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Lucius Durham Battle interviewed by Richard Rusk
1985

RICHARD RUSK: I'm talking this rooming with Mr. Lucius Battle, long-time friend and colleague of Dean Rusk. Let's see, you were Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs or Executive Secretary?

BATTLE: Yes. That was the first involvement with your father in the sixties period. We'd known each other for a long time, as you said. I guess I first knew him when he was Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization affairs. That was what it was called at that point. It was the area of the Department dealing with U.N. [United Nations]. And then, I was special assistant to Dean [Gooderham] Acheson, who was Secretary of State, and I came in contact a great deal with Dean Rusk at that period. We were frequently in touch with each other for a lot of reasons. One is I married in that period, and I remember discussing with him getting an apartment which was no mean feat at that point. The housing shortage was very, very acute. I remember we got an apartment at Park Fairfax, which was in a sought after, new cheap housing accommodation, and a lot of young married people lived out there. And I remember he--It was sort of a joke, because everyone was trying to get in there, partly because it was cheap and partly because there was (unintelligible). And I remember he said, "Well, why don't you try to come to exclusive Park Fairfax?" And then he laughed. And, not that he had anything to do with it, but I did manage to get an apartment there and lived there for a year or so. During that period we drove back and forth to the Department of State together frequently, and frequently drove home together. But more than that, I came into contact with him regularly during my period with Dean Acheson, and I was extremely close to Dean Acheson. And Dean Rusk was one of the central figures in the Department of State at that time. And, in fact, I remember saying during that period that there are only two or three of the senior staff that I think have any possibility of ever handling this whole Department. One was Philip [Carl] Jessup, the other was Dean Rusk, and the other was Paul [Henry] Nitze. And those were the only three that I could see who could be Secretary of State. And they were really, in many ways, the closest of the people around: Rusk less in the beginning, but as we got increasingly into things like the Korean War, into the problem of China, and so on. And after he moved to become Assistant Secretary for the Far East, he was frequently involved in meetings and conferences and whatever. And he and I, on a couple of occasions, went out to see the Secretary in the evening at his Georgetown--

RICHARD RUSK: Secretary Acheson?

BATTLE: Acheson, yeah. And I remember going out there with him the night before the famous Press Club speech, which, as you know, caused a great deal of--

RICHARD RUSK: This is my dad's comment about the Slavic Manchukuo?

BATTLE: Yes. Right.

RICHARD RUSK: He was out there the evening before?

BATTLE: We went out there that evening. We had tried a number of drafts, and my recollection is that Whit [W. Walton] Butterworth and Dean Rusk and I--and Marshall [Darrow] Shulman might have been there, I don't recall whether he had joined us by that time or not. He was a speechwriter. And we tried innumerable drafts on that speech and none of them seemed to come across very well. The speech was the following day at lunch time. And after spending an evening trying to reword this thing, Acheson said, "This isn't working, fellows." He said, "I'm going to do this from my own notes, and I shall do it without text," which was pretty risky business on a matter of this sort. So, he then turned to me and he said, "I won't be in in the morning. I will stay here and work here. You can call me or send out anything that has to be dealt with." And so I didn't see him that morning, and neither did anybody else as far as I remember. He made the speech, and the speech included the famous statement about perimeter.

RICHARD RUSK: This was Acheson's speech?

BATTLE: This was Acheson's speech.

RICHARD RUSK: Okay, I was referring to my dad's speech.

BATTLE: No, this was Acheson's speech. And this became the speech that really plagued him and still is brought up as an--although it was unwise to make a speech of this sort without anything. He just had an outline. But he had ground into him all the content of the several drafts that we had been through. And I remember calling Walt Butterworth. While those speeches were never off the record, you didn't necessarily have to release a text. And the question came up as to whether we should release a text. Walt Butterworth was still Assistant Secretary for Far East, and Dean Rusk was in the process of taking his place, as I remember it. And I remember we were under great pressure to get the text out. And there, of course, was no text so it had to be typed up from the transcript, the taping. And I felt we had some liberty to play with it, and I called Walt Butterworth to see whether he felt that there was any--I may have called Dean Rusk, too, I don't remember. But I remember nobody saw anything wrong with it at the time. Walt Butterworth said that he felt we were a little optimistic about the holding out of some of the provinces in the north. I don't remember what provinces, but there was something in the speech about the likelihood of Chiang Kai-shek's groups holding out in those provinces. He said he felt we were a bit optimistic about that, but that was a matter of opinion and was not necessarily bad to state it that way, and he thought the speech was all right. Nobody made any reference to what became the controversial aspect of it, which was whether we had drawn a line through the area saying that we would go to war here and wouldn't go to war there. And oddly enough, the Korean War came later. Dean Rusk lived with the results of all this for a long time. But at any rate, the speech was well-received, although the China lobby was really at work at that point. And then when the Korean War began, it was initially a very popular war. Everybody thought it was great. John Foster Dulles, I remember said to me, we've made the U.N. a living, vital thing. There was a lot of support. The President did not ask for a joint resolution of Congress in support of it. He did not do that for the simple reason he felt it weakened the power of the Presidency. He said, in effect, "We are there, we have done it. I do not wish, by an action on the Congress to imply that

it is necessary--" The President has to have the right to protect the security of the other country. And that became a very important point.

RICHARD RUSK: Didn't he receive the assurances of congressional leaders that this policy was in accord with their wishes?

