

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

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Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas J. Schoenbaum

circa 1985

RICHARD RUSK: Warren [I.] Cohen, in his book, made the statement that you were involved with every major foreign policy issue of the 1950s both due to your close personal friendship with John Foster Dulles and as part of the many advisory boards that you served with. Will the record show that your influence was indeed substantial upon Dulles, perhaps upon the [Dwight David] Eisenhower administration?

DEAN RUSK: No, not really. That is a great exaggeration. I saw Mr. Dulles occasionally, but I was not consulted regularly. Perhaps the most significant thing I did involving foreign policy during that period was to participate in the Rockefeller brothers' study on the future of America which ran for about two or three years.

RICHARD RUSK: Prospects for America?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. And I was pretty active in that, but that was done wholly by the five Rockefeller brothers. But we had a very good group and we met regularly and went over the drafts of those statements. Then I participated pretty actively during the 1950s in discussion groups at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Whether any of that trickled back in policy, I don't know. There was one occasion--if I have discussed this before stop me when I was in close touch with Dulles on possible change in our China policy.

RICHARD RUSK: Right, we have that. You say Dulles asked for your advice on seven or eight different matters. China was one. Do you recall what the others might have been?

DEAN RUSK: Well, soon after the beginning of the Eisenhower administration, he told me privately that he had wanted me to be his Under Secretary of State. But he decided that it would not be appropriate in a Republican administration and he would not want to try to move me away from the [John Davison] Rockefeller Foundation where I had a very good job and was enjoying life.

But you see, it is rather odd; but I am one of the few people who was a close friend of both Dean [Gooderham] Acheson and John Foster Dulles, even though they themselves did not like each other at all. I sometimes wondered whether each one of them thought that it was just a sign of a lack of character on my part. But it came about in a very natural way. President Truman had asked John Foster Dulles to negotiate the Japanese Peace Treaty. And Truman brushed aside the stacks and stacks of materials that had been prepared in the government about what should go into the Japanese Peace Treaty and gave John Foster Dulles a two-page letter outlining the kind of peace treaty that Truman wanted. And he said to Dulles, "Now you go off and you negotiate this kind of treaty." My job was to backstop Dulles in the Department of State for those negotiations. And part of that job was to fend off all the bureaucrats who came running in to

insist this, that, or the other point needed to be in the Japanese Peace Treaty, because Truman wanted a very simple, short treaty of reconciliation. And so I was a kind of blocking back for Dulles in the bureaucracy there during those negotiations. Then when we went to the Japanese Peace Conference in San Francisco, Dean Acheson, as the host foreign minister, was automatically the chairman of that conference. But John Foster Dulles was the floor leader of the U.S. delegation. So they had to work very closely and intimately together during that process and indeed throughout the period of the Japanese Peace Treaty. And I was very much a part of that close cooperation between Acheson and Dulles on that whole subject.

SCHOENBAUM: May I ask, sir, did you prepare the two-page letter that Truman sent to Dulles?

DEAN RUSK: I had a hand in it. I did not write the whole thing. It was the kind of letter that Dean Acheson saw first.

SCHOENBAUM: Who prepared it?

DEAN RUSK: Well, it was a group matter. Maybe Clark [McAdams] Clifford in the White House had a hand in it before it was all over.

SCHOENBAUM: Does that letter still exist?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, it is in the public materials.

RICHARD RUSK: How much of that Rockefeller panel report, "Prospects of America," did you write?

DEAN RUSK: I didn't actually do the drafting. We had staff people like Henry [Alfred] Kissinger and others to do the work as far as the writing was concerned.

RICHARD RUSK: Cohen called that thing "vintage Dean Rusk." He said a lot of it read like the types of things you were advocating.

DEAN RUSK: Well, we had a lot of discussion, but I didn't write a word of it.

RICHARD RUSK: There were lots of distinguished fellows in that group.

DEAN RUSK: We reviewed drafts and made suggestions about drafts, but we didn't do the writing.

RICHARD RUSK: You were in agreement with the majority of the conclusions?

DEAN RUSK: Broadly speaking. There were a number of details which you couldn't get any group to agree on completely.

RICHARD RUSK: I have a question about George [Catlett] Marshall. You talk of him as if he were a great teacher and a great influence upon you. He taught you several lessons about foreign affairs and how to conduct yourself. What about Dean Acheson and Foster Dulles, both of whom you worked with? What kind of lessons did you draw from your experiences with those two?

