

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

Rusk IIII

Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas J. Schoenbaum

1985 June

RICHARD RUSK: We are interviewing Dean Rusk about the Dominican Republic Crisis of 1965. Tom Schoenbaum and Rich are doing the interviewing. This is a second tape in a series of two or three. The other one was done a week ago. This is June 1985.

SCHOENBAUM: Just to start with what I think is the State Department involvement, a question about Latin American policy leading up to the Dominican Republic. On December 18, 1963, Mr. Thomas [Clifton] Mann was sworn in as the Undersecretary for Inter-American affairs. This was just after the new Dominican government was recognized by the United States, on December 18, 1963, and of course just after President [Lyndon Baines] Johnson took office. President Johnson announced that this was a major appointment and the Administration intended to speak with one voice on Latin America, and so Tom Mann would be that voice. How did you regard, from your perspective, Mann's appointment?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I approved it. I had known Tom Mann before and he was a career professional officer of great ability. I was very much in support of that nomination; I was glad to have him in charge of Latin American affairs of the Department.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you have another person in mind for that job?

DEAN RUSK: No.

RICHARD RUSK: Was it LBJ who recommended the appointment?

DEAN RUSK: Tom Mann was one of three or four who might have been appointed and I discussed that with Lyndon Johnson. He chose Tom Mann out of the group that I thought was eligible.

RICHARD RUSK: LBJ recognized that regime less than a month after the assassination of John [Fitzgerald] Kennedy. Now, in our last session, I believe [William] Tapley Bennett or you, or both, suggested that these changes were in the works, and it was more those changes than the succession of presidents that was responsible for recognition of the new regime in the Dominican Republic. Are you sure about that? Did LBJ bring a different frame of mind, a different philosophy to that problem that caused recognition to occur?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, there was a different attitude on LBJ's part, but I don't think that was responsible for the recognition. This fitted into a general policy that we had of recognizing the governments that were in actual control in Latin America. We did not subscribe to the [Thomas] Woodrow Wilson doctrine that dictatorships were not to be recognized if we thought they did not represent the wishes of their own people. Because, you see, coups d'état in Latin America have

been a constant element in our relationships with Latin America. And if we adopted the Woodrow Wilson attitude, we'd find ourselves without relations with most of the Latin American countries. The incidents of golpes or coups d'état has been steadily declining over the years in Latin America. I remember seeing at one point the statement that Panama had had something like sixty-one presidents in sixty-three years, or something like that, as though the ruling families down there just passed that job around among themselves so that each could share in the loot that came from the Panama Canal. But, we normally recognized a government when it was clearly in control of the country. Now, we usually waited until some of the other countries in the hemisphere also extended recognition. We very rarely were the first to recognize.

RICHARD RUSK: Had other countries recognized the Dominican Republic?

DEAN RUSK: I think so yes.

RICHARD RUSK: You did say that LBJ did bring a little different philosophy to Latin American relations.

DEAN RUSK: Well, LBJ had a much stronger interest in this hemisphere than did John F. Kennedy. I think I said earlier that LBJ used to tell us that this hemisphere was our home. This is where we live, these are our neighbors, and if we can't work out good relationships with our own neighbors, where would we expect to work out good relationships in other parts of the world? So, he put a lot of time and thought into our relations with Latin America. He spent a lot of time around Mexican relations, and he also helped to arrange a summit meeting in Punta del Este of all the presidents of the Western Hemisphere, and he went down there. I went with him and we spent three days or so in which we not only had meetings with the presidents, but he had bilateral meetings with each one of them. So, he was very much interested in this hemisphere.

SCHOENBAUM: Did he ever talk about the Guatemala coup? I ask that because apparently Mann was involved in that in some lower level capacity and of course in that coup, as it is presented at least, the U.S. had a hand in the overthrow by a military man of the elected government that had a Marxist-Leninist--

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall that LBJ ever talked to me about that. That had occurred some years before. I did look into it myself a bit just to try to understand what had happened, and I came away with the impression that the actual role of CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] was much less than CIA claimed, and that the general impression would have it. Because when people make what John Locke called the "appeal to God," or what Thomas Jefferson called the "right of revolution," they take their own lives in their hands. And in the situation within Guatemala, the United States was a long way away, after all. Those who carried out the coup were the ones who put their lives on the line and, in fact, did the action. I have no doubt that maybe some CIA types, and maybe our own ambassador might have said some things that might have encouraged them, but in terms of action, the role of CIA was much more limited than people suppose. After something like that happens, you see, the CIA tends to do a bit of bragging, particularly before the Appropriations Committees of Congress.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: And so I think their role has been exaggerated.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you think over "what I would do in that situation, if I were faced with that situation?" Just a general question.

DEAN RUSK: No, I didn't spend much time on that kind of "iffy" question.