BATTLE: Absolutely. Absolutely. And it was only when things began to go sour, did anybody object. And then, there were questions of whether the authority existed to enter the war in the first place. Secondly, whether we had brought about the war by the speech, the perimeter speech that Dean Acheson had made or--

[break in recording]

BATTLE: And it was only after things began to go bad that anybody had paid any attention to that particular part of the speech. Absolutely nobody. It really had received a minimum of attention in the press at the time, that part of it. The speech received a lot of attention, but on different points. And the Secretary, Acheson, said to me--Too many deans, too many secretaries here--Acheson said to me, "Let's get that speech and see what we said." And so then we pull out the speech and it said, in effect, "This is an area where we will go to war immediately in defense of our obligations and interests. There is an area where we would go to the U.N." And he said, "Well isn't that just what we did?" Well, that was true, but it was a slight distortion. I mean, we went in first, and then we went to the U.N. So, I think an argument can be made as to whether that really was--But the statement with respect to the perimeter was very similar to a statement Douglas MacArthur had made just a short while before and the statement that others had made. So it wasn't really as earth shaking--It became a political earth shaker, but in terms of policy, it was not as startling a thing--

RICHARD RUSK: In the hindsight of thirty years, does it seem new, in retrospect, that the Soviets and the North Koreans did indeed see that as a signal?

BATTLE: I don't think we really know. I think they may have taken it along with other factors as one element. I don't know that we'll ever know whether that was the--but I'm sure it was a factor because I don't think they would have gone in there had they really been convinced there was going to be an immediate response by us.

RICHARD RUSK: Was it a point listed in your various drafts that you brought to Secretary Acheson?

BATTLE: I don't think so.

RICHARD RUSK: It was not?

BATTLE: That's my recollection; that it was not. But, I have never gone back and rechecked those drafts. We probably discussed it. But I don't remember that we made a point of saying it. But, that was the beginning, the Korean War. And your father played an enormously important role in that decision, which I still think was the right decision, and the Korean War went on. As I

said, it was a very popular war initially. As long as it was success everybody thought it was great. Once it began to be doubtful, then it became a very unpopular one.

RICHARD RUSK: You say you knew Dean Acheson quite well. Do you know enough about him to comment on the Acheson-Rusk relationship, particularly Dean Acheson's feelings about my dad back in those days?

BATTLE: Yes. Dean Acheson was extremely fond of your father, He liked him and enjoyed working with him, had no problem at all. And the rapport was really quite good between them, better than it was later, I thought. And, in fact, Acheson had a large hand in suggesting the appointment of Dean Rusk as Secretary of State. I was very much in that. I knew all about it at the time. I was in touch regularly with Acheson.

RICHARD RUSK: In 1960?

BATTLE: Yeah. He called me. We'd left the Department, but Acheson and I had a relationship that went on throughout his lifetime.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he feel you out, or did anyone with Kennedy's staff feel you out on my dad's appointment?

BATTLE: No, I don't recall that anybody--He did.

RICHARD RUSK: He did?

BATTLE: Acheson and I discussed it.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall what you might have said?

BATTLE: No. Well, my recollection is that I referred to what I said a moment ago, that at the time of the sixties period that I felt that the three people who appeared to be qualified to be Secretary of State were the three that I mentioned, and that I certainly thought Dean Rusk was an admirable choice and I was delighted with the appointment when it was made. So, there was no particular--let me get back to one point on the Korean War: one that has troubled me all these years. I think this is in a couple of the books. I've told this story to people.

RICHARD RUSK: Incidentally, I don't see you down for any books yourself.

BATTLE: I'm not going to write any books. I have done oral histories for all the libraries. In fact, I've done a couple for some of them. But that's another story. But there is only one incident do I remember having--well, I was with Dean Acheson so constantly. I traveled with him; I shared a suite with him. At moments we got on each other's nerves in spite of being very good friends and continuing to be so throughout his life. And this is all written in his book, *Present at the Creation*. There's a great deal about me in there, in which he describes our--I mention this because of the background about a story I'm about to give you. At the time of the Inchon landing, Douglas MacArthur's ability to pull that one off was doubted by a lot of people. The military,

Joint Chiefs, everybody was worried about that. The situation had not gone terribly well.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall my father's views on that?

BATTLE: I don't remember your father's views on that particular part of it, but I will in a moment come to--Dean Acheson and I went up to New York for the U.N. meeting and perhaps other meetings. I've forgotten whether that was the year that NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] met. I think it was the year NATO met there, in 1950. But we would stay up there for several weeks at a time. In the beginning, usually two weeks. And he and I shared a suite at the Waldorf during that period. I had been with him constantly, at every meal and sharing a suite with him, for two weeks. And there were times we got sick of each other, and we began to have little problems. But the Inchon landing, as you know, had gone beautifully. And the press were all saying, "Why doesn't MacArthur cross the 38th parallel, which we had never accepted as the definitive boundary between North and South Korea. And Dean Rusk was in Washington and brought up to Acheson a telegram that had been cleared by the Joint Chiefs and was brought to New York for Secretary Acheson to see before it went to President Truman. This was an orderly way of doing business. That administration was more orderly than a lot of others that we had later. But, as was usual practice, if people had telegrams and things of that sort they would hand them to me. Somebody was in with Dean Acheson, so I read the telegram very carefully. And I objected strongly to one portion of it. And that portion, in effect, left to MacArthur how far he went and what he did. And, I remember taking it in with Rusk, as I always did, handing it to Acheson. And he read it. And I said there's one point in here that troubles me, and that is the point that leaves entirely to the judgment of General MacArthur what he does if he crosses the parallel. In effect, the telegram said, "Make your decision on the basis of military requirements, and go as you see fit." I said, "This is terribly dangerous. Do you really want to leave to that man--" I had been on the receiving end of his telegrams for many years in World War II and throughout the period I was with Acheson. I didn't trust him at all. I felt he was a--well, you know all of his weaknesses, his flamboyance. I felt this was a very dangerous situation. Acheson turned on me. He was already cross as hell with me. He said, "How old are you?" And I said, "I'm thirty." He said, "Are you really, at thirty years old, willing to interject your judgment as opposed to that of the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff?" I said, "Yes. I think they're wrong."