DEAN RUSK: Marshall, Acheson, and Dulles were three very different people. They had almost nothing in common except that all three became Secretary of State. Dean Acheson was a fellow with fine intelligence. He didn't suffer fools gladly. He became impatient, sometimes contemptuous, of people who just were stupid. And that got in his way when he was testifying before Congress, because you run into a lot of stupid reactions when you testify in Congress: people who are simply uninformed, or that sort of thing. He tended to irritate people in Congress occasionally. Lyndon [Baines] Johnson used to play out a little act of Dean Acheson appearing before a committee of Congress. He'd come in there, tall with his bristly mustache and his impeccable clothing and look around the room as though he smelled a dead dog. LBJ was uproarious in describing Dean Acheson before a congressional committee.

But despite all that Dean Acheson got most of his legislation through Congress. But he was an interesting and sympathetic colleague with whom to work. Personally, he was very kind to his colleagues. But he had an almost tunnel-vision in the sense that he looked at the world in North Atlantic terms: relations between the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. He really didn't care much about all the little people around the world: the blacks, the browns, and the yellows. They were almost beneath his interest.

Although George Marshall had had a rather comprehensive view of the world, Dean Acheson was heavily focused on the North Atlantic relationship. And he did a great job in that and the Marshall Plan, NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], and all that sort of thing. He would occasionally strike a pose. I mean, he liked to put on a little of the dramatic occasionally. That was best illustrated by the background of his famous remark about Alger Hiss. Alger Hiss' case was in the courts and some of us were briefing Dean Acheson just prior to one of his press conferences, and all of us briefed him to stay out of that. It was a matter before the courts; he shouldn't mix up his job as Secretary of State with whatever reaction he might have toward the Alger Hiss case. In our meeting he seemed to accept that briefing. But then when he got in his private elevator and went down on his elevator all by himself to the news conference, he apparently changed his mind. And so he came up with that reference to the Bible and that famous comment that, "I will not turn my back on Alger Hiss." Well now, as Alice [Stanley] Acheson reminded us afterwards, he was not a close friend of Alger Hiss. He was pretty good friend of Donald Hiss, Alger's brother, who was a member of Dean Acheson's own law firm. But it seemed to me that that was an instance where he just decided to strike a pose. And then the sky fell in on us because that just invited McCarthyism and all that kind of thing, and there was a good deal of dumping on the Department as a result of that comment. I still think that, as Secretary of State, he should not have commented on a case which was then before the courts. But he did.

RICHARD RUSK: When John [Fitzgerald] Kennedy was elected, he apparently was determined to avoid a Dean Acheson presence in his administration. George [Frost] Kennan and Kennedy discussed that. What was he referring to there?

DEAN RUSK: We didn't discuss Dean Acheson very much, if at all, in that first meeting I had with Kennedy about various names to be Secretary of State. I had the impression that Kennedy felt that he was the first President born in the twentieth century. This was a new generation, a new start, and he did not want to bring back someone like an Acheson. But he saw Dean Acheson from time to time while Kennedy was President. But I just don't know. I know that when I suggested the name of Adlai [Ewing] Stevenson [III] to be Secretary of State, Kennedy immediately backed away from that. I think that was partly because he did not like the way Stevenson had acted during the 1960 convention out in California. He was off again/on again and playing around with maybe being nominated again, and from Kennedy's point of view, probably was just a nuisance. We talked about [James William] Bill Fulbright as Secretary of State. But Kennedy was very much concerned about the fact that Fulbright had signed that Southern Manifesto on Civil Rights. I told Kennedy that if Bill Fulbright no longer had to be elected as a senator from Arkansas, that his native liberalism would come forward, and that if Kennedy put known liberals like Adlai Stevenson and Chester [Bliss] Bowles around a Fulbright that that would probably cause no trouble. Now, I still don't know whether Kennedy might have talked this over with Fulbright. It is possible that Fulbright turned it down. I don't know.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you think Kennedy might have been referring to the fact that perhaps Harry Truman had only one advisor on foreign affairs, according to some of these historians? That advisor was Dean Acheson, and the vast majority of all the advice on foreign policy that Truman got came from Dean Acheson.

