went home and apparently mentioned this in their Reich Bundestag and they treated him like a skunk at the tea party. Many people forget the extraordinary generosity involved in such programs as the Marshall Plan and things of that sort. It's just never, never happened in history. This offset problem was a real one. Our soldiers were spending dollars over there for their personal needs, and we were buying a lot of things in Germany, in dollars, for our troops, and so forth. There was a real foreign exchange drain.

RICHARD RUSK: Martin, did you say that Erhard was personally shaken by the experience of the LBJ treatment at the ranch?

HILLENBRAND: Very definitely. He returned to Germany a shaken man. His political opponents immediately lambasted him and he collapsed. His whole government collapsed shortly after his return. As I say, this is still an obscure historical period because German historians have tried to describe it, but on the basis of inadequate documentation. It's never been adequately described in the United States. It's not a matter of major interest to most Americans.

DEAN RUSK: At some point there may be some notes on those Johnson-Erhard conversations at the ranch in the LBJ papers at the library. They probably are not available yet. LBJ did press him hard because, for us, this was a serious problem. It was a serious problem.

RICHARD RUSK: You don't care to get into what pressing someone hard may have meant, in terms of LBJ?

DEAN RUSK: No, let me do a special note on that sometime--on the LBJ treatment.

HILLENBRAND: One development that some observers of the Washington scene have noted is the progressive erosion over the last ten years or so of the responsibility for international

economic affairs on the part of the State Department. Were you satisfied at your time? This is all after your time actually as Secretary of State. Were you satisfied with the way the Treasury, Commerce, and Agriculture Departments behaved? And were you aware of any attempts on their part to reduce the role of the State Department in the international economic area?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. There was a good deal of bureaucratic pushing and shoving on some of these special fields, like trade, labor, agriculture, and things of that sort. The Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, and Labor have always wanted their own independent foreign service. They wanted to be in charge of their men who would serve as commercial attaches or labor attaches and things of that sort. At the State Department, we felt the State Department's responsibility was for our foreign relations as a whole, and that these special parts of it could not be separated out without damage. So we had some controversy over that.

But during my period we did succeed in keeping the commercial attaches as a part of the State Department, commercial service as a part of the State Department. After all, since Benjamin Franklin first went abroad to represent the American colonies, the promotional American trade has been a primary object of diplomacy. Since then the commercial function has been taken out of the State Department and pretty much placed in the Commerce Department. One disadvantage of that, from the point of view of trade, is that when something like that happens the State Department people tend to forget it; that's Commerce's business. So you don't have your ambassadors and your top embassy personnel feeling a sense of responsibility for trade matters. They leave that to Commerce. And I think there is a loss there. But that's an ongoing problem. We probably will have more of it in the future. So long as the State Department is completely aware of what is being done, what is being said, to other governments with an opportunity to put in its nickel's worth if it wants to, no great damage is done. But to me, it's an unfortunate development to divide up responsibility for our representation abroad among different departments of government. I think that ought to be State Department. And the American ambassador ought to be in sole charge in the foreign country over all official activities of the United States. We even have a staff from the Social Security Administration in our embassy in Rome. They are supposed to check on social security recipients all over Europe, to see whether they were dead or not. And we have a Veterans Administration staff over there somewhere, paying pensions to veterans who are now in Europe. All sorts of things going on.

RICHARD RUSK: See, the revisionists and historians make great bones over what they call the hardball efforts of American business abroad in the internal affairs of all these countries to keep conditions favorable to American business. What you are saying here is that may have been more possible, due to the fact that the Department of State really couldn't exercise tight, firm control over the entire department influence abroad. Although you say that it was only after you left that trade matters went over to Commerce. Is that right?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. That's right.

HILLENBRAND: It happened under Cyrus [Roberts] Vance, actually.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, right.

HILLENBRAND: The Carter administration.