RICHARD RUSK: Is that right? Good for you!

BATTLE: Well, it was the big mistake of the war.

RICHARD RUSK: You felt that strongly about it?

BATTLE: Oh, I felt that strongly. But what I regret was I didn't fight harder. Now, I don't recall your father taking any part in this exchange. He may or may not remember it at this point.

RICHARD RUSK: But did you consult with him on that point?

BATTLE: No. Well, we didn't have time. I mean, he brought the telegram in to my office and we waited in till Acheson--

RICHARD RUSK: Was he aware of the potential?

BATTLE: Well, I don't know whether he was or not. But he brought the telegram up and had worked with the Joint Chiefs. And I understand the whole problem. The political pressure at that point was enormous. The Inchon landing had been an incredible success, nobody wanted to challenge what MacArthur thought about anything. And so the tendency to deal with this, we'd looked as though we were moving toward a quick and easy victory: not so easy, but apparently a speedy one. And I can see the arguments to the contrary, but I just had a very deep-seated concern about that, and I've regretted it all these years. And, I remember going to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Korean War at the Truman Library. I don't think your father came to that. I don't know why he wasn't there. But, there was Matt [Matthew] Ridgway, and Clark [McAdams] Clifford, and [William] Averell Harriman, and a group of us, and then a lot of journalists. It was a large audience. And I got the text of this telegram which is in Present at the Creation.

RICHARD RUSK: Was Acheson still alive at that time?

BATTLE: Yes.

RICHARD RUSK: He was there?

BATTLE: No, he wasn't there. Well now, wait a minute. Was he still alive in '75? No, he was not alive; he was dead. He died about '72. And if it was, it must have been '75. It was the 25th anniversary. And I had the volume that had the telegram in there. And I remember Averell was making the great--I felt that the decision on entering Korea was absolutely right; I had no problem with it. I did have a problem with that telegram at the time, and I had a worse problem with it as I thought back on it. It's plagued me all these years. And each of us made presentations and comments. Everyone was praising the decision of Harry Truman. I had no problem with that. The Truman Library sponsored it. It was downtown, it wasn't out at the library, it was in a hotel. But everyone was praising the action and the whole thing. I had no problem with any of the praise, although I said I did not feel that the instructions we had given to MacArthur were clear. I said I felt that they had been deficient in a number of respects. And Averell, who has a slight tendency to rewrite history anyway, more than a slight tendency--Don't put that in anything you write (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: Have you known anyone who does not have that tendency?

BATTLE: Well, I try to be honest about these things. I think the tendency as we get older to see everything with the perfections of twenty-twenty hindsight is a dangerous force. But I said what I just said to you, except perhaps not in quite as strong words, that I felt this had been a big mistake. And then Averell spoke up and he said those instructions were perfectly clear, they were perfectly all right, and he exceeded them. And I said, "Averell, that is not true. And I have the document here, if you want me to read it." And he pounded the table, "Don't pay any attention to documents, Luke, pay attention to me!" Now, I don't know, they published the record of that meeting, but I think that was taken out. I could be wrong. Somewhere there's a book at the Truman library--

RICHARD RUSK: Well, that thing should be part of the public record somewhere.

BATTLE: It may be there. But at any rate, you look back and you look at those errors, but that's the one that I found most difficult. Most difficult. And, I think Acheson acknowledges in his own way, in his book, that this was one of the mistakes of the period. Well, at any rate, enough on the Korean war.

[break in recording]

BATTLE: Well, the next real involvement where I ran into your father was between the end of the Truman--Well, actually between the time he left, because he left before the end of the Truman era to be president of the Rockefeller Foundation.

[break in recording]

BATTLE: Yes, I think the question of his involvement; he was the one who wanted John Foster Dulles to work on the Japanese peace treaty with him. I don't quite agree with your father's recollection on how Dulles got in the Department, because there were some negotiations with Dulles that I got involved with before the issue of his becoming head of the Japanese peace treaty negotiations. I mean, your father has said a couple of times, or it's been said in books that he said that Dulles came in to do the Japanese peace treaty. That's what Dulles said later, but it wasn't true. He had already been negotiating with us to come in, and before the issue of the Japanese peace treaty came along. And I had insisted to Acheson that if we were going to have him in the building, we had to treat him like an equal. He had to be involved, see all the telegrams, be involved in various issues. So the question of limiting it to the Japanese peace treaty, which Dulles wished to do--you see, I didn't like Dulles as well as your father liked Dulles. I had much less regard for him than your father did. But, I was all for getting him into the Department of State, and I was a prime mover and shaker on it before the Japanese peace treaty issue ever came up.

RICHARD RUSK: On what grounds did you not care for John Foster Dulles?