DEAN RUSK: No, that's not strictly true because Truman had his own advisors on the Palestine issue, for example, sitting right over there in the White House: he own personal liaison to the Jewish groups in this country. Truman used to call in Dean Acheson and others of us who were working on the issue to be discussed, and Truman would want to hear from each one of us in that sort of a situation. But it is true that he had great confidence in Dean Acheson, partly because of a known personal loyalty between the two. During the campaign of 1948, for example, Truman would go off on one of these train rides on a political tour and he would come back to Washington and Dean Acheson would be the only person at the railroad station to welcome him back. And Dean Acheson was not even in the government at that time. Everybody just assumed that Harry Truman was dead politically and paid him no attention, even when he was President. Truman did not have the same regard for the Olympian quality of a George Marshall in his attitude toward Dean Acheson. He liked him, he trusted him, he delegated extensively to him, but Truman was really persuaded that George Marshall was the greatest living American and Acheson never quite attained that stature in his relations with Truman.

Acheson had a lively sense of humor and sometimes we had to watch that with him. When he was presiding at the Japanese Peace Conference in San Francisco he would sit up there in the chair, and while all these speakers were making their long speeches he would sit there and write very naughty limericks about the other delegates. So we had to rush up to the podium at the end of each session to make sure that we collected them all so none of them would leak out because it would have been devastating had some of those limericks leaked.

SCHOENBAUM: I wanted to focus in on a period of the transition from the time you were named by Kennedy in that Palm Springs press conference, as Secretary of State, through the day of the inauguration. Most people could not conceive of that tremendous responsibility being thrust upon a person. And most people, I think, would be very interested in the human reaction that you had in suddenly finding yourself in that position even before you assumed office: how you prepared yourself, what your hopes were, what your thoughts were, etc. You said that you can't train yourself to be Secretary of State. Obviously that is the case. But what did you do? Who did you talk to? Did you seek out advice? Did you organize an agenda? Did you hold intensive discussions and commission briefing papers like they do nowadays?

DEAN RUSK: Let me go back one step. I was in New York at the time of the election in 1952. And on the day that Eisenhower announced that he would ask John Foster Dulles to become Secretary of State, Dulles telephoned me and asked me to come over to see him there in New York and I did. Now, although everybody had supposed that Dulles would become the next Republican Secretary of State, I found Dulles to be a very shaken man at the prospect. He told me then that he would have much preferred to be in a staff position in the White House "making foreign policy" than to be administering the Department of State and handling all the relationships we had with so many governments in all parts of the world. In my talk with Kennedy in West Palm Beach, I told him that I would have to leave to him the responsibility for deciding whether or not I was qualified for the job, that I could not make that judgment because I am not sure that anybody is qualified for the job. But, it was a formidable prospect to think about.

I had seen enough of the Department of State over the years, beginning with Cordell Hull, to know something about what was involved in being Secretary of State. Indeed, I lost fifteen pounds in the first ten days after that announcement. But there were a lot of things that had to be done. As far as our family was concerned, we had children in school in Scarsdale and we had the prospect of having to move to Washington and all that kind of thing. But as far as the official transition was concerned, the sitting Secretary of State, Christian [Archibald] Herter, could not have been more helpful. He provided an office for me there in the State Department with staff which he allowed me to select, and he saw that the daily flow of cables came across my desk. I had access to anyone in the Department I wanted to talk to. I spent a lot of time talking to the chiefs of the various bureaus about their problems and what were coming up, and that kind of thing. The transition from any technical point of view could not have been smoother.

Now, Kennedy and I did decide that we would not create any confusion about who was President until Inauguration Day. And so, he and I would not comment on policy matters that were up for decision before the outgoing Eisenhower administration. One prime example: [Fidel Ruiz] Castro had, after a series of backs and forths, finally got to the point about three days before inauguration of telling us that our embassy in Havana would be restricted to something like twelve people. Well, that just made Eisenhower mad, and he decided that he wasn't going to have relations on that basis; and he decided to break relations with Castro. Well, they asked me if Kennedy or I would wish to comment on that point and we declined to comment.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you hold some discussions though about that? Did they not ask you informally, because obviously you were going to be--

DEAN RUSK: They would give us the chance to comment, but Kennedy and I were very rigorous about trying not to comment and not to confuse the element of responsibility.

RICHARD RUSK: Were there any other major decisions that were made during this transition before you actually became responsible for policy?

SCHOENBAUM: When did you learn, for instance, about the Bay of Pigs?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I was not briefed on the Bay of Pigs until after we took office. I was told by one officer there was something about Cuba that I ought to learn about as soon as we took office. But I was not briefed on that ahead of time. Another thing, when there is a President-elect and Secretary of State-designate, representatives of other governments, ambassadors around Washington, are very keen to talk with those incoming people at as early a stage as 10 possible in order to try to advise their government about what kind of administration the new administration would be. We tried not to do that. I think it is possible that I might have talked with the British ambassador during that period. But we just didn't want to share any of the responsibility before we were, in fact, responsible. So we fended off efforts by foreign governments to establish contact with us before inauguration.