RICHARD RUSK: Let me follow up on that comment, Pop, and get back to LBJ's attitude. Do you, at times, underestimate the role of the CIA, the role of other U.S. agents, military representatives, in a Latin American country or any Third World country? Do you underestimate it because perhaps you fellows aren't totally aware of what our total role is out there? For example, [Antonio] Imbert [-Barrera] with his forces after the revolutionary uprising in the Dominican Republic, said that his whole payroll was underwritten by the United States to the tune of \$200 million for the first two months, something like that.

DEAN RUSK: I would doubt that figure.

RICHARD RUSK: The figures are--it's in here, I'll dig it out for you. But his payroll was underwritten by the United States. You know, that's heavy influence. That's not an ambassador sitting down with a few leaders and giving--

DEAN RUSK: Well, I would need to know more about the facts, as far as that particular point is concerned.

RICHARD RUSK: [reading] "Imbert's forces were paid by the U.S. \$21 million for May and June 1965." Were you aware at the time--I'll assume that this thing is accurate. It's probably worth running down. This comment, this so-called "fact" came out of Theodore Draper's book on the Dominican Republic. I identified that one earlier. Were we underwriting Imbert's forces?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I'm sure we gave them financial assistance during that period. For what purposes that financial assistance was used, I have no recollection. But if you give someone financial assistance, they can shift their books and apply the funds in different directions. I'm in no position either to confirm or deny what Theodore Draper said.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: Theodore Draper's method, I think, is very serious and insidious because--and this was common at the time, you know--what happened was that people who opposed U.S. policy, though, were not content with simply opposing U.S. policy and saying their judgment was wrong, they impugned the integrity of the decision makers. And this seemed to be a more widespread tactic than it is today.

DEAN RUSK: This touches upon a point that I may as well say something about. I am one of those liberals of the nineteenth century who think that the word liberal is related to the notion of freedom. Many modern liberals forget that. And it puts them in favor of dictatorships of the left

and puts them in opposition to dictatorships of the right. I don't like dictatorships of either breed. Now, we faced a situation in the Dominican Republic where we were told by most of those that knew about the situation, and particularly what was happening inside the city of Santo Domingo, that there would be a bloodbath, that the result would be either a dictatorship of the [Rafael Leonidas] Trujillo type or a dictatorship of the [Fidel Ruz] Castro type. Well, I'm a liberal who thinks that liberal has something to do with freedom, and I didn't like either one of those prospects as a solution for the Dominican Republic.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah, but it's their country. What are we--

DEAN RUSK: Whose country?

RICHARD RUSK: The Dominican Republic is their country. What business do we have screwing around inside the international frontiers of a legitimate Latin American country? Juan Bosch, that regime, was the only constitutionally elected president that that country had had for some time. And where do we get off?

DEAN RUSK: Well, Juan Bosch had demonstrated that he was not capable of organizing a country.

RICHARD RUSK: That's their problem.

DEAN RUSK: Whose problem?

RICHARD RUSK: That is the problem of the people of the Dominican Republic.

DEAN RUSK: Well, bear in mind that the Organization of American States had imposed sanctions upon Trujillo and had imposed sanctions upon Castro. So the nature of the regime inside the Dominican Republic was not just a local Dominican affair, it involved the general principles on which the QAS was founded and the kind of leadership which had come up there. Row, if you are saying, Rich, that we should simply have picked up the foreign and American nationals there and then let them have their bloodbath and let them have whichever kind of dictatorship might evolve from such a bloodbath, I just don't agree with you.

RICHARD RUSK: I don't know, I really think perhaps a country should be free to work out their own inside arrangements as long as they stay within their own borders.

DEAN RUSK: Well, but Trujillo had not, and Castro had not, so that's not necessarily a choice.

RICHARD RUSK: You mentioned the principles of the OAS charter. One of those principles that was very firmly agreed upon by all parties was that a country would not violate the sovereignty of another member of the OAS.

DEAN RUSK: That's correct

RICHARD RUSK: And we were guilty of that one.

DEAN RUSK: The OAS charter is interpreted by the nation members of the OAS. And the foreign ministers of the OAS met and decided to organize a peace force for the Dominican Republic to arrange an interim government that could have elections so that the Dominican people themselves could decide what kind of government they wanted there.

RICHARD RUSK: That is true.

DEAN RUSK: Those who have the official responsibility for interpreting and applying the OAS charter made those decisions.

RICHARD RUSK: That is true, but we didn't go to the OAS until after we had landed the Marines.

DEAN RUSK: Ah, yeah, but again, that was the first phase; that was the protection of American and foreign nationals.

RICHARD RUSK: Nevertheless, at the first meeting of the OAS when you fellows did meet with those representatives it was stormy as hell. There was a lot of criticism of U.S. action. The feeling was that the OAS was again being circumvented. We were exercising our--

DEAN RUSK: Well, you'll just have to count the votes. The QAS did decide to organize the peace force and put themselves behind the organization of the interim government to hold elections.

RICHARD RUSK: And you ended up putting in office a fellow who had been foreign minister for Juan Bosch. And as a matter of fact--

DEAN RUSK: You mean for Trujillo.

RICHARD RUSK: No, no. For Bosch.