BATTLE: Well, that's a long story. That'll take me an hour. I found him a distrustful and doubtful man, and I just--

RICHARD RUSK: Did it bother you that my dad could have the--

BATTLE: Well, at that point, I didn't--I became distrustful of him as time went on more than in the beginning. I mean, the more I dealt with him the less I felt. I just did not believe he was completely honest. And, for example, at the time of the entry into Korea, he had nothing whatever to do with that. He was in Japan at the time it occurred. But he came back and, as I said, I think, a moment ago, he told me he thought we'd made the U.N. a living, vital thing. And I said, "I was delighted to hear you say that." He said similar things at the airport when he arrived. And then when things went sour, after December 1950, he began to say that he had nothing to do with the decision. Absolutely true. And then, two, he would never have done it. And three, he would have maybe authorized air cover, but nothing more than that. So, his position changed.

And this is what really began to turn me on him; because his position changed and what he said earlier was not what he said later. And he moved awfully fast with whatever seemed to be the times. And I found that rather bad. And there were other issues. Then he wanted to get out of the government because he wanted to run for public office or--not to run for public office--he wanted to be the main foreign policy supporter. He had run for the Senate and been defeated. But, he wanted to get out with as little Democratic marks upon him as possible. But back to the question of bipartisanship: I think Dean Rusk was very right in his assessment that we had to try to keep a bipartisan foreign policy. And his desire to have Dulles work with him on the peace treaty had a great deal to do with a bipartisan approach to it. And he got along fairly well with Dulles. There were a lot of times that I thought Dulles misled people, some of the other countries involved in the ANZUS [Asia-New Zealand-United States] and other treaty negotiations. But that's another story.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall any southeast Asian involvements of my dad that maybe would have quite a bearing? Did you work with him on the colonialism problems in southeast Asia, French Indochina?

BATTLE: Well, I used to sit in meetings with Dean Acheson, and we would talk about these issues. But I did not work with your father on any of these things directly. I mean, I was in the Secretary's office and I would come in contact with him.

RICHARD RUSK: You weren't aware of his thinking.

BATTLE: Only as expressed in the presence of the Secretary or in meetings that we held. Maybe I chatted with him, I don't remember.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember my dad, in the presence of Dean Acheson, rethinking or chewing over the roots of our involvements in southeast Asia, the problems presented by colonialism, the earlier French occupation of Indochina, Franklin [Delano] Roosevelt's wishes in 1943 that the Americans ought to assist those former colonial peoples to find their own independence? Were these issues ever chewed over at the beginnings of our commitment there?

BATTLE: Yes they were, in the sense that we were constantly--I remember the March 9, 1949 agreements with the French called for certain advances in the direction that would have given them some of the arrangements that we had hoped for. And I remember we were objecting strongly to the French failing to carry out those agreements and that Premier, and it was all part of the whole thing. This came up in a number of contexts. Yes, I mean but this general philosophy was pretty much government policy at that point. I don't remember Dean Rusk being distinguished from the others in his attitude. I guess that's what I would say. There was a deep concern about southeast Asia at that point. There was deep concern about its future. There was a real worry about the degree to which the French were handling their problem adequately. There was all of that. But it was not as central an issue as China was. And that which became the issue--China and the Korean war became the two big issues that involved the Secretary, and therefore involved me because I was simply an adjunct to the Secretary; I was not an independent figure in myself.

RICHARD RUSK: Incidentally, you commented briefly on Acheson's attitudes toward my father back in that period. Dean Acheson later recommended my dad's appointment to John Kennedy. And I understand that he became somewhat critical of my dad's performance in the sixties.

BATTLE: He did.

RICHARD RUSK: I asked William Bundy this question, if he could comment a little greater length knowing Dean Acheson. He said it was an unfair question because he was his father-in-law, and Dean Acheson tended to be a very critical man in any case. But, could you cast a little more light?

BATTLE: Well, it's an unfair question to me too, in a way, because I was very close to Acheson over all those years. I was not his son-in-law. Yes, he was critical. He was extremely critical. He was critical, but I don't recall that he ever did anything publicly, did he?

RICHARD RUSK: I've only seen a brief reference to it in a book of some of his statements and anecdotes, in fact, that he was a little bit critical of what he called the lack of leadership that my father exhibited.

BATTLE: Well, your father and Dean had rather different views on how to run the Department of State. And both points of view are reasonable and defensible, but the fundamental difference was that Acheson felt that he was supposed to run the Department of State and to be responsible for the performances and actions of the assistant secretaries and the deputy secretary. Under Secretary was in those days.

RICHARD RUSK: You served as executive secretary for both. And I think this would be an important point to pursue.

BATTLE: Well, there was a difference. Dean Rusk considered himself the foreign policy adviser to the President, period. And Acheson considered himself that, but he considered himself responsible for running the Department. Now it was different periods of history. The Department was a good deal easier to run in Acheson's day than it was in Rusk's day. The problems were smaller, the organizational structure was different. And the criticisms that first emerged from Acheson that I remember had to do--

[break in recording]

BATTLE: The big difference, as I said, was the difference in what each conceived the role of Secretary of State to be. And I won't try to argue which was right and which was wrong. But that started problems. And then there were difficulties on substantive issues of one kind or another. And as time went on, Acheson got increasingly difficult for a lot of reasons. He became something of an old curmudgeon, and he began to attack Rusk privately on various issues. Of course, the big issue at the time was Vietnam. And Acheson was a--as we used to describe people, carelessly and generally, as hawks or doves. He was clearly a hawk throughout the worst, the earlier period of it, but then he switched to be a dove. His son-in-law, Bill Bundy, was

Assistant Secretary for Far East. I never knew Dean to attack Bill in any way. But he did reach the conclusion that we had made a gigantic mistake and that--

RICHARD RUSK: You are talking about Dean Acheson?