SCHOENBAUM: Putting yourself back at that stage, did you formulate in your own mind some goals? For instance, I'm going to be Secretary of State. Now what am I going to focus on? I am going to focus on number one, Test Ban Treaty. Did you have some things, pet projects so to speak, that you thought were more important, your priorities?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I had some basic orientations that I brought into the office with me. Kennedy and I discussed some of those at West Palm Beach. For example, I was a very strong supporter of a strong United Nations. I was deeply dedicated to NATO. I thought we ought to make a real effort to establish normal and friendly relations with the third world countries that we ought to try to find points of agreement with the Soviet Union where we could even though there were fundamental differences between us: a number of those things. I don't think you could sum it up in a few words because I was well aware of the fact that the conduct of foreign policy is a mass affair. Three thousand cables a day go out of that Department. And the rest of the world is not going to squeeze itself into oversimplified summations of policy cooked up here in this country whether by officials or professors.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you think about how you were going to divide your time? Obviously no one person can keep track of three thousand cables a day. Did you make up in your mind what you would concentrate on as opposed to--

DEAN RUSK: I had learned from George Marshall the necessity and importance of delegation: to try to get people around you in whom you had complete confidence and then to delegate to them and give them as free a hand as possible. Now, there were times when Kennedy himself would, in effect, interfere with that process of delegation by injecting himself into matters which seemed to me were not of presidential importance. He might read the morning newspaper at home and at 7:30 in the morning pick up the phone and call some desk officer of the Department

about something he had seen on page twelve of the morning newspaper. When he did that, two things happened: One is, he scared the hell out of that desk officer. And secondly, ~tat ever that subject was, it had to come to my desk because whatever the President was personally involved with, I had to become involved with. That sometimes interfered with my ability to delegate downward to the assistant secretaries and to others to let them handle these things.

But, I also had no political constituency of my own. I never expected that I would be Secretary of State, so I did not have any team of individuals around me to bring into the Department of State. So basically, my constituency was the Foreign Service. First, we were very fortunate in having at that period some extraordinarily able and experienced people to call upon for help. I mean there was a man like George (Wildman) Ball; there were people like Llewellyn Thompson [Jr.] and Charles [Eustis] Bohlen on Russians affairs; there was Martin [Joseph] Hillenbrand. So I drew very extensively on those people. In the economic field there was [Anthony Morton] Tony Solomon who we brought in to be Assistant Secretary of Economic Affairs. He is now president of the Federal Reserve Bank in New York which is a very important position. So, we had a group of people there carrying responsibility that, in effect, made it easy for me to delegate and a source of very good advice.

SCHOENBAUM: Were they already there, though?

DEAN RUSK: No. We brought people like that in. The Foreign Service officers were already there.

SCHOENBAUM: But how did you go about it? Did you call these people and say, "How would you like to be Under Secretary of State?"

DEAN Rusk: Yes. You would have to clear that with the President because the key positions in the State Department are presidential appointments: the assistant secretaries for example. But, on the whole, he let me name my own people. I had a little problem with [Robert Francis] Bobby Kennedy on certain appointments because Bobby wanted to get dedicated Kennedy people into those jobs. But some of these people in the foreign policy field had no personal attachment to John F. Kennedy and certainly had no family attachment to the Kennedys as a family, and so there were a few cases where I had to wrestle with Bobby Kennedy over certain appointments. But in the key cases, I managed to prevail.

RICHARD RUSK: He had a little trouble rehabilitating some of the old China hands that you wanted to do because of the opposition of Robert Kennedy and his concerns about those appointments.

DEAN RUSK: Well, there were certain ones who had been victimized during that McCarthyism debate. For example, [W.] Walton Butterworth, a fine career officer had been wounded in that business and it seemed unlikely that he was going to be given a job that required Senate confirmation. But I got him sent as Ambassador to Sweden, got him confirmed. In the case of John [Paton] Davies [Jr.], which was one of my bitter experiences: I had served with John Davies under General [Joseph W.] Stilwell during World War II and knew him and his lovely wife Pat [Patricia Grady Davies] very well. I had testified before the State Department Board that

considered his case. And when I became Secretary of State I thought that one thing I really ought to do was to straighten that whole thing out. But when I moved to do it I was told by the law officers of the government, including Bobby Kennedy, that since I had testified on his behalf, I had to disqualify myself in dealing with it as an executive matter. So I had to leave that to George Ball and others. And they finally got the whole thing reviewed by a former federal judge and we got that case straightened out, but it took years. They simply felt that it was not appropriate for me just to sign a piece of paper and do it, as I wanted to do, because I had been a witness in John Davies' behalf. There was never any doubt in my mind about John Davies' loyalty and security. Indeed, in the board hearings he had a complete defense which he himself would not use because the information which would have fully explained why he did one or two things that he did was itself top secret. And he just decided, in effect, to hell with it, and would not use his own best defense.

