

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

Rusk I

Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas J. Schoenbaum

circa 1985

SCHOENBAUM: Maybe we could start by asking what specific discussions you had leading up to your appointment, and who were the people primarily responsible for your appointment, and why were you interested, and why were they interested in you.

DEAN RUSK: While I was an Assistant Secretary of State in the Truman Administration, I was invited to join the Board of Trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation. There were already on that board a number of people who I had served with in government: people like Robert [Abercrombie] Lovett, John J. McCloy, John [Sloan] Dickey, John Foster Dulles and some others. So I simply became a member of the Board. Well, then Chester [Irving] Barnard was coming up for retirement. There is an automatic retirement age of sixty-five at the Rockefeller Foundation, so they appointed a search committee of the Board of Trustees to find out and recommend a new president. I spent one or two evenings with that search committee. On that committee were, I remember, John D. [Davison] Rockefeller, III, John Foster Dulles, and one or two others. There was no detailed discussion with me about whether or not they were going to propose my name, they just seemed to want to talk but they did in fact propose my name.

SCHOENBAUM: What did they talk about? What were they interested in? Did they ask you questions? What was their approach?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I rather forget the details, it was so long ago. But they talked about, in general, how I saw the world situation, how I saw the possibilities for a foundation like the Rockefeller Foundation, and somewhat about my experiences both in the Pentagon and in the State Department. I think they wondered if I had had much administrative experience. Well, I had had during the Truman Administration as Assistant Secretary of State, but not strictly speaking much administrative experience in the Army during the war. I had been Dean of Faculty at Mills College and that involved some administration.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you bone up for the interview?

DEAN RUSK: No, they just invited me to have dinner with them. We spent the evening talking. I was not in the position of an applicant for the job. I had not put together any materials or letters or anything of that sort. But anyhow, they had suggested that in December 1951, when they had one of their two annual board meetings at Williamsburg, they had suggested to me that I remain in Washington until they called me down there. So, presumably they took up my name and voted on it. And then Flora [M.] Rhind, Secretary of the Foundation, called me in Washington and said that the Board wanted me to come on down. So I put Virginia and myself in a car and drove on down. But she did not tell me on the phone whether or not I had been elected. But I went on down, then they told me I had been elected. I don't know whether John Foster Dulles played any key role in that. I did tell John Foster Dulles that on this kind of job, just as in jobs in

government, there ought to be a periodic review to see whether or not it was working and that we should not proceed on the basis that this was necessarily a lifetime post. So I wrote a letter to him as Chairman of the Board, suggesting that at the end of five years we take another look at it. But it was relatively simple.

Then when it was announced that I would succeed in July first, 1952, they gave me an office and put me on a salary as soon as I could leave the government, so I could be there to begin to get used to things while I was still president-elect. Then we had to make arrangements about finding a place to live and all that kind of thing.

SCHOENBAUM: You moved from Washington to New York?

DEAN RUSK: To New York, and we found a house in Scarsdale, New York, and stayed there for the entire period. On the day on which I was elected president, I was invited by Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to have lunch with him at his home there in Williamsburg. I must confess that I had a little thought in the back of my mind that I was going to get my marching orders from Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. because he had been the great organizer and first leader of the Rockefeller Foundation in many ways. It was quite the contrary. He only said really two things to me about the foundation. First, he said, "Mr. Rusk, I never want to hear from you about the Rockefeller Foundation. You should not look over your shoulder at me. My son John is on the Board and if you ever want to talk to a member of the family, he is available, he is at your disposal." The second thing he said was, "I suggest that you take some time off and spend several months in the wilderness alone just thinking about what could be done with a fund of this size for the well-being of mankind around the world. Don't feel yourself chained by the past." Well, that was excellent advice but I didn't have a chance to take it because my first big duty as President of the Rockefeller Foundation was to respond to congressional committees of inquiry and that required me to go back in great detail over everything the Rockefeller Foundation had done since its founding in 1913. So I steeped myself in the background of all its grants and activities and so forth in order to be responsive to those congressional committees.

SCHOENBAUM: You knew that this was looming on the horizon at the time you took over the presidency? So you knew what you were getting into.

DEAN RUSK: Well, it came about the same time.

RICHARD RUSK: I have a question about your letter to the Board of Trustees. Is this the same letter that Warren Cohen referred to? Apparently there was a degree of controversy with regard to your appointment, and you wrote a letter in response to that controversy.

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall that it was in the framework of any controversy.

RICHARD RUSK: He saw it in that light.