DEAN RUSK: [Joaquin] Balaguer.

RICHARD RUSK: No, an interim fellow. What's that guy's name? [tape interruption] [Warren I.] Cohen's is one, and [Theodore] Draper's is another, and LBJ's *The Vantage Point* are the three books I used. You yourself became a little bit disillusioned as did the administration over the performance and the capabilities of this fellow Imbert and you began to feel that maybe he wasn't the man to do that job. I believe you, McGeorge Bundy, Cyrus Vance, and a few others began to think that perhaps the communist danger had been overexaggerated, and perhaps we should see to what extent Bosch or his representatives could work themselves back in there.

DEAN RUSK: Which could be done only through the holding of an election, unless you wanted us to pull our own coup d'état to establish Juan Bosch back in power at the end of American rifles.

RICHARD RUSK: Was LBJ's attitude possibly a little different than John Kennedy's? Let's get back to that point just for a minute. LBJ's critics would say that his attitude was a bit more indiscriminately anti-communist whereas John Kennedy's was a little bit more sophisticated. That underlay some of Kennedy's reasons for establishing the Alliance for Progress. I think Latin Americans seem to feel that Kennedy was more sensitive to that type of thing. What would be your comment on that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, after all, it was John F. Kennedy who instructed me to go to the Punta del Este conference in early 1962 to get the OAS to expel the Castro government from the OAS. And we did so. That is, the OAS voted with the necessary votes to expel the Castro government from further participation in the OAS on the grounds that Marxist-Leninism was incompatible with the political traditions and institutions of the Western Hemisphere. And John F. Kennedy had me hold a special TV program when I got home to explain what happened and why.

RICHARD RUSK: Special press conference, was it?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. So Kennedy was not in any way disinterested in the appearance of communism in the Western Hemisphere through illegal means. After all, remember he tried to overthrow the Castro regime in Cuba through the Bay of Pigs. So I wouldn't say that Kennedy had a more tolerant attitude toward communism in the Western Hemisphere than did Lyndon Johnson.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. You really think that had Kennedy lived, that this recognition of the Dominican regime would have taken place?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes. And remember that when Lyndon Johnson, in the face of a rapidly deteriorating situation in the Dominican Republic, decided to put the Marines ashore, he used a contingency plan that had been developed under the direct personal instruction of President Kennedy.

SCHOENBAUM: This is a point in [George Wildman] Ball's account that I find very interesting about your role. George Ball makes a statement, and I think it's important. He says that when LBJ went to the nation and explained the Marines going in that he--of course as we know LBJ mentioned only the idea of the American lives, saving American lives.

DEAN RUSK: Well, that was phase one. That was the sole purpose of phase one.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. I understand that, and there certainly were grounds for that. But Ball makes the statement that you advised him, even at that time, to say something in his speech about what you just said: free institutions and the importance of preserving free institutions. And yet there was nothing in that speech. First of all, do you recollect doing that? Ball makes the statement that you did it. And secondly, wouldn't that have been a good thing to get that out and tell people that this is important, and people would understand that.

DEAN RUSK: Well I think we dropped that idea from LBJ's first speech because that required reference to the OAS, and we had not yet taken this situation to the OAS. Nor did we have the

evidence from all these people who were coming to us out of Santo Domingo, including the Secretary General of Juan Bosch's own party who described the situation for us, told us what was very likely to happen and asked that something be done about it. So, that was phase two. Now, either one of you is perfectly free to be as critical as you want of the Dominican affair. All I can say is what it looked like to me at the time.

RICHARD RUSK: This guy called Joseph--You're the one who gave me the article. I will read it to my dad, but I won't read the whole article into the record. I'm going to read an article to my dad. It's called "In the Dominican Republic, Wounds of War Linger," written by Joseph [B.] Treaster as a special to the *New York Times*. And the date is not here.

SCHOENBAUM: It's May 1, 1985. It's a twenty-year retrospective.

DEAN RUSK: I see.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll go ahead and read it. We'll make it available to the oral history.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: That story you read from the *New York Times* is the kind of story that is strongly shaped by the fellow who writes the story. Somebody else could go down there and write quite a different type of story putting together different pieces. A reporter in the United States, here in June 1985, can write any kind of story he wants to and get a lot of quotes from people about the hostages in Beirut. But, with six-and-a-half million people in the Dominican Republic you don't get unanimity on anything, you get the greatest diversity of views. And those that are picked out and used in the story are pretty much up to the reporter. But, all right, even so, there are elements in that story that help to explain why we did what we did. [Elias] Wessin y Wessin was then in '65 one of the military people in high command. And I remember, one of our people--I'm not sure whether it was Tapley Bennett--went to see Wessin y Wessin and his senior commanders and found them almost in a state of terror. They seemed to be scared out of their wits, didn't know what to do, where to go, anything like that: weren't sure of their own troops. And they simply were not willing to accept responsibility for the safety of American and foreign nationals down there.