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DEAN RUSK: I think I probably ought to say too that there are some people who seem to think that had it not been for McCarthyism and that kind of thing that each one of these old China hands would have wound up as ambassador to the Court of Saint James. Well, certain ones of them had simply limits on their abilities. They would not have gone to the very top in any event simply because of certain limitations. But that was a pretty disgraceful experience. Now, I do not believe myself that that period of McCarthyism stifled the Foreign Service. The word seemed to be out that Foreign Service officers became afraid to report accurately and with integrity their own views about things. Well, I did not find that to be the case, because if you look at the Foreign Service officers who have risen to the top in the Service throughout all this period, you will find that they were the ones who expressed themselves forcefully and honestly and freely in putting their views before their superiors.

SCHOENBAUM: Can we come back to the Kennedy Inauguration itself? Do you remember what you did that day, well immediately before? You were on the podium, and you listened to the speech--

SCHOENBAUM: You were on the podium and I was sitting there in the audience shivering away. That was a bitter cold January day.

DEAN RUSK: That was a very cold day. There were about twelve inches of snow on the ground. And Virginia and I had to get back down, in long evening dress for her and white tie and tails for me, and we had to go to each one of the Presidential balls. There were about six of them; and we slushed around town putting in an appearance at each one of those balls. It was a very hectic period. Actually, the Cabinet was not sworn in on Inauguration Day because those names could only go to the Senate after Kennedy took the oath of office. It required unanimous consent of the Senate to waive their rules to vote on them on that afternoon; and Senator Wayne [Lyman]

Morse, for some impish reason of his own, refused unanimous consent. And so, under the Senate rules those names had to lie over until the next day. So, we were confirmed on the twenty-first and took the oath of office. The entire Cabinet took the oath of office all together over in the White House.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you hold any meetings with Eisenhower or Eisenhower's people other than that one where he talked about Laos? Were you given any more advice?

DEAN RUSK: I had a talk almost every day with Christian Herter, the then-Secretary of State, and we exchanged a lot of views. But just as we did not want to accept any partial responsibilities before Inauguration Day, we did not want to share any responsibilities after Inauguration Day. So we didn't ask them for guidance after they left office. Now, Chris Herter very quickly became the President's special representative on trade matters: a very gallant thing for him to do, because he was severely crippled by arthritis and every move he made was pained. But with great courage he took on that job and did a beautiful job with it with the assistance of [Werner Michael] Mike Blumenthal who later became Secretary of Treasury.

Top personnel were largely a matter of continuity in the State Department. There was much more continuity than change because of my regard for the top people in the Foreign Service.

SCHOENBAUM: You personally had quite a transition to undergo in the process of moving from your advisory roles in the Department to the number one position. Your job at the Rockefeller Foundation was really the only prior experience you had with major administrative responsibilities. What was that transition like for you? Did being the number one man there make life more difficult for you?

DEAN RUSK: I do think that one thing in the background of any individual who takes on one of those jobs is the experience of making decisions and living with the results. There are some people who simply can't come to a conclusion at the moment that a decision is required. Well, I had been in the army where I had to make decisions and live with the results, where no excuses were tolerated; you lived with what you did. During the Truman administration, Truman delegated massively to George Marshall and he in turn delegated massively to me on United Nations affairs. So I had substantial responsibility there. Rockefeller Foundation was an experience in decision making. So I had been accustomed to the business of making decisions, even though, since Providence has not given us the ability to pierce the fog of the future with accuracy, you knew that many of your decisions were in the conditional mood: hopefully, perhaps, maybe, if things go well. Because you have to deal with it as you can. Also, the factor of time is important in decisions because as far as the United States is concerned, with its momentum, its strength, its wealth and things of that sort, not to make a decision is to make one. Now, very often doing nothing is the right decision, but it is important that if that is the case that you do that on purpose and not through neglect, delay, refusal to make up your mind and things of that sort. So I had a certain amount of experience in what some people call the "decision making process."

RICHARD RUSK: Was there any part of going to the number one job, any aspect of that job, that was especially difficult for you or that you had special trouble with?