BATTLE: Yes, Dean Acheson. I'm sorry.

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BATTLE: --at my house at a dinner party we gave, with Stu [William Stuart] Symington, and Townsend [Walter] Hoopes and various others present. And it became, as was common in those days--This is Dean Acheson, now. There was almost another war in my dining room. And--

RICHARD RUSK: There were a lot of wars in a lot of dining rooms.

BATTLE: There were. And at that point Acheson was attacking Stu Symington because he had become a dove, and Acheson was still a hawk. About two weeks later, three weeks later, I went over to Johnson's Flower Center. I had an old station wagon at that point, and I was backing out. I had been buying something for the garden. There was a rap on the window of my car, and it was Acheson. I was already in motion. And he said, "I was going to call you." He said, "I think you ought to know I've just told the President we've got to get out of Vietnam." And I said, "My God, Dean," and I turned the motor off. And he said, "I've told him that I think he's been misled by the military and that the--" And I had been over at the White House a great deal on Middle East matters, but I had heard these briefings. This is very prevalent in the [William Childs] Westmoreland case. I have serious doubts that General Westmoreland ever deliberately distorted anything. But, I do think that a rather rosy glow was put on the whole Vietnam War by Whit Rostow and the briefers every time I went over there. And I felt I should--I had serious doubt about it then, although I did nothing about it. I was not involved. I had my own Arab-Israeli wars, and whatever, to worry about, and I wasn't taking on anybody else's. I had my own. But at any rate, that's a comment more on the Westmoreland case, I suppose, than anything else. But at any rate, I don't remember the discussions with Acheson--

RICHARD RUSK: Between Acheson and my father.

BATTLE: --after that. I just don't know anything about them. And I was beginning to have troubles with Acheson on other issues. Acheson, as I said, was getting more and more difficult. He was moving farther and farther to the right politically. He was trying to startle people. And so, although our friendship lasted until his death, thank God, I ceased to get into substantive issues with him because he got so damn difficult. And so I really don't know what he said or did after that. Bill Bundy was his son-in-law and still Assistant Secretary, still carrying out policy loyally. I continued to see Mary [Acheson Bundy] and Bill Bundy regularly. We would go over

there a great deal. But when we saw each other we did not talk about these things. He and I were living all day long with our respective--I was an Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asia, and Bill was Assistant Secretary for Far East and that was enough.

RICHARD RUSK: Of course, Dean Acheson could have been a great resource person for my father, but I presume the tension in their relationship made it impossible for my dad to rely on Dean Acheson or consult with him more than superficially, is that correct?

BATTLE: In the beginning I think there was a tendency on the part of Dean Rusk to ask Dean Acheson, to have him come in to talk with him. He was over there a great deal on review on NATO. He did a lot of things, Acheson did. Acheson had trouble keeping his hands off of things, and he tended also--you talk about his criticism of your father. He was very critical of the President, Kennedy.

RICHARD RUSK: Bill Bundy said he was a very critical man.

BATTLE: He was a critical man. He was not an easy person; he was not an easy taskmaster. And you had to be careful with him.

RICHARD RUSK: Dean Acheson recommended my father for that job and later became very critical of his performance as Secretary. What did he fail to see? What did he fail to appreciate in my dad in the Truman years that made a difference in his view, resulting in a less than satisfactory performance as Secretary? I could ask the same question of you if you are at all critical of various aspects of my dad's job as Secretary.

BATTLE: Well, I try not to speak for Dean Acheson. I feel that he had his own audience. I've said more than I usually say now, because I felt that he wrote and said what he wanted to say. And let's stand on that. I think that your father had a few problems, and they are in large measure personality differences between him and Acheson. I don't mean with each other, but differences in personalities as applied to the Department of State. Acheson tended to trust all those around him to tell him--he would tell me everything that went on in the building. I knew everything that went on in the building. Your father was more reticent. He tended to be more withdrawn within himself.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he have that same reticence in the fifties?

RICHARD RUSK: Although, Liwy [Livingston Tallmadge] Merchant told me once he had trouble. He was Deputy to your father. He said, "You know, the only problem I have with him is that I never know what he's doing." I didn't pay any attention to it at that time, but as I look back, this became a problem. Because you never knew what went on like Acheson, who would tell me immediately when he got back from an appointment with the President, precisely what the president said, and I made a memorandum of what he told me. It was all in the file. And we never had any problem with it at all; Truman knew it. Now, it was a different White House, it was a different crowd of people.

RICHARD RUSK: Any other specific differences in the styles of operation that affected your

job as Executive Secretary?