RICHARD RUSK: You didn't have either then or now any second thoughts or misapprehensions about the idea of Americans landing twenty thousand troops, helping to put down forces that were seeking to reestablish the only man who had been elected by constitutional means to head that country in the last forty years?

DEAN RUSK: That would have produced a bloodbath. The continuation of that effort would have produced a bloodbath. And the result would have been--

RICHARD RUSK: But it was their bloodbath. I mean, sure we had an obligation to American troops, or American lives, and American civilians, but shouldn't these countries be free to work out their own interests? I must say we can go around and around on this point. It seemed then, and it seems now, that it was kind of heavy-handed. Did you not, yourself, have second thoughts

about this so-called communist threat down there? Didn't you see it as possibly a real thing when you started, and then came to back off from that point of view, and perhaps you realized that the threat had been exaggerated? Did we overreact to the--

DEAN RUSK: Well, you don't know, because the communists are good organizers and highly disciplined and relatively small numbers of them can succeed in imposing a regime on a small country. One doesn't know the answer to that, one can't know the answer to that question "What might have been?" But, in fact, when the people themselves had a chance to choose, they did not go that way. It was pretty clear that the Dominican people did not want a communist dictatorship, nor a Trujillo dictatorship for that matter.

RICHARD RUSK: Well, the analogy I can use is that of the shepherd boy who was constantly crying wolf and, when the real wolves did show up no one listened to him. There are real wolves in the world. And if our anti-communism is of indiscriminate nature and is not accurately assessed, we are running into problems. And it makes it difficult to mobilize the American people to face real crises.

DEAN RUSK: We've never embarked upon a crusade against communism as such. It's communist aggression that has bothered us. After all, the Soviet Union became communist in 1917; we haven't fought a war with the Soviet Union or with communism.

RICHARD RUSK: Well, we participated in an international expedition into the Soviet Union back in those years to try to influence--

DEAN RUSK: Oh, we put a handful of men into Siberia trying to give assistance to a Czech brigade that was making its way across Siberia. And we had a very, very small force along with the British in Murmansk. But these were a couple of gnats on a water buffalo. They had no impact at all upon the situation, and we very quickly pulled those people out.

RICHARD RUSK: There was no threat of aggression in the Dominican Republic in '65.

DEAN RUSK: Well, if it had become a Castro dictatorship, there might well have been.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: Let's go to some particular questions that may not be easy to answer because the facts are obscure. But, on Sunday, April 25, what some people call the day of decision--that was the day that [Donald J.] Reid Cabral resigned and that Wessin y Wessin was still fighting the rebel colonels. And the rebel colonels were somehow converted to Bosch, or they were at least saying they were Bosch supporters. I don't necessarily believe this, but I think it's important to clear up the record. The charge is made that, at this point, the colonels were going to carry the day and that the U.S. attaches, the military attaches at the embassy, are the ones that gave the sign to Wessin y Wessin. Wessin y Wessin was ready to give up and that would mean that the rebel colonels would take over with all they represented, or didn't represent. And the U.S. attaches ordered the attack, and they started the attack on the national palace. And in effect, the charge is made that the U.S. started the conditions that resulted in the danger three days later to

the Americans at the Embajador Hotel. Would you like to comment on that? That's not the way you saw it, obviously.

DEAN RUSK: Well, to begin with, the so-called rebel colonels were not a part of a unified group. Each one had his own band. The situation in Santo Domingo was such that these different bands had broken into police stations and armories and things like that, armed themselves, and they themselves were fighting with each other for control of the city. There were neighborhoods which had been taken over by a particular band in which members of other bands simply could not go. And there was no organized unity in the so-called left movement of that time. And that was part of the scene which was described to us when people from these different bands, as well as from the political parties, came out of Santo Domingo and told us about the situation in the city. It was just a chaotic situation. Nobody was in control as far as the left was concerned. They weren't even unified in wanting to bring Juan Bosch back to power.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall what our contacts were with Wessin y Wessin and his forces back then? Were we advising him or encouraging him to do different things?

DEAN RUSK: I'm sure that we were. I know that we were in touch with Wessin y Wessin and his commanders about the situation on the island, because we saw him from time to time, got his judgment, estimate as to the situation, and what was likely to happen. And as I say, there was a time there when he and his people were just in a state of terror--they didn't know what to do. They were at wit's end and scared for their lives.

SCHOENBAUM: Reid Cabral, too. Tap Bennett points out the Reid Cabral took shelter with the embassy.

RICHARD RUSK: Stayed in his house for a few days.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, sure

RICHARD RUSK: Did we encourage Wessin y Wessin to move against the rebel forces? Obviously we weren't in a position to order him to move, but did we strongly advise him to move?

DEAN RUSK: I forget the details; I really don't recall that. Tap Bennett would know more about that.

SCHOENBAUM: Now, after the Marines went in and after the OAS action, and when it was a question of putting the pieces back together, or in other words, phase two, what was your role there? Specifically, you may remember that the American advisors close to the President seemed to be split. On the one hand there was the [Abe] Fortas mission, and McGeorge Bundy supported the Fortas effort at kind of putting together an interim government that reflected the Bosch people. And that proved impossible. And then there was the other group that thought that was impossible and that was a waste of time. What was your role there? How were you advising the President? What were you and LBJ telling each other?