DEAN RUSK: I knew that there were certain parts of it that were more important than people usually think. For example, there is very little that a President can do in foreign policy without the necessary support from Congress because many things you do in foreign policy involve legislation or appropriations or both. From the very beginning I spent a lot of time with Congress, with the congressional committees and with individual senators and congressmen and congressional breakfast clubs and things like that. That was one aspect of it.

Then, I took seriously my responsibility with the State Department's budget. And before I would go down to meet the appropriations subcommittees of the Congress, I would normally hold my own budget hearings inside the Department of State with the different parts of the Department so that I had the feeling that I knew where every dollar was. Now this had some dividends, because if you follow every dollar in a large organization, you very often will uncover waste or things you never knew about. But I felt that since those subcommittees, in going to the floor of the House or the Senate, had to know where every dollar was because they might be asked questions about it from any direction, that I at least ought to have that same information under my skin. Once in a while I would get very impatient with some of my colleagues. Because after I had testified to open up these budget hearings then that would be followed by hearings with each one of my assistant secretaries. Once in a while one of my assistant secretary colleagues would go down there without knowing what was in his own budget. I was very impatient with that and gave one or two of them a bit of lecturing on that. But the administration of twenty-five thousand people is not a simple matter. Now that included local employees of foreign embassies abroad, that twenty-five thousand, but nevertheless it is a considerable number. I have seen a good many people come into Washington, typically from big business, who are going to show the bureaucracy; they are going to cut out the red tape; they are going to bash heads. Well the cemeteries are full of such people. The way to deal with the bureaucracy is to capture it and make it work for you. That was my approach to the Foreign Service. Loyalty is a two-way street: You'll get loyalty if you give loyalty. And so, I tried to operate on that basis and I think that was understood by key members of the Foreign Service who understood my approach.

Now I did wrestle with the White House staff quite a bit, once in a while directly with the President, about ambassadorial appointments. I must say that I was surprised when I became Secretary to see how few applications for ambassadorial posts come through the political process. The political people really don't want the big embassies because they have to work too hard. And they don't want the embassies in these far-away, dangerous places where dysentery is the common order of the day. So the political people tend to want to go to Ireland, Switzerland, Denmark, Jamaica, or that sort of place. But even there the applications were very few. I only knew one person, for example, who wanted to be our ambassador in London who did not get the job. Of course, we had David [K. E.] Bruce there, and nobody could lay a glove on David Bruce. He was absolutely superb. But sometimes a President will have a problem on his hands, patronage in character, and so he will take the initiative on occasion to invite one or another of these people to go off somewhere as ambassador. Well at any given time about seventy percent of our ambassadorial posts are held by career Foreign Service officers. Then another ten to fifteen percent of them are held by what might be called "professional people" who are not strictly political in character: people like a [Edwin Oldfather] Reischauer in Tokyo, a Lincoln Gordon in Brazil, David Bruce in London, who are not political in any sense of the word but who

are not, strictly speaking, career Foreign Service officers. Then there would be another ten or fifteen percent who would be just plain old-fashioned political in character, and there you usually pick up a few dogs. When I would wrestle with the President on something like this and lose the fight, then what you would try to do would be to surround that person with highly competent professional officers to carry the work of the embassy and to keep that ambassador from making too many mistakes. We really don't need ambassadors who have had no experience in negotiating anything with any foreigner, who have never made any decisions of a diplomatic character, who have had no experience in the trade, who don't know how to write a diplomatic note. But I suppose you have to leave a President a little wiggle room on that because he has his own problems. Sometimes these problems that a President has will arise on Capitol Hill. Some senator will press him very hard to name old Joe somebody to a particular post, and the President, in trying to keep his lines with Congress in good shape, will occasionally have to act on something like that. I remember once that the Foreign Minister of Ireland said to me rather wistfully one day, "Mr. Rusk, do you think that the United States can ever send us an ambassador with whom we can talk foreign policy?" Poor Ireland, I think, never gets a career foreign service officer as an ambassador. They are very rare.

SCHOENBAUM: So, in this transition period, were you talking mainly to Secretary Herter more than to the officials in the administration, the team, or whatever?

DEAN RUSK: Well, there were briefing teams that came into existence during the campaign, and task forces on this, that, and the other. And they produced all sorts of papers. But actually, after inauguration we didn't pay a great deal of attention to those things because those people were not really carrying responsibility. I don't know whether I have put this on tape, but to me there is an enormous difference between the world of opinion and the world of decision. As I have said elsewhere--You got that? You see, when you actually face a decision, there are almost always dozens and dozens of secondary and tertiary questions locked up in that issue, that problem.