DEAN RUSK: Well you see, John Foster Dulles had been deeply embarrassed by his sponsorship of the appointment of Alger Hiss as President of the Carnegie Endowment, and I think he was of the mind that maybe we ought to try this out for a few years to see how it worked

and if it didn't work we could do some thing else. You see, I was of the same mind. When you took those jobs in government that I had held, you knew that you were going to be there only for a limited period of years. I had been in the Civil Service in the State Department on a tenured basis, but when you become an Assistant Secretary, a Presidential appointment, it is up and out. You know that those jobs are temporary. So this was not an unusual idea in my mind.

SCHOENBAUM: Before we get to the Foundation itself, could we talk about John D. III? I take it that your impression of him was favorable.

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes. He was a tremendous man, the father of the five brothers. Of course, he had long since retired from the Rockefeller Foundation board at age sixty-five. At that time some of the Trustees wanted to change the bylaws to make it possible for him to stay on the board and he flatly refused. He said, "No gentlemen, I wrote those bylaws and I am going to comply with them. We ought to build in a turnover in the leadership of the Rockefeller Foundation." And so, he had long since been out of Foundation affairs.

SCHOENBAUM: His advice to "go into the wilderness," as I remember, he did have a feel for nature, for conservation.

DEAN RUSK: I think he used "wilderness" as a metaphor. He was strongly of the view that a foundation like the Rockefeller Foundation should not become some impersonal bureaucracy, but that it should be directed and led by actual living, breathing human beings who had some ideas in their heads and he thought I ought to take some time to reflect upon these things and think about priorities and where the marginal impact of the fairly limited Rockefeller funds could make the most difference.

SCHOENBAUM: Organization-wise, you came into the office in New York. I know roughly how it was organized. They had apparently several divisions, primarily up until that time, and I guess you continued it. They were concerned primarily with medicine and health.

DEAN RUSK: Well, there were divisions of medicine/public health, the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. That was the basic framework. But by the time I became president, I and a good many other Trustees felt that since enormous funds from governments, international organizations, and other places were coming into the field of medicine and public health, that the time had probably come for the Rockefeller Foundation to cut back on its activity and interest in those fields, because our funds, were relatively, so minor in relation to what everybody else was doing that perhaps that wasn't the best use of our money. So I went through the process of cutting back on our personnel and our grants in such fields as medicine and public health. We built up the natural sciences end of it. We soon established a separate division of agriculture because we quickly became heavily involved in what later came to be known as the Green Revolution. Then we expanded certain fields: for example, it was during my period that the Rockefeller Foundation began to get into the arts field. But we had some very able officers there. Some of them had been there a long time with a great deal of experience. There was a little bit of a shake up in attitude in one point. By the time I got to the Rockefeller Foundation many of the old-time officers had sort of developed the view that the primary function of the Board of Trustees was to approve their recommendations, and that the officers themselves were the

Foundation. Well, I took the view that by law and by charter the Board of Trustees was the Foundation; that is where you start from, and that we ought to emphasize that it is the Trustees who are responsible for the activities of the Rockefeller Foundation. I worked at that pretty hard. I tried to visit every year or so with each Trustee at his own home base, spend a day and spend as much time as he was willing to give me--There were fifteen or sixteen Trustees--just talking one-to-one on the Foundation, and its direction, and so forth. I found that very valuable and it also contributed, I think, to a high degree of cohesion among the Trustees as to what we should be doing. So I think that we soon worked out a pretty good working relationship between the officers and the Board of Trustees.

RICHARD RUSK: Did the Trustees themselves welcome the additional responsibility of being more heavily involved in these policy decisions.

DEAN RUSK: I think so.

RICHARD RUSK: I assume it would have meant a lot more work for them.

DEAN RUSK: Well, it did to a degree, but I think these Trustees all enjoyed the work. Another thing that we did all along, when we invited somebody to become a member of the Board, it was emphasized to them by the Chairman of the Board, whoever the chairman was, that they should not become a Trustee unless they were willing to work at it and give it some time, that we didn't want honorary trustees, we wanted working trustees. That was made very clear to them at the very beginning.