DEAN RUSK: I forget the details. What I wanted was an interim government that was more or less neutral politically, which could simply be there for the purpose of holding elections, and then let the elections decide what the outcome would be. And the key concern was to have an interim government which would, indeed, permit free elections to occur. And as I recall, we had that kind of an interim government. After some considerable agony we were able to put it together and the elections which were held were generally regarded as free elections.

SCHOENBAUM: What about the Fortas mission, though? Were you in on the planning of that? How did LBJ think of that, calling his old friend Fortas?

RICHARD RUSK: Abe Fortas?

SCHOENBAUM: Abe Fortas' secret mission.

DEAN RUSK: I don't think that made that--

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BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

DEAN RUSK: --was particularly enamored of that, because Abe Fortas was not carrying any kind of responsibility and didn't have to bear the consequences of anything that he suggested. And also, Abe Fortas was more of a hawk than I was on such matters. I wanted a more moderate, middle-of-the-road kind of approach to these questions.

RICHARD RUSK: LBJ, in *The Vantage Point*, reports a pretty crucial meeting of April 28th, April 29th, in which he had the unanimous consent of his advisors. Do you recall any--

DEAN RUSK: To do what?

SCHOENBAUM: That was the day that the Marines--

RICHARD RUSK: That would probably be for the landing of the Marines.

DEAN RUSK: Oh, yeah; okay, yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall any differences within the administration as to whether or not we should, in fact, go ahead and land U.S. Marines?

DEAN RUSK: At that point I don't recall any, because the reports we were getting from the Dominican Republic were that American nationals had been gathered into the Embajador Hotel out on the edge of town, that some of these armed elements were out there harassing them and firing tommy guns all over the lobby, and things of that sort: terrorizing the American nationals.

And it did appear that they were in real danger. And neither the armed forces nor the police could accept, would accept responsibility for their safety. And so we thought this was a situation that required us to act in behalf of the safety of American citizens and foreign nationals.

SCHOENBAUM: Now the critics, again--just to be a devil's advocate here, because this is important to get it on record. The critics say that that firing with the tommy guns and things happened the day before, and even after that happened, Tap Bennett told the President that they didn't need the Marines yet. And then the next day, some over twenty-four hours later after that incident in the Embajador Hotel, then the Marines were ordered in. In other words, critics say that that couldn't have been the real reason because that happened and they didn't send in the Marines right away, that happened and then they didn't act.

DEAN RUSK: Well, if they say it was not the real reason, it's just nonsense.

SCHOENBAUM: Okay, its good to get that on record.

DEAN RUSK: After all, you don't know that, if the day the Marines landed these fellows were not in the Embajador Hotel shooting all over the place, that was no sign they wouldn't be there the day after shooting all over the place.

SCHOENBAUM: That's good to have on the record, because I think that's a cheap shot that Draper made.

DEAN RUSK: Well, any time anything turns out relatively successfully, there will always be those who will then ask, well, was this trip necessary?

SCHOENBAUM: Whenever things don't work out successfully.

DEAN RUSK: I mean, there are a good many people now who would question whether the crisis over the missiles in Cuba was necessary. Well, that retrospect is not the luxury of those who are having to make decisions.

RICHARD RUSK: Cohen says in his book that the net result of the Dominican intervention was a real loss of credibility, not only as far as the press is concerned, but with the foreign policy establishment.

DEAN RUSK: I don't believe that, I think this--

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember getting a lot of heat?

DEAN RUSK: If I may say so, I think you fellows are attaching much more importance to the Dominican affair than it appeared to us at the time to be. It was one of those passing episodes. It had to be looked at, decisions made as to what, if anything, we should do. It came out with an elected president, an elected government, which on the whole has done pretty well over the years. And the attitudes that were attached to Juan Bosch have come back through elections into a government in the Dominican Republic, and our relations with that government have been

good. So it was not one of those great dividing lines in policy that some people have tried to make it.

SCHOENBAUM: In phase two, then, was there a debate in the administration about the formation of the interim government?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, there were varying views about just who ought to be in such an interim government, sure. I mean, there always is internal debate in the government about a lot of questions of that sort. But, I think it worked out reasonably well. An interim government was put together, it did hold elections, and Balaguer was elected and took over the government. Sure there were many differences of view.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you in close contact with Ellsworth Bunker then? Tap Bennett says that he, [Bruce] Palmer, and Bunker met almost daily. They had dinner together every night, and they kind of worked out problems.

DEAN RUSK: I remember talking occasionally with Bunker on the telephone, but I forget the details.

SCHOENBAUM: Advising him about certain things. Of course, then he was wearing kind of a mixed hat, wasn't he, an OAS hat?