BATTLE: Well, I would have said that, in terms of substance, they were relatively similar. I didn't have exactly the same job with Dean Rusk that I had with Dean Acheson, although it was close. We started the Executive Secretary job, as it became that, when I came into it. I was the first one with that title. Up until then, when I'd been there before, I was just Special Assistant to the Secretary. And Executive Secretary position had been the director of the Executive Secretary, which was not dissimilar, but there was a slight broadening of the whole thing when I took the job. And I was there for about a year, and I was with Acheson four years. So there was a different period of time. But your father was an enormously courageous man, and he had a marvelous sense of humility about him that I always found rather rewarding, you know? And he also did not wish to hurt anybody, unlike Acheson who would tear you apart at the slightest drop of a hat. Rusk rarely lost his temper, he rarely berated others, and he rarely was destructive. But again that's part of the problem of communication, if you see what I mean. With Acheson, you knew. You may not like it, but you knew precisely and immediately what his attitude was. With Dean Rusk there was more of a tendency to be gentle and kind and at times not to make it clear. So, those things were elements. Those were differences in individual personalities as applied to the ruining of a very large department in a very different time and with a very different White House. And I think the differences in the White House in the Acheson--I remember two conversations that I think have some very direct bearing on that. When I first started to work for Dean Acheson, I got a call from the White House: General [Woodrow Wilson] Vaughn. Well, I hadn't talked to the White House very much in my life. I had worked over there a little bit on speeches for President Truman who was going to Canada. And I worked with Clark Clifford on the preparation of a speech for the President to make in Canada because I was on the Canadian desk in the Department of State. But, I had had relatively little contact with the White House. And General Vaughn was a famous crony of the President's. And he called me on the telephone and he said, "There's a paper coming up from the Department from the Secretary and it makes one recommendation. And I don't approve of that recommendation, and I hope you will see that he does the reverse." Well, the paper came. It was the first time that had ever happened to me. And I took it in to Acheson and I said, "I've had this call from General Vaughn and he said so-and-so." And he said, "What do you think, Luke?" I said, "I think the Department is right and General Vaughn is wrong. On the other hand, I understand the White House." He said, "Don't ever again tell me what anybody at the White House thinks with the exception of the President." He said, "It is of no relevance at all. And he said, "Don't even talk with them on the telephone if you don't want to." He said, "If you have any problem with them, speak with me and we'll talk to the President about it." Now that was early '49, March, April. The first day I came back to Washington to take the same, similar job with your father was the first of March 1961. The administration had been operable for about six weeks. And he said, "Luke, will you please, for God's sake try to get that White House under control?" He said, "They're all over this Department, all over it: in and out of it in every way, shape, and form."

RICHARD RUSK: This is my dad speaking?

BATTLE: This is your father--

[break in recording]

BATTLE: So there were White House staff difficulties and they were enormous. It was entirely different than it had been in the Acheson era. This seems to me to be an important--I made this point to Dean Acheson, and he recognized this. He said, "Well, Dean Rusk should be able to take care of it. He just should speak to the President about it." Well, that was easier said with Acheson and Truman.

RICHARD RUSK: As a matter of fact, John Kennedy asked Dean Acheson at one point, "What's the matter with the State Department?" Acheson told him, "You are."

BATTLE: Well, that was good.

RICHARD RUSK: But I don't think my dad probably ever said that to John Kennedy. He wouldn't have seen it as part of his role. Yeah, I've read all the literature on that.

BATTLE: Well, it was a real problem.

RICHARD RUSK: It complicated all of your lives.

BATTLE: It did indeed. And I had known Mac [McGeorge] Bundy. And when I came in we began to get the thing under control to some extent: the flow of paper, at least. I think we got it under pretty well control. We had two paper channels to the White House. One was Battle-Bundy, and the other was the Secretary to the President. And those were supposed to be the only two channels going over there. Now what you never could stop were the telephone calls and the little meetings and the little poking around.

RICHARD RUSK: And there was quite a bit of that?

BATTLE: There was a lot of that.

RICHARD RUSK: Did any stories or anecdotes come out of that staff interplay?

BATTLE: Well you knew, I have a tendency to forget names of people I don't like. And I can't think of that dreadful man who fiddled around with South American policy.

RICHARD RUSK: Richard [Naradof] Goodwin?

BATTLE: Dick Goodwin. During that period when I was Executive Secretary, he called one of the desks. I don't remember precisely what the issue was. But he said, "Please send a telegram out saying so-and-so and mark it 'Cleared with the White House'." And the telegram went out. And whatever the substance of it was, it didn't go right at all. It was a mistake. And Goodwin denied he'd ever had anything to do with it. Now, there was that kind of thing.

RICHARD RUSK: You don't recall the policy he sent out?

BATTLE: I don't remember what the issue was. And so, I put out an order all over the damn

department saying, "There's no such thing as 'Cleared with the White House'," that that had to be done through me. This was to stop people from saying it was cleared and then backing down on it. I said, "There's no White House clearance except Bundy and the President." New, that was impossible to enforce. But at any rate it gave people a certain--I was furious about that incident. My recollection is that this wasn't the only time that kind of thing happened.

RICHARD RUSK: It must have been quite a frustrating period for my dad, having all these back channels in operation.

BATTLE: It was a frustrating and a very difficult period.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall his response to it?

BATTLE: It was incredible patience. He didn't talk about it very much; he said very little about it. But, boy, I was livid about it. Then we had, in the beginning, the problem of Chet [Chester Bliss] Bowles, with whom he couldn't possibly have worried.

RICHARD RUSK: Right. Did any of you ever go to my dad, either individually or as a group, and say, "Look, there are these problems which we are all aware of. Here is the way we should proceed. This is what you need to do as Secretary"?