SCHOENBAUM: How did you get the paperwork? Did you actually give them proposals to review or--

DEAN RUSK: Well, we had two annual meetings of the full Board of Trustees. Then we had an executive committee of the Board of Trustees, made up of seven or so, that met once a month in between Board meetings. For each one of the meetings of the Board or executive committee we prepared what was called a docket. This would be a big book with all of the proposals in it that would be coming up at the meeting. And we sent that to them in advance so they could go over that and study it, and be ready with their questions, and have a chance to think about it. Those dockets were prepared following a docket conference which I had with the officers. We would have the heads of the different divisions in there, and as these items came up there would be a discussion in which all heads of divisions would participate, even though the subject might have been chiefly on one division. We had some very interesting, and I think profitable, discussions in those docket conferences. There we would decide which things to put to the Trustees and therefore which would go into these docket books. Well, then when we had reached that stage we asked our counsel, during my period Chauncey Belknap of the firm of Belknap and Webb, to go over the docket to see if he saw any legal problems involved in any of it. And very rarely did that occur. I remember on one occasion we were proposing to make a grant to some foundation or organization there in New York to help them search out and upgrade black talent, and our lawyer told us that that particular grant would probably be in violation of the fair employment legislation of the State of New York because it was concentrated on blacks. Well, we discussed his point with the Trustees, and I think it was I who raised the question that if we made this grant

who would complain. Would the Attorney General of the State of New York bring a suit against us? Who is going to complain? And when it was clear that nobody would complain, we went ahead and made the grant. In a truly theoretical sense it might have been contrary to the law, but in practical terms not.

SCHOENBAUM: You said that during your years, the Foundation moved into the arts. This is something you don't have a history of being personally interested in, the arts. Can you describe what your own interest in the arts is, where you came in contact with the arts? I assume we are talking about painting and sculpture and ballet and dance and music.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I can't claim to be any kind of an expert in art. I am one of those who appreciates the kind of art that I like. But when I was in Europe as a student I attended operas and the theater quite a lot. You see, in those days in Europe they sold standing room tickets to students for almost nothing. And I could go to the opera in France, Germany, the Comedie Francais, for very little. So I used to enjoy that. But I can't claim to be in the know as far as the arts are concerned. But I felt that this was a part of life that should not be neglected. The Rockefeller Foundation put very little attention to it. Looking back on my own college experience, Davidson College was a very good liberal arts college but it was a desert as far as the arts were concerned. We had a marching band, and we had a glee club, and that was about it.

So we began to see what was possible in the arts. We ran quickly into a question which I think is a very difficult question to answer, and that is "What is the connection between money and creativity in the arts?" What has money got to do with creativity? You hear about all these artists who worked away in the attics in Paris, living on a shoestring and that kind of thing. And as we probed around on that and talked to a great many people, we thought that maybe one thing we could do something about would be to give young creative artists a chance to see their work in production; young painters to see their paintings shown, exhibited, criticized; in the case of young dramatists, to see their plays performed; in the case of young composers, to see their compositions performed. For example we made some grants to the Louisville Symphony Orchestra to make it possible for them to play and produce new compositions. And I think that that was pretty useful. We also gave a good many fellowships and study grants to young artists, to buy time, to have some time in which to work. Many of them were having to earn their living as waiters or something like that.

SCHOENBAUM: Are there some success stories of people that you remember?

DEAN RUSK: Well, you would just have to look back through some of the grants. None of them actually spring to mind at the moment. We were very careful about not claiming credit on that kind of thing. Over the years, in its talent search, the Rockefeller Foundation has located and supported the work in one way or another some ninety people who later won the Nobel Prize. The Foundation never used that figure. It shouldn't, because all we were doing was putting in some money. It was their talent, their brains, their abilities. And so our attitude during my period was that the Foundation itself should not attempt to take credit for work that others have done. We simply, in our Annual Report, accounted for every dime we spent and let it go at that.

SCHOENBAUM: I noticed that one of the books said that you switched from the emphasis on preservation to an emphasis on interpretation in the arts. Was that a conscious move.

DEAN RUSK: Well, we did make an occasional grant or two, I think maybe to Columbia University, for some very sophisticated work on art preservation. This gets you into atomic and molecular materials of all sorts because some of our great masterpieces were in the process of deteriorating for lack of pest control, and lack of temperature and humidity controls, and things of that sort. And so the restoration of masterpieces that were deteriorating was quite a fine art as well as a science. I made a mistake once when I was visiting Madrid, I visited the Prado and saw that their great masterpieces there were poorly lighted, badly hung, no environmental controls of any sort in terms of humidity and temperature and things of that sort, no pest controls. And so I tried as tactfully as I could to inquire whether the Rockefeller Foundation would be permitted to provide the funds to do something about this. But Spanish pride immediately rejected this. I think I did not do that as tactfully as I might have, but they have now done a good deal to improve the conditions of the Prado.

SCHOENBAUM: What was it like personally to be president of the Rockefeller Foundation? Were people obsequious to you?