DEAN RUSK: Well, Ellsworth Bunker had tremendous standing within the Organization of American States. I remember going to an OAS meeting there in Washington once and talking to one of my Latin American friends. And Ellsworth Bunker came toward us and this Latin American friend said, "Here comes the angel." He said, "You don't know how much we respect Ellsworth Bunker in Latin America." He had tremendous standing there.

SCHOENBAUM: Who was Ellsworth Bunker technically responsible to, though? Someone in the OAS?

DEAN RUSK: He was a member of the council of the OAS, but he was responsible to me and to the President.

SCHOENBAUM: That seems to be an ambivalent situation that he was there on behalf of the OAS, but also he's there responsible to you and the President.

DEAN RUSK: Well, that happens to every other member of the OAS and any commissions that they might establish.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you responsible for the appointment of John [Bartlow] Martin? Was he your choice to be the fellow to go down there and try to sort things out? He was an old [Adlai Ewing] Stevenson liberal and known to be somewhat sympathetic toward Juan Bosch.

DEAN RUSK: John Bartlow Martin. I don't think he was my nominee. I don't know whether Tom Mann had much to do with his appointment, it was an LBJ appointment. But John Bartlow

Martin was, himself, a little like Juan Bosch. He was a writer and a dreamer and he was not an experienced diplomat in a professional sense. And so we didn't always take his advice or recommendations offhand, just *carte blanche*. But, for the period, he did a reasonably good job and managed to move things along.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you read his book?

RICHARD RUSK: Cohen has stated in his book that in this mission that went down involved with Vance, Bundy, and Thomas Mann, that McGeorge Bundy and Vance more or less wanted to try to go along with some of Juan Bosch people in trying to work up a solution that involved him. Yet Thomas Mann was very hard-line opposed to it. You were more or less sympathetic to McGeorge Bundy and Vance. Mann left that delegation down there, came back to Washington, and personally advised LBJ, and they came out with a pretty hard-line point of view that more reflected Mann's position than the former. Do you recall your role in that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I thought that in an interim government which had to be a kind of coalition government, that the General Juan Bosch point of view ought to be represented, but I was not in favor of Juan Bosch, himself having much to do with it. He had already demonstrated his incompetence and if he was going to come back to power, he would have a chance to do so in an election. But, no, I think there were some differences of view there, but I approved of the way LBJ told Tom Mann to try to bring it off.

RICHARD RUSK: You did approve of LBJ siding with Tom Mann in that split within that mission?

DEAN RUSK: Sure. Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: Juan Bosch makes the statement that he was [tape interruption.] Okay this is an article, Friday, June 21, 1985, by Irving Kristol in the *Wall Street Journal* criticizing Grenada on the basis that "one of the most distressing aspects of American foreign policy today is the felt need of our government to lie to the American people when it takes an action." And it says, "The invasion of Grenada was the most illuminating case in point." And he goes on to say, I'll paraphrase, that the danger to the American medical students was not the real reason why we sent the troops into Grenada, that the real reason was our own fear of a "Soviet puppet state in our area." And then he says, "Why did we lie?" And then he goes on to say that we lied about Grenada because we are trapped into an irrelevant system of international law, and this irrelevant system of international law, he says, was the one founded and emerged under Woodrow Wilson with the founding of the United Nations. And this irrelevant system of international law speaks of a worldwide community of nations dedicated to the preservation of peace and makes illegal certain actions such as impermissible aggression, i.e. the violation of any and all existing borders by unilateral military action. Now, he says that this is irrelevant, and that we therefore searched for a legalistic fiction when we invaded Grenada because we tried to uphold this irrelevant system of international law based on no violation of other countries' sovereign nations' borders. And he calls for a new system of international law which would justify unilateral intervention. Basically he says, "The sad fact of the matter is that we do not have available, in the American political tradition, a mode of thinking about foreign policy that is appropriate to our condition

today. The older nationalist isolationism is clearly irrelevant, okay, but Theodore Roosevelt's combination of nationalism and internationalism seemed to offer promise of an interesting alternative until it foundered on a foolish mimicry of European imperialism. Liberal internationalism, because it is incarnate in a host of international treaties and organizations, still predominates, but it is theory, empty of substance, and at war with reality. A new way of looking and thinking about American foreign policy will eventually emerge. What one may call it, reality therapy will see to it. Meanwhile, however, we shall have to rely on our common sense and moral intuition to cope with the challenges of the near future." Now maybe that's why the--do you have a comment on that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I don't agree with his rather scoffing approach to present international law, or, indeed, to its effectiveness. A lot of this tongue-in-cheek attitude toward international law comes from sheer ignorance that the overwhelming majority of international frontiers are peaceful, the overwhelming percentage of treaties are complied with, the overwhelming percentage of disputes are settled by peaceful means. Now, it's true that the governments of the world have not yet become willing to use international law to prevent the use of force against another across international frontiers, and that's still some unfinished business. But I just don't agree that we are in a situation where international law is more or less irrelevant. I wouldn't like to see us go back to the, what seems to me to be his suggestion, to a system where power becomes the criterion by which people decide whether they will act or not. But, no, I think in the Grenada affair it would be oversimplification to put it just on the danger to the medical students, although a good many of those medical students said afterwards they thought they were in danger. Who can make that judgment? Somebody has to make it. But also, remember that half a dozen of the neighboring island countries had told the United States at that time they were very much concerned about what was happening in Grenada and urged the United States to do something about it. Well, that's not something you can just brush aside. That has to be taken into account.