SCHOENBAUM: At that time, what decisions did you think you would immediately be faced with, and what did you prepare for? Laos would have to be one I suppose.

DEAN RUSK: Laos was very much a part of it. It came to be that the Bay of Pigs was very much there. You know the rest of the world doesn't change just because we elect one man rather than another as President. And so the flow of business is already in midstream in many, many things, and you just pick up and take a look at it and see whether any changes of direction are indicated or whether you simply get on with the world's work. You see, this was still a period when foreign policy was largely bipartisan in character.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you call Dean Acheson for advice? Or did you call John Foster Dulles?

DEAN RUSK: Dulles had died.

SCHOENBAUM: He had died. That's right. Did you call Dean Acheson?

DEAN RUSK: I don't think I called Dean Acheson because I didn't want to leave any impression that I was crying on his shoulder. I kept in touch with him and we invited him to a good many things. And I would call on him occasionally to talk things over with him.

SCHOENBAUM: Before you took office, did you discuss with anybody what you were going to be doing?

DEAN RUSK: I chiefly talked to senior officers of the Department of State. Now, I had known a lot of these people and known a lot of the people who were in on the swim through those many discussion groups at the Council on Foreign Relations that I sat in on. But you see, I didn't come into this business as a complete stranger. I had been heavily involved in it already in one way or another. When I was at the Rockefeller Foundation, in any given year we had relations with some sixty or seventy countries somewhere in the world for one purpose or another. And I had traveled extensively during my days at the Rockefeller Foundation, so I wasn't a stranger to the flow of business.

RICHARD RUSK: You were probably as well prepared for that job as anyone we have had if you look over the last dozen people.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think in terms of his previous experience Foster Dulles had had a lot of experience in the field. Dean Acheson had been in the administration before he became Secretary. He had been Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations at one stage.

SCHOENBAUM: Robert [Abercrombie] Lovett, what was he doing then?

DEAN RUSK: Robert Lovett was George Marshall's Under Secretary of State, and he was in every sense the alter ego of the Secretary of State. We knew that if Marshall was inaccessible we could go to Lovett and get a decision from him. Then he became, briefly, Secretary of Defense under Harry Truman. And during the war he had been Assistant Secretary of War for Air. And so he was a great fellow. As a matter of fact, in my first conversation with Kennedy, I raised with him the possibility of asking Lovett to take this job. But he said that Lovett had ulcers and was ill and just couldn't consider any public service.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you talk to Lovett at that time?

DEAN RUSK: No. Some writers have somehow left the impression that I sought the office. I think Warren Cohen said I "finally made it." Well, the truth is that I didn't seek it at all. I didn't ask a single living person to put in a word for me or write a letter about me or anything like that. I wasn't looking for it. I already had one of the best jobs in the United States there at the Rockefeller Foundation and was very happy at it. Kennedy never told me and I never asked him why he turned to me. Later, rumor had it that people like Robert Lovett and Dean Acheson had strongly recommended me to him. In any event, that is just one of those things. I just don't know what was crucial in his mind.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you feel it necessary to have an alter ego? Did you have an alter ego? Someone who could make decisions?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I wanted one. Chester Bowles, whom I had recommended initially to be Under Secretary of State, was a dear kind of fellow. His glands all moved in the right direction and he was a very decent kind of individual. But he had certain limitations that did not let him survive on that job too long. In the first place, he wouldn't come to decisions. The business of the Department would pile up on his desk and the assistant secretaries couldn't get any action out of him. Then, he had a rather strong prejudice, I think, against the professional Foreign Service. Then at certain moments of crisis, he did not close ranks with President Kennedy: the Bay of Pigs for example--

RICHARD RUSK: Were there other instances other than the Bay of Pigs?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I don't know. Chester Bowles wanted to be Secretary of State at the beginning. I knew that; he knew it; he knew I knew it. But I tried not to let that get in the way of our working relationship.

RICHARD RUSK: He also didn't have much interest or talent for administration, and that was his job, administration.

DEAN RUSK: He was supposed to keep the business of the department flowing. But the business would stack up on his desk because he was a man of ideas, constantly looking for new ideas, people with new ideas, and the day's business tended to suffer. He became rather bitter about his experiences with the Kennedy administration, but some of it he brought upon himself. After Chester Bowles, I had George Ball as my Under Secretary and he was a genuine alter ego.