DEAN RUSK: One of the besetting sins in the foundation world is the temptation to play God: the notion that just because there is money behind it that your ideas are important. And I had to keep reminding my colleagues about that from time to time.

RICHARD RUSK: Explain that.

DEAN RUSK: Well, if somebody came in with a proposal, there is a temptation on the part of foundation officers to want to move it around, to change it a bit, shape it up in accordance with our own views as to what ought to be done. Simply because there is money behind it, these ideas sometime appear to be more important both to the Foundation officer and to the prospective recipient than they deserve to be. But I remember I used to--My old friend Bob [Robert Francis] Goheen, who was to become president of Princeton--I didn't frame it up this way but it just happened. He came in to see me asking for about a half million dollars for some program they had in the humanities, and I had several of my colleagues sitting with me at the time. And when he got through with his proposal, one of my colleagues said, "Well, now if you could just move this over and turn it in this direction a bit." And another one said, "Well, what about doing it this way?" and so forth. Young Goheen, who was then in his thirties, interrupted and said, "Now wait a minute, gentlemen, I am telling you what Princeton University wants to do. The only question before you is whether you want to give it any money. We know what we want to do." I laughed and we gave him his money.

Most of those who come to us are people who are carrying heavy responsibilities and were not intimidated by us. At the time in the mid-fifties we decided to liquidate the General Education Board. It had been established in 1903, I think, to support education in the United States. And over the years the General Education Board had made a good many endowment type gifts. Well when you start making endowment gifts, you start spending money pretty heavily, and so our resources were being drawn down. So we thought we had just better go ahead and spend the

General Education Board out of existence. I remember coming down to Atlanta and talking to Dr. Benjamin [Elijah] Mays, long-time president of Morehouse. One of the questions I put to him was whether we should concentrate the remaining funds in the General Education Board in black education and he smiled and said, "Oh no, don't do that. These white boys need education just as much as our black boys do." The General Education Board had put a lot of money into southern universities like Vanderbilt, Tulane, places like that, Fisk, Tuskegee. But we decided to liquidate it rather than try to hang on and do little tids and tads on a shoestring. So that was wound up during my time.

SCHOENBAUM: Did Davidson College suddenly think that they had a friend and try to approach you? (laughter)

DEAN RUSK: No, not really because--

RICHARD RUSK: It would not work in that direction. (laughter)

SCHOENBAUM: I realize it wouldn't.

DEAN RUSK: Neither the Rockefeller nor the General Education Board took--

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DEAN RUSK: We made a substantial grant to a Japanese university and about a year later we discovered that nothing had happened. They hadn't done anything with it. We discovered that they felt they simply couldn't afford to spend it because the interest they were getting on demand deposits from their bank was such that they--(laughter)

Then I remember we would give a good many books to universities abroad. In my travels I visited a good many of these places and found that these book gifts had been put into locked cabinets with glass covers on them with a sign put up there on them "A Gift of The Rockefeller Foundation," but nobody could use these books. And so I insisted that they unlock these things and let people use them, and the reply was "Well, they would be stolen." I replied, "Well, at least somebody would have them who wanted them. Books are to be used." A number of little things like that that had to be followed up.

One thing we did do, I think the most important single thing the Rockefeller Foundation has done over its history has been the thousands of postgraduate fellowships we have given all over the world. This is particularly important in the so-called developing world because most of those newly independent countries started off as independent nations with a tremendous shortage of manpower in every field. When the Belgian Congo, now Zaire, became independent, it had something like a dozen university graduates in the whole country. When Indonesia became

independent, a country of a hundred million people, it had only seventy-five or so university graduates in the whole country. So we emphasized fellowships. Now the Foundation did make fully adequate provisions in its fellowships so that people could do what they wanted to do comfortably on those fellowships. And we helped them be admitted to the appropriate institutions in this country or Western Europe. Most of the fellowship candidates, about eighty percent of them, wanted to start off by wanting to go to Harvard. Well, Harvard is not the place to study agriculture or forestry and a lot of these other things they were studying, so we had to work on that a little bit. We then, however, because we had the money to do it, we followed up on these fellows when they got back home, and if we found that they needed some pieces of equipment or some reinforcement to their libraries or something of that sort, we could back them up after they got back home.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you concentrate on any particular area of the world in these education programs?