RICHARD RUSK: You know, one of the things I liked about the Grenadan affair and this Dominican thing is that we may have been a little off base, however we did things overtly. You know, we were entirely open with what we did down there, as opposed to all this covert screwing around we've been doing in a situation like Nicaragua.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. I prefer overt action to covert action on the whole.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: LBJ took a lot of heat for having exaggerated the situation down there and making some wild statements at press conferences and things like fifteen hundred headless bodies lying around the streets of Santo Domingo.

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall his putting a figure on that. He talked about headless bodies, but apparently they did find a few. (laughter) Well, LBJ was not a man to understate the point he was trying to make. (laughter)

SCHOENBAUM: This was just his personality, wasn't it?

DEAN RUSK: Well, when he was giving people the LBJ treatment, he didn't pull any punches.

RICHARD RUSK: How did all that affect you, and affect policy, the fact that he did overstate the case in certain ways? He did so in a fashion that hurt our credibility. Do you recall specifically doing anything about that to try to counteract that?

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall particularly because this was, you know, another episode. I didn't find that we had lost any credibility, for example among the Latin American countries, as a result of the Dominican affair. As a matter of fact, we were working very closely with quite a number of them during this period. And I don't even recall that we got all that much flack, say, from the Congress: Got some from some elements of the news media, but this was--

RICHARD RUSK: Mostly the intellectuals that gave you a hard time on the Dominican.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I don't take the general view that the end justifies the means, because there are means which are so extreme that the end cannot justify them. But, on the whole, I think the way this came out gives a good indication of what it was we were trying to accomplish. We did accomplish that and so there it is.

RICHARD RUSK: Had LBJ not stepped in as vigorously as he did and been the desk officer for the Dominican Crisis, if you were more or less calling the shots, although with his authorization and of course with him making the official decisions constitutionally, how might it have gone differently, Pop? Would you have more or less followed the same steps as you did?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I think that I would. Based on the information that we had at hand about what was happening on the island and the situation in which American and foreign nationals were, I would have put the Marines ashore. I think there's no question about that. Now, what happened later, turned upon all these people that we were getting information from about what was happening down there, and particularly in the capital city, and their predictions that there was going to be a bloodbath and it would wind up with either a Trujillo-type dictatorship or a Castro-type dictatorship. We certainly didn't want either one of those. And those were not just a matter of domestic concern. Trujillo had been punished by the OAS for tinkering around in the affairs of Venezuela, and Castro had been punished by the OAS for his activities, including landing men and arms on the coast of Venezuela in 1964. So these were not just domestic matters, these also were questions with considerable international repercussions.

RICHARD RUSK: Let me ask you a question about your concern about communism taking over down there. How is it that just a band of small men are able to become many men? How do the few become the many?

DEAN RUSK: Well, take a look at the Castro experience. When he was making his drive for power, there was a good deal of sympathy for him around the hemisphere and in this country because he was promising the establishment of a liberal constitutional government, elections,

things of that sort. But then, when he seized power that relatively small group of communists around him took charge. They refused to have elections, they established a dictatorship, and very soon they started monkeying around in other countries in the hemisphere. So, it doesn't take too many of a tightly organized group to seize power if the other elements are diffuse and weak and disorganized and uncertain. A determined group can do a lot in a situation of that sort.

RICHARD RUSK: Are they keeping people any worse off today under Castro than, say, they were under the last few years of the [Fulgencio] Batista regime? Isn't that the fundamental question? We could ask that of China.

DEAN RUSK: Some things have been done that have benefited the Cuban people in the field of public health and education and things of that sort.

SCHOENBAUM: What I think is insidious is people that don't attack the policy. I think the policy is fair game. If they disagree they should say so, but what they do is twist things to impugn. They don't attack the policy; they impugn the integrity of the decision maker. And they keep doing this and keep doing this, and usually their facts are off base. They can't prove what they say, but the whole point of the article is to impugn the decision maker. They don't attack the policy, they impugn the decision maker. And I think that is destructive to not only the people involved and unfair to the people involved, but I think its destructive to the body politic.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think that's true, but that's the kind of society we are. But it's usually very difficult to get into people's motivations.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: But there are times when your motivation is utterly simple, and yet people try to make it complicated. For example, I had a man in here this past week who was studying our decision to put the Seventh Fleet between Taiwan and the mainland at the time of the outbreak of the Korean War. The reason we did that is utterly simple. At the beginning of the Korean invasion we did not know what that entailed: whether it meant a general communist onslaught in Asia, or what--or whether it would be limited to the Korean peninsula. So we put the Seventh Fleet between Taiwan and mainland China to discourage any idea that mainland China might attack Taiwan during that period. Now that was it. Utterly. Period. Simple. But, somehow people, some people, are reluctant to accept a simple notion of that sort and they try to make it complicated.