RICHARD RUSK: He was the Robert Lovett of your own experience?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, yes. When I would go away on a foreign trip somewhere, I went away in complete confidence in leaving the business of the Department in his hands and he was a great Under Secretary.

SCHOENBAUM: There is an interesting aspect of your relationship with George Ball. He, in his memoirs, says that you encouraged his different approaches on certain policy matters, Vietnam being one. And no one could really understand why you were encouraging him to play the devil's advocate or, as he claims, he did more than that and you always spoke in favor of--

DEAN RUSK: Well, a President should be exposed to all sides of a problem and George Ball had the courage to put the other side with great ability. He earned the affection and respect of his two Presidents and his Secretary of State by the skill with which he did that. And I encouraged him to speak his piece and not hold back because, although we all had a duty to support a decision made by a President, before the decision is made a President ought to have the widest range of different points of view put to him. And George Ball played that very effectively.

Now there is locked up there a little question to which I do not have the answer. George Ball was the only senior officer in government that I can remember who came out and said, "I don't like what we are doing in Vietnam." I don't remember any other officer of the Department of State

coming into my office and digging his heels into the rug and saying, "Mr. Secretary, I don't like it." I can think of two or three instances where people resigned and later attributed it to Vietnam, but while they were in office, they didn't peep. And I would see these fellows three or four times a week privately and they were always at the morning staff meetings. The same thing applied to the Cabinet.

RICHARD RUSK: With [Robert Strange] Bob McNamara?

DEAN RUSK: Well no. Bob and I spent a lot of time together and so far as I knew we were working in the same direction. In Cabinet meetings Lyndon Johnson would have McNamara and me report briefly on Vietnam and he would go right around the table to each Cabinet officer: "Do you have questions? Do you have any comments?" And they all sat silent. Now, why? Here was [William] Ramsey Clark, the Attorney General, who as soon as he left office went all the way to Hanoi. But when he was Attorney General he wouldn't lean eight inches to his left to whisper in the ear of the Secretary of State, "I don't like what you are doing." Now, I have written a good many letters to people, friends, trying to get some answers as to why people will not act like men while they are in office and really come out with what they really think. But the more I have gotten into it, the more complex the answer becomes.

RICHARD RUSK: What were some of the answers or possible reasons that you came up with?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think part of it was a sense that this was not their direct responsibility, that their responsibilities lay in other directions: the main business of their respective departments or within the department their particular bureaus. And they would not inject themselves into something which was not their primary responsibility. That's one element. Now, there may have been a few cases where they did not want to run the risk of angering the President. To me, that is not a good reason. It might be that some of them felt they simply had not been deeply enough involved in the problem to understand it fully and they had not given enough thought to it. I don't know. There are reasons which range from good reasons to rather contemptuous reasons.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you and LBJ both make a conscious effort to draw these folks out and yourselves being receptive to dissenting views?

DEAN RUSK: Well, on one occasion LBJ suggested that I have about three of my cabinet colleagues to lunch to talk over Vietnam because he sort of sensed that they probably had misgivings about it. And I did. We talked about it. But there were no fireworks at that luncheon and no eye-gouging kind of discussion or debate.

By the way, President Kennedy suggested to me that the Cabinet have periodic lunches rotating among the different departments without him so that the members of the Cabinet would have frank and full discussion and develop a sense of cabinet cohesion. When he suggested that to me, I asked him if he wanted to put that in writing because when Secretary [Robert] Lansing called a cabinet meeting without [Thomas Woodrow] Wilson's approval, Wilson fired him. But we had a number of those. We would take turns about being host to our cabinet colleagues in our different departments, and I thought those were useful.

RICHARD RUSK: Now that wasn't a problem with Kennedy's administration, I gather. There was almost an excess of conflicting opinions and advice. It was more a problem with the Johnson administration. Is that a correct summary?

DEAN RUSK: You mean that uniformity of attitude?

RICHARD RUSK: Yes, and not sticking up for your beliefs at times when it was really crucial. Did you find that same dynamic involved during the Cuban Missile crisis?

DEAN RUSK: There was somewhat more freewheeling discussion in the Kennedy administration because Kennedy himself was a fellow who liked to chew the fat, and he would talk to people at Hyannis Port and at West Palm Beach, in the Rose Garden and places like that. He was always looking out for ideas. Arthur [Meier] Schlesinger [Jr.] was sort of his in-house intellectual who was supposed to keep touch with what was being written, books and articles and things like that, and calling those to Kennedy's attention. But there were times when people would be somewhat misled when Kennedy would just be chewing the fat and looking for ideas--

END OF SIDE 2