DEAN RUSK: Well, by and large the Rockefeller Foundation since 1913 had given a kind of priority to the Western Hemisphere, to Latin America. It was there that we launched the great program that found the answer to yellow fever. It was there that we worked on malaria. The agricultural programs concentrated in the beginning in Mexico and Colombia and Peru. In medicine we concentrated heavily in the old days in places like Brazil. Now in the pure sciences, our activity in Western Europe was pretty keen, at least in terms of finding individual scientists that needed support.

We became aware also that if you look out all across Latin America, Africa, Asia, you would probably not find a single university which would be considered eligible for admission to the American Association of Universities, this group of fifty elite universities in this country. Now that was understandable from an historical point of view, but my feeling was if that were still true thirty years later it would be a shame. So we tried to upgrade some of these universities, usually department by department. We put a good deal of money in the American University in Beirut for example. But we tried to upgrade higher education at key points, because if they were to meet their trained manpower requirements most of that training would have to occur in their own countries. It could not be done just on the basis of foreign fellow ships and foreign travel.

RICHARD RUSK: Did that emphasis on the Western Hemisphere exist throughout the life of the Rockefeller Foundation?

DEAN RUSK: Pretty much so.

RICHARD RUSK: What about elsewhere in the world?

DEAN RUSK: Well the Western Hemisphere; and then of course, at the very beginning there was a pretty heavy interest in China.

SCHOENBAUM: Was there an emphasis on Taiwan and funding things in Taiwan?

DEAN RUSK: Not really.

SCHOENBAUM: How did you personally spend your time, and what percentage? Were you dealing primarily with the officers and making hiring and firing decisions, or were you dealing with overall policy that filtered down into grant applications, or were you reading grant applications, or out traveling, or--

DEAN RUSK: Well, we had a rather limited staff in New York. Our general approach had been that since these were philanthropic funds provided for philanthropic purposes that we shouldn't eat too many of these funds up with our own administration, our own staff. So we might have three or four officers in each division there in New York, but they were all of very high quality. We relied very heavily upon the process of going out and visiting with top people in the field and getting their judgments as to where the most important work was being done and where the cutting edge of the sciences were moving--

SCHOENBAUM: And you did a lot of that personally?

DEAN RUSK: I did a good deal of that, but the officers traveled a great deal, both at home and abroad. We were trying to keep in touch with the, if you like, the gossip in the different fields as to where the really top work was being performed.

RICHARD RUSK: You concentrated pretty much on policy and you had to have a good number-two man handle most of the administrative work.

DEAN RUSK: Yes although, you can delegate but you can't abdicate responsibility. And so I would occasionally take an active part in just administrative detail. Big things are made up out of a lot of little things, and unless the little things are put right the big things sometimes don't go right.

SCHOENBAUM: Who was your number two man there?

DEAN RUSK: Lindsley [Fiske] Kimball was my Executive Vice President: a fine man. He had been, for a period, also head of the United Negro College Fund in the United States.

RICHARD RUSK: Is he still around?

DEAN RUSK: I am not sure, but I think he is dead now [Librarian's note: Lindsley Kimball is still living]. But I left most of the actual administration to him. And the internal administration of the records and the books and that kind of thing on policy matters was pretty much in the hands of the secretary to the corporation, Flora Rhind. She was very good. We had a treasurer and a comptroller, but the staff in New York was a rather limited staff.

SCHOENBAUM: How many did you have there approximately?

DEAN RUSK: You can get out one of these earlier reports. They list them all. I should think not more than fifty, if you include the administrators.

SCHOENBAUM: Where were the offices located?

DEAN RUSK: When I first went to the Foundation we were on the fifty-fourth and fifty-third floors of the RCA Building, that big skyscraper there in the heart of Rockefeller Center. The Rockefeller family had their offices just above ours. But then, in the mid-sixties they persuaded-- they asked us to move across the street to the new Time-Life-Fortune Building. And we went there to about the forty-second floor there, but we had two floors there. Of course, relatively, it was a high-price space. When the time came for us to move across the street to the Time-Life Building, we looked rather seriously into the question as to whether we ought to build our own building. The Ford Foundation was in the process of building their own building. Well, we looked at it and decided that it would cost us more to build our own building than it would be for us to go ahead and rent. Since it would be more costly and we would be using philanthropic money, we decided that we should not take the higher-priced approach to it. You see, a tax-exempt philanthropic foundation is spending one-hundred cent dollars, whereas a business corporation spends fifty-cent dollars because it can charge off expenses to taxes. So I was very conscious of that. For example, at one point some of my colleagues suggested that we get a Rockefeller Foundation airplane. Well, we looked into that and it was clear that without any ability to charge off anything to taxes, that maintaining a Rockefeller Foundation airplane would be relatively very expensive and just didn't make any sense. So I turned that down.