DEAN RUSK: The American businessmen abroad, on the whole, do a very good job. But there are times when they overreach, as they do in this country. And that sometimes causes problems for the State Department and our relations with other countries. I established an attitude that a few businessmen didn't like. If there was a concession contract with another country by one of our business companies and somehow the other country didn't perform on that concession contract, or a new government came in and simply denounced, it or something of that sort, the businessmen would simply come to the State Department and ask us to bail them out in that situation. Well, we would look at the situation and if, in our judgment, the contract itself was corrupt, we would not support it. I took the view that we would support diplomatically only those types of contracts which would be consistent with the public policy of the United States here at home. So there were times when a few of these businessmen got left out on a limb because their contracts were just corrupt.

SCHOENBAUM: Would there be records of that? And how would we find records in the State Department? That would be interesting to investigate.

RICHARD RUSK: This is an interesting area.

DEAN RUSK: It may be some day when the all the papers are opened up, you may find something of this. But I couldn't now put you on a trail of a specific document that you could ask for under the Freedom of Information Act.

RICHARD RUSK: Gee, that's a good area, worth looking into. Do you remember having to call businessmen in? Go ahead, Pop, let that thing roll. Do you remember ever having to call individual businessmen in and say, "Hey!"?

DEAN RUSK: I wouldn't have to call them. They would usually be there first. (laughter)

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: Do you want that thing turned off?

HILLENBRAND: I think your father wanted it turned off.

[break in recording]

HILLENBRAND: I have only one other question. Apart from rivalries within the executive department, there is also the question of relations with the Hill, on which you had to appear many, many times. Do you have any thoughts about problems of relations with the Congress which could be described as intra-governmental rivalries?

DEAN RUSK: I mentioned on another tape that Chief Justice Earl Warren--Come in Loch--visited this law school here, and on that occasion pointed out that if each branch of the federal government were to pursue its own constitutional power to the end of the trail, our system simply

could not function. It would freeze up like an engine without oil; impasse is the overhanging threat to our constitutional system.

RICHARD RUSK: Incidentally, we did a tape on my dad and congressional relations and it went on for two or three hours. There was a lot of material on that aspect.

HILLENBRAND: Maybe this question is superfluous--

RICHARD RUSK: Maybe that question's been covered on another tape.

DEAN RUSK: It's useless for people in the executive branch to fret unduly about the necessity for working as much as they have to with Congress. The Congress has enormous powers bearing upon our foreign relations. I don't know whether I am repeating myself, but the Congress itself is not well organized to handle foreign relations questions. Almost literally every committee of Congress, almost without exception, gets involved in foreign relations.

SCHOENBAUM: We've covered that, the Congress relations.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, you mentioned the fact that David Bruce reported forty-three different agencies alone in his embassy in England, Britain. In a situation like that, just how sure were you that you were in control of American foreign policy in Britain? It must have been difficult.

DEAN RUSK: If things moved off the track, then we would hear about it immediately from the British. David Bruce began to cut down on the size, the variety of personnel in his embassy. For example, I think my memory is correct on this, during that period we found that there were seven assistant military attaches in our embassy in London whose sole responsibility was to give logistic support to the dozen service Rhodes scholars at Oxford. Hell, I'd been a Rhodes scholar and nobody gave me any logistic support. So a telephone call to McNamara and that particular thing was ended. Over time there just tends to be a steady growth of bureaucracy and one has to go back and look at it from time to time to bring it within reason. I am not sure I commented in the earlier tape on the business of senators and congressmen traveling abroad. I personally was in favor of senators and congressman seeing some of the rest of the world; see how the rest of the world looks, and sounds, and smells, and acts: the difference between what happens on the ground and these pieces of papers that senators and congressmen see in Washington. There are times when these visits can complicate matters, depending upon the discretion and behavior of senators and congressmen. We usually have each year a few incidents arising out of some lack of judgment or good sense on the part of one of these visitors. And then when they visit abroad, they want to see the head man in each country. Well, that's a real problem because these people are busy. Our President doesn't see every visiting legislator who comes into this country from another country: can't possibly do it. Yet, these senators and congressmen get pretty insistent about that. So there were times when the State Department would go through the form of requesting an appointment, but making it clear, that if it was not convenient, it would be all right. There were other times that we knew how to put it in such a way that we ourselves were strongly recommending that the visiting group be seen.

END OF SIDE 2

Richard B. Powell
Library for Political Research and Studies