BATTLE: Yes. We had these 9:15 or 9:30 staff meetings. And I said to your father once, "You are not speaking enough in those meetings. You should tell people what you think. They come out of there asking me what you thought, and I don't know what you think." I said, "You listen to all of these Assistant Secretaries like an order for groceries. They will recount their problems; et cetera, what their issues are, but they get no guidance from you." And so he said he appreciated that. And a couple of times he did ask me questions about what he ought to do. And then a few days after that, I'd gone to a party and he had chewed out--not chewed out, that's an overstatement. He had taken issue to sane extent with [James] Harlan Cleveland. And it was very easy to fight with Harlan Cleveland. I mean, you almost couldn't talk with him without having a vigorous--And he was not exactly a thin-skinned person. I'm very fond of Harlan, don't misunderstand. But, there was a little exchange with him. And later that afternoon we were at a reception, and your father was there, and he said, "Was I too rough on Harlan today?" And I said, "Not at all. You ought to do it more often." I said, "That's the sort of thing you need to do with the Assistant Secretaries. You need to have an exchange with them." And so he, at times, did try. But he had the problem of Chet Bowles, which was very difficult. I mean, Chet was all over the lot. He was absolutely disorderly. And he wanted to work; he thought he was there to make policy. And he never understood that the question of outgoing telegrams, responding to questions, responding to mail, responding to a letter from the Shah of Iran or the president of a ailch country, that that was policy. He thought that was just routine. Policy was something else. It was maybe more abstract in context. And so those were all the kinds of issues that made it difficult. It was very hard to manage Chet Bowles. And I sat right in the middle, and I tried my damn best to make it work. And I found it very difficult indeed.

RICHARD RUSK: There was no alternative to the reorganization that later took place?

BATTLE: I don't think there was. But at that point it was not up to me to say that. And it was the beginning of the period and I was trying. And I like Chet Bowles; personally, I liked him very much. And so, I remember once your father said to me, "Luke, you're trying to make work what will never work." That was the nearest time he ever came to, in effect, saying this is impossible. Chet wanted to go in. He kept saying, "I never know what the Secretary's thinking." And I said, "Well Chet, you approach him wrong." I said, "You go in there with a big question like, what are we going to do about the brown people of the world?--abstract, high-level kind of conversation--where he would like you to come in and say, "How are we going to answer the telegram from the Shah this morning?" And it was a very different thing. And that was part of Bowles' lack of understanding that policy was made by the meeting with an ambassador, by a message that was going out. Most policy is not made in an abstract vacuum, it is made on the basis of a specific issue that has come up and has got to be responded to.

RICHARD RUSK: You referred to this generalized feeling on the part of other people not knowing where my dad stood on things. But you served him in three or four different roles. Now, how did he work for you?

BATTLE: When I became assistant secretary?

RICHARD RUSK: Well, in all of your capacities: ambassador, assistant secretary, Executive Secretary. Did you know enough of what was in his mind so that you could function in your job?

BATTLE: Well, he did what I like to have done to me in the job as ambassador and assistant secretary; he left me alone, which was his policy. And I said, this is a perfectly valid argument, you see? And he felt assistant secretaries were supposed--now there were times when I, particularly on things like the Arab-Israeli War--but during that period he was spending his time almost entirely on Vietnam. I mean, that was consuming his time, and his schedule, and his thoughts.

RICHARD RUSK: As early as that '68 war?

BATTLE: Well, I was sworn in in April 1967, and I had the Six Day War, and the Cyprus Crisis, and various other things. At any rate, there were times that I felt that he--There were some changes around the building I thought he should have been more emphatic about that occurred. I've never felt that having Gene [Eugene Victor] Rostow there was a good idea, particularly with Whit [Whitman Rostow] at the White House. It gave one more little back channel there that occurred all the time. And I did not think the Secretary was wise to let that happen. I wasn't here when it happened. I was Ambassador to Egypt at that time. As executive secretary, I did not know what was in his mind, frequently. That was a problem. And particularly when I had the uncertainties--And I was left pretty much on my own to deal with the White House, and I fortunately knew and liked most of them. I mean I had no problem with Mac Bundy, Ralph Duncan. I didn't entirely like Arthur Schlesinger, but I didn't entirely dislike him either. I had known him for a long time. I did not care for Dick Goodwin, as I've made fairly clear to you. And there were a few others who got in my hair over there. But in the main, I found I could take them fairly well. My God, I went over there a lot. I used to go over and have lunch with Mac and Ralph Dungan frequently. And that helped a lot, and it created a better atmosphere in terms of

the relations between the departments. But you had the President calling all around the building, and you had the Waite House staff calling all around the building trying to stay one step ahead of the President. And this became a real problem But all of it was not Rusk's fault. I'm trying to put as balanced a picture on it as I can.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall instances when he did crack the whip?

BATTLE: They were never done in a public way, and never a way I knew about. You sort of wondered how he could take some of the things that went on. But I don't know what he said to the President; I have no idea. Like my period with Acheson where I knew everything he told President Truman, and I used to listen to the telephone conversations between them half the time: more than that. And they both knew it. And so it wasn't a matter of anybody holding back; it was perfectly open. And so there was a difference. You asked me the question; I have to give you the answer. I can be sympathetic to both positions, to both situations, and I can understand both to a point. But the fundamental thing is, Acheson saw himself as running the Department, and plus being the (unintelligible). He felt that running the Department was part of being a foreign policy advisor for the President, whereas Dean Rusk saw it in a different context, and he felt the Department ought to be run by someone else and he didn't have to run it.

RICHARD RUSK: Right. There is this generalized claim that my dad did not run the Department. And yet, you're the fourth assistant secretary I've talked to and they all said, "Well, it didn't affect me because I knew what was in his mind on the things that were important to me," or conversely, what you said, "He let me run my show." Putting good people in the top jobs and then delegating massively to them, did it work?

BATTLE: Well, I felt the assistant secretaries were pretty good, and I thought we held our own pretty well. And I think it's a perfectly defensible thing. But during my period as Assistant Secretary for Education and Culture, I just didn't bother him. It wasn't so important--

RICHARD RUSK: Your concerns were not related to him?