RICHARD RUSK: Any perks at all go with the job?

DEAN RUSK: No.

SCHOENBAUM: Where did you eat lunch?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we did have an officers' dining room. And that was a very pleasant place to have lunch because, typically, unless you had a guest in and wanted a small table on the side, you would sit around a long table. There you had a lot of that interdisciplinary kind of discussion, and we had some great discussions at that luncheon table. We had our lunches catered, we didn't try to run our own kitchen. No, there were no special perks.

SCHOENBAUM: How did you get to work? Did you take the train in like everyone else?

DEAN RUSK: In Scarsdale I commuted in by New York Central railway. I must say after a few years, that commuting got a little boring. I started out thinking that I could do a little work on this train going to and fro, but I had an uneasy feeling that when I would dig out the Rockefeller Foundation papers to study that my neighbors were looking over my shoulder. They were very curious, and so, I finally relaxed and just read the newspaper during that time. I became interested in the sociology of newspaper readership out of Scarsdale, New York, during that period. If you got a train around 7:30 A.M., everybody was reading the *New York News*. Well, along about 8:00 A.M., it shifted to the *New York Times*. And then about 8:30 it would shift to the *Herald Tribune*. Any train from 9:00 on it was the *Wall Street Journal*.

We did give some thought once to doing what some of the other corporations around New York had done: move out to the country. But our younger staff, the secretaries, the clerks, all those

people absolutely refused to move. They said, "We want to be right here in Manhattan. This is where the action is. This is where it is interesting." So we decided not to move because the younger staff people and younger officers wanted to be there in Manhattan, they didn't want to go out into the country.

SCHOENBAUM: During this period too, you were also active. You maintained contacts in Washington and political life, did you not? Those were the [Dwight David] Eisenhower years, but did you maintain contact politically with the [Adlai Ewing] Stevenson [III] people? You were a registered Democrat.

DEAN RUSK: Well, since we were a non-political, tax-exempt foundation, it was traditional that officers of the Foundation would not take active or leading part in the national political scene. We did encourage our officers to take an active part in our own local communities so that in the little village of Scarsdale, New York, I was an active Democrat in community affairs and during the 1960 campaign I was the co-chairman of the Kennedy- Johnson committee in Scarsdale. But that was as far as I ever got politically. No, we more or less stayed away from active state or national politics because, the role of the Rockefeller Foundation could be misinterpreted if we were to do that.

SCHOENBAUM: Didn't you have some informal contacts with the State Department?

DEAN RUSK: Well, John Foster Dulles would call me occasionally to talk about various things.

RICHARD RUSK: How many contacts, say in an eight-year period, did you have with Foster Dulles once he was in Washington?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, maybe a dozen.

RICHARD RUSK: Mostly at his initiative, at least according to his biography.

DEAN RUSK: That's right. Although there was one thing that was done on my own initiative which you fellows might want to take a look at. And the end of John Foster Dulles' hundredth day in office, I wrote him a long letter about how he seemed to be doing on his job. And it was a pretty interesting letter: still is, as a matter of fact. Well, then when I became Secretary of State, I was very fortunate in getting the same secretary who had served him for so many years, Phyllis [D.] Bernau, now Phyllis Bernau Macomber. So at the end of my hundredth day, very quietly and without any comment, she simply came in and laid [on my desk] a copy of that letter that I had written eight years earlier to John Foster Dulles. And then indeed, I sent a copy of that letter to William [Pierce] Rogers, just for his interest. But, it is not a bad letter, and for your own education you two guys might want to read that letter.

But one interesting thing that occurred in the latter part of the mid-fifties, Foster Dulles asked me to come down to Washington to see him. He wanted to ask whether I would be willing to undertake a very private and very discreet negotiation between him and Senator Walter [Franklin] George of Georgia, who was then Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on the subject of a change in China policy. I told him I would if he wanted me to.

And he and I had two or three quite long discussions about what the alternatives might be. Well, then about that time, Governor Herman [Eugene] Talmadge of Georgia announced that he was going to run for the Senate against Walter George, and Senator George looked the situation over and decided that he would not run again. So Dulles made the judgment, which I think was the right judgment, that under those circumstances. Walter George would not want to take on so difficult and controversial a matter as a change in China policy, so the whole idea was dropped. I think the principal possibility that Dulles had in mind was a kind of two-Chinas approach. I don't think it would have gotten anywhere because both the national government of China on Taiwan and the People's Republic in Peking, categorically rejected that kind of approach.