BATTLE: No, they weren't important enough to bother him with. And I wouldn't have bothered the Secretary no matter who it had been. And I felt perfectly competent to handle the job, and I did it well, and that was all there was to it. Now when I became Assistant Secretary later for Near East and South Asia, there were moments when I would have liked knowing what his view was with respect to handling the Arab-Israeli problem. And he had a few conversations that I later found out about with Mike (Michael Joseph) Mansfield and others that he never told me about. And they would have been important. And there were things of that sort. Yes, there was some deficiency. But in the main, on the NEA (National Education Association) job, he left it to me and I ran it. And I'm not reticent about taking on things. As I get older--I might now be more careful. But in those days, I wasn't. And so there we are.

RICHARD RUSK: As Assistant Secretary for Middle Eastern and South Asian Affairs, did you get into Vietnam at all? It wasn't part of your specific area, but did you talk, to my dad about Vietnam?

BATTLE: Not really. I got into it a couple of times when I was ambassador to Egypt. Gamal Abdel Nasser was president at that point, and he was very eager to reassert his own major role in the world, and he was on the decline by that time. And he was sort of waiting in the wings for an opportunity to find a solution, to look at the world. He needed to reestablish himself in a global sense on the big issue, which was Vietnam, as he saw it, in those days. Averell came out there. Once or twice there were allegedly efforts to pass messages through Nasser, but it was all fake; it wasn't real. And therefore it's very difficult to see how we could have done anything. And at that point the U.S. was so rigid in its view that there was nothing that Nasser had that would have worked anyway.

RICHARD RUSK: You are talking about 1968? 1968?

BATTLE: '67.

RICHARD RUSK: You, I presume, had some major doubts about what we were doing in southeast Asia.

BATTLE: Yeah, I did.

RICHARD RUSK: As well as you knew my father, and that extends back to the German years, why did you not go to him directly and confront him with what you felt to be the deficiencies of that policy?

BATTLE: Well, there were two or three reasons. One is, I was just harassed beyond belief. I had the Arab-Israeli problem, and then the war and the aftermath of that. I had the U.N. and its consideration of the problem. I had the Cyprus Crisis of 1967, which was a very serious crisis, plus a few Indian-Pakistani arguments and a few other issues. I was just absolutely up to my neck, which is the way it tends to be. And I just did not have sufficient--I began to have serious doubts. I didn't have any doubts about it for a long time. I began to have the doubts during that last year I was in the Department, but I was just overloaded. And, as I said, I had my own wars. I couldn't worry about anybody else's.

RICHARD RUSK: Would my dad have been receptive to you, or did he have a reputation for being receptive within, the Department to dissenting views on Vietnam?

BATTLE: No.

RICHARD RUSK: Go ahead and elaborate on that if you will.

BATTLE: Well, I can't. I just--I don't know.

RICHARD RUSK: George [Wildman] Ball says yes, but that was George Ball.

BATTLE: Well, he did with George. And I've read George's entire file on that. He listened to George, but I don't think he went around the building asking people or encouraging people to dissent. George and the Secretary got along quite well. In the very beginning they didn't. It

wasn't that they didn't get along, it was the same problem. George told me, and this is in George's book, this little incident: George said, "I wish I knew what the Secretary's thinking." And I said, "Well, the Secretary said pretty much the same thing to me about you." I said, "Why don't you go talk with him?" That's in his book. That's not precisely accurate, but it's very close to it. But I think by the time we're talking about, he had gotten very jumpy and very defensive of criticism on Vietnam. And unless I had specific--I was around. I was at the NSC [National Security Council] meetings enough to see the very real difficulty.

RICHARD RUSK: Of raising these dissenting views?

BATTLE: Well, the real difficulty of the solidarity of the people involved with it: Walt and Gene Rostow, Whit particularly--McNamara, Rusk, the whole crowd. And the beginning of the crack came through the Clark Clifford.

RICHARD RUSK: Right. And he himself had a major problem trying to mobilize people.

BATTLE: Yeah. Well, they had a major problem in the Defense Department mobilizing him in the beginning. And I've talked with the--there are accounts in various books. There's a book by Townsend Hoopes on it.

RICHARD RUSK: Right, I have that. Any particular theories of your own as to why my dad signed on with such total commitment, certainly by the spring of '65 or probably earlier?

BATTLE: Well, I was gone during that period, and I don't really knew. I can understand the President's point of view, I think, in a way, more than I can your father's. I think the President was absolutely determined that the charge of losing China was not going to be applied to him with respect to southeast Asia. And I think that was a major factor in it. And I think the American people, although they had been whipped up into a white heat during the China lobby period, (unintelligible). I think they would have responded to a different point of view as they later did with Nixon, who was Mr. China himself. And so there we are going to have to stop, I'm sorry to say. I'll be glad to talk with you again some other time, if you have any other questions, (interruption)--to defend him to a lot of critics. And I've forgotten--I told somebody about this and he used it. I think it was an article in Foreign Affairs. But one of the last times I saw him when he was Secretary--I had gone, you see. I left in October and the administration did not end until the following January. But I was over there a few times. And I saw him once and he said, "It's strange that I came into office as a man of peace, and I leave the office looking like a war emperor something like that.

RICHARD RUSK: I saw that. That was used by someone.

BATTLE: I know it came out of me, and it was used in a couple of places, I think. I think it was a Foreign Affairs article, by whom, I don't remember. But I did try in that period to make the--

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