RICHARD RUSK: How did you personally advise Dulles, forgetting the political situation in this country? Were you in favor of a two-China policy back in the late fifties?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I felt that this was a fish that wouldn't swim, therefore there was not too much to it. From our point of view, it would be alright.

RICHARD RUSK: Because of our domestic scene and because of their--

DEAN RUSK: No, both Chinas absolutely rejected it. As late as the mid-sixties we might have had considerable international support for the idea of two Chinese seats in the United Nations because that was what the reality was. There was a government on the mainland and a government in Taiwan. But both Taiwan and Peking categorically rejected any such approach.

RICHARD RUSK: Personally how did you feel about a two-China policy? Would we not have been better off going ahead, presuming that the domestic situation would have allowed it? This may not be a fair question to ask. But would we not have been better off going ahead and at least proposing it? If both Chinas or either China refused to go along with it, at least the ball is on their side.

DEAN RUSK: Well, we did propose this approach to the people in Taiwan on more than one occasion and they just categorically refused. And it was clear also that Peking would have also refused it. You see the one thing that both Chinas agreed on was that there was one China and that Taiwan was a part of China.

SCHOENBAUM: They still, more or less, agree on that.

DEAN RUSK: That's right.

SCHOENBAUM: Where was the pressure coming from, from Dulles' point of view? Was this something that [Dwight David] Eisenhower wanted?

DEAN RUSK: No. Just before [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy took office, Eisenhower said to Kennedy, "Now I will try to support you in foreign policy matters as much as I can, but on one matter I will have to oppose you publicly and strongly and that would be the seating of Peking in the United Nations or bilateral recognition of Peking." But before he became Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had written an article, I think it was in *Foreign Affairs*, in which he had sort

of played with the idea of a two-China approach. You see, he recognized, as all of us did during all of that period, that there was an enormous gap between the real situation in the real world and this fiction that they tried to maintain in Taiwan that they were the government of all China, that they would sometime go back to the mainland, and so forth. And that gap between theory and the real world is always a troublesome thing. I think Foster Dulles had come to these ideas in his own mind. But he was not going to move on it unless he felt that he had some chance of success in the Senate, and that was why he asked me if I would take on these discussions with Walter George.

RICHARD RUSK: Because it would have been expensive domestically?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, it would have been very controversial domestically.

RICHARD RUSK: Going through all that and not actually achieve something.

DEAN RUSK: Well, you can't sort of leave out the domestic side of it when you are deciding what to do. For example, soon after President Kennedy took office I had a long talk with him, just the two of us, on the alternatives with respect to China. But he had in front of him a resolution of the Congress which had been passed just two years before, I think it was a unanimous resolution, objecting to the seating of Peking in the U.N. and bilateral recognition. And he had in his mind the statement that Eisenhower had made to him. So Kennedy just decided that there was not enough in it to be worth the eye-gouging kind of controversy it would cause here in the United States, particularly in the Senate. And so he told me in that discussion that he simply did not want to reopen China policy. And as I left the room, he called out to me, "And what's more, Mr. Secretary, I don't want to read in the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times* that the State Department is thinking about any change in China policy."

So I went back to the State Department, and when people like Adlai [Ewing] Stevenson [III] and Chester [Bliss] Bowles would come in to talk about China, I would just play the role of the village idiot. I did not tell them of my talk with Kennedy, because I would be reading about that in the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*, so I just stonewalled it. You see, Kennedy was more cautious than many people think of him as being because he did not feel that he had had a mandate in the election of 1960. He had been elected by only a few tens of thousands of votes; he used to say [by] Cook County, Illinois. I remember one quip he made after the disaster of the Bay of Pigs: He said, "I think I will ask for a recount in Cook County!" So, Kennedy was very careful about choosing the issues on which he would do battle, particularly do battle with the Congress. He used to say to us, "If you're going to have a fight, then have a fight about something; don't have a fight about nothing." Now, had he been reelected in 1964 with a much stronger vote, it is entirely possible that he might have considered a change in China policy.

SCHOENBAUM: What other things did John Foster Dulles--In these dozen other contacts, what else did he call you about? Did he want advice about specific things, or want you to undertake a study, or something like that, in addition to the China--

RICHARD RUSK: Do you have the correspondence or records of your contacts with him?

DEAN RUSK: I have never in my life been in the practice of making memos of conversations.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he get in touch with you by mail or phone?

DEAN RUSK: He would have his secretary call me or he would call me and ask if I would come down to see him.

RICHARD RUSK: So there probably wouldn't be a record of it.

DEAN RUSK: No. Well there might be in his files, I don't know; but I doubt it. Sometimes these would turn on the issues of the day. For example, at one stage there in the early fifties--Eugene [Robert] Black was then President of the World Bank and he was negotiating for a kind of consortium for the building of the Aswan Dam. This would involve the World Bank, and it would involve U.S. aid funds, some private financing, and things like that. While he was engaged in those negotiations, he and I agreed that if they went ahead with that, that the Rockefeller Foundation would put up significant funds to study, from the very beginning, the non-engineering impact of the Aswan Dam: its impact upon agriculture--the testing of the soils that were supposed to be developed by it, what it would do to the snail disease, bilharzia, the question of the non-engineering impact of the dam. Well then John Foster Dulles got mad at [Gamal Abdel] Nasser about something and those negotiations were halted, the Russians raked it up and went ahead with it. But they did not make any provision for giving advance attention to these non-engineering aspects of the building of the dam, and so they found themselves later with a series of problems which at least could have been anticipated and thought about.

SCHOENBAUM: I wanted to ask you too about the article in *Foreign Affairs* that you wrote when you were President of the Rockefeller Foundation. What occasioned that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, along about 1956, 1957, I was invited to give the so-called Elihu Root Lecture at the Council on Foreign Relations. These were three lectures, the first of which was on the Presidency, the second was on the Congress, and the third was on, I think, the State Department, the bureaucracy. Well, it was planned that these three lectures would appear as a very small book or as three articles in this journal, *Foreign Affairs*. Well, I procrastinated a bit, I am afraid. But I did get the first lecture prepared as an article on the Presidency, and that appeared in the spring of 1960. The lectures were well received at the Council. But in any event, this article was published. These lectures were given when the last thing in the world which I had in my mind was that I would ever be Secretary of State. Fortunately, my procrastination meant that my second and third lectures did not get published, because I had to eat some of that article when I became Secretary of State. For example, I complained that the Secretary of State traveled too much and--(laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: But the initiative for that article came from the Elihu Root people?

DEAN RUSK: Well, the Council on Foreign Relations had invited me to give the Elihu Root Lecture, and this was one of those lectures.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you think that article influenced Kennedy? Isn't that one of the things Kennedy read, or Kennedy's people read, when they were considering you for Secretary of State?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I had never met Kennedy until he was President-elect. In mid- December he asked me to come to see him there at his place in Georgetown. I went over there and we spent about two hours talking about various things. He had a copy of this *Foreign Affairs* article on a nearby desk, but we didn't talk about that at all. [Theodore Chaikin] Sorensen, in his book, seemed to think we talked about that article, but we didn't. We talked about different possibilities for Secretary of State. He had three or four names on his list and I added a couple for his consideration. There was no discussion about me as a possibility for that job. So I went on back to New York and told my colleagues at the Rockefeller Foundation that they could forget any press speculation they might have seen and that I would be staying at the Foundation. Well, the very next morning Kennedy called me and told me that he wanted me to take the job. I said, "Now wait a minute. There are a lot of things we ought to talk about before you make that decision." So he asked me to come on down to West Palm Beach and we spent the morning of the next day talking over a lot of things, and then he made the announcement. But it came as a complete surprise to me in every way. I had not lifted a finger trying to get anybody to nominate me for it or support me for it.

RICHARD RUSK: About these lectures: Weren't you on the Council on Foreign Relations?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, as were eight hundred other people. It was a discussion group. There was no such thing as a point of view in the Council on Foreign Relations because they have a membership there that differ widely among themselves. But they did have various study groups and lectures and things like that. And I was fairly active as a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, but--

RICHARD RUSK: But you weren't part of a small policymaking group for the Council?

DEAN RUSK: No. There was no such thing.

RICHARD RUSK: When you got the appointment--I remember when you got back from Florida. I believe you traveled by train.

DEAN RUSK: No.

RICHARD RUSK: You had had some hours to get over the feeling of what you had just been through in Florida. I remember when you came through the door you were just as white as a ghost.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I lost fifteen pounds in the first ten days after that announcement was made. I had known enough about the job to know something about the enormous responsibilities it carried. As a matter of fact, I was in New York when Eisenhower announced that he was asking John Foster Dulles to be Secretary of State, and Foster Dulles asked me to come over to see him that same day. I went over there and we had a talk, and Foster Dulles was pretty shaken.

I had the strong impression that Foster Dulles would have much preferred to be some kind of officer at the White House "making policy."

END OF SIDE 2

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