RICHARD RUSK: Did this fellow have any tendency to believe you now?

DEAN RUSK: Well, he was looking for more complicated answers and there were none.

RICHARD RUSK: In the same fashion that I do.

DEAN RUSK: There wasn't any. Here I was an eyewitness participant in that decision about the Seventh Fleet, and I'm one of the few surviving participants in that decision, and I just told him,

very simply, that that was why we did it, and all the documentation, and all the books, and all the articles are not worth a damn compared to my statement that that was why we did it.

SCHOENBAUM: That's a good point.

DEAN RUSK: But people generally make a mistake in assuming that people in government are either knaves or fools.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, that's absolutely right.

DEAN RUSK: And a lot of people make their living out of playing on that sort of thing.

RICHARD RUSK: You used to say rather plaintively at these press conferences, "I am not the village idiot."

DEAN RUSK: Yeah

RICHARD RUSK: Okay, Tom. Thanks.

DEAN RUSK: Okay, have you got anything else, Rich?

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. We're talking about whether or not--

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: --Cuban people and are they in fact worse off under Castro than under a fellow like Batista. This whole issue of communism in the Third World raises some questions. One is: "Are we so sure, or should we be so sure, that what we are trying to establish around the world is really all that preferable to their systems?" In view of the extreme conditions that some of the folks are up against, the degree of poverty, the disease, health problems, lack of productivity, the degree of social and political repression in their own countries, the lack of a democratic tradition, as illustrated by the continent of Africa where democracy has been such a difficult thing to establish, should we be so sure that what we have to offer is the preferred way? Critics of our policy would suggest that people inside these own countries should be free to make their own arrangements. They become bandits only when they move outside their territories. We assume too much at times in our anticommunism. We assume that the few will, in fact, become the many, and that they will indeed become aggressive against their neighbors. Can you respond to that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we've never appointed ourselves to be the den mother of the universe on these things. There are fifty countries in Africa, and we've had a minimum role in influence among those countries in Africa. Now, we do have a commitment to human freedom.

RICHARD RUSK: Africans make poor material for democracy. (laughter)

DEAN RUSK: Well, I'm not sure. We do have a commitment to freedom, and where there is a chance to encourage it we are likely to do so. But I think it is fair for us to point out that in their haste to get on with development, that a totalitarian, centrally-planned economy is not the way to do it.

RICHARD RUSK: Its very inefficient, economically.

DEAN RUSK: Very inefficient from the point of view of the economy of the country. And you're seeing considerable changes in, say, Eastern Europe and in China, trying to get away from that muscle-bound, highly-centralized kind of economic system. So, I think it's fair for us to point out that if they want to develop, their chances for development are better if they are a part of a general free world system rather than these rigidly organized societies. See, there are about, what, fifty military dictatorships in the Third World these days. Now, when you have that, you know that the first claim on the resources of those countries will be the armed forces, and that doesn't do anybody any good.

RICHARD RUSK: But we tend to prefer those people, and in fact will back those regimes in situations where domestic insurgence seem to be turning toward communism or have communists within the ranks. We haven't appointed ourselves the den mother of the world, but we damn sure have appointed ourselves the den mother of democracy in this ideological struggle with communism.

DEAN RUSK: Well, it's right for us to affirm our own basic political commitments, those to be found in the Declaration of Independence and other places. Other types of regimes go all out using far more resources than we do in trying to preach their systems. It seems to me appropriate for us to favor democratic values and democratic regimes. Among other things, it is easier for us to deal with other democracies than it is for us to deal with dictatorships, either of the right or of the left. And so, we have some preferences, but that doesn't mean that we go around the world acting in a way to try to impose these systems on other countries.

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: Something by McGeorge Bundy called "Beware of Aiding the Contras." I don't know where it came from; I'll have to read that part of it into the record at a later date. This is a recent newspaper column. It must have been written Spring of 1985.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: I have great respect for anything that McGeorge Bundy has to say; he's a very able and wise man. I personally would think that if Nicaragua and Cuba are in fact sending arms and men into neighboring countries--El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica--then I would take whatever action needed to be taken overtly to stop it. For example, to have American planes, including night fighters, shoot down any unidentified plane coming out of Nicaragua over El Salvador or these other countries. I would patrol the coasts of El Salvador to be sure that none of this material was coming in there by sea, stopping ships and searching them, seizing those that were carrying contraband to the rebels in El Salvador. And if, for example, there's a problem in

Costa Rica, long a democratic country without armed forces of its own, if that threat to Costa Rica builds up, I would be more than glad to see American armed forces to go in there if the Costa Ricans wanted them. In other words, I would be inclined to act overtly rather than covertly to stop what I think has to be stopped.

Now, the administration has had a problem in establishing the factual case just what it is that Nicaragua is doing in these neighboring countries. They have, in fact, put out a good deal of information on this, and I've just recently received a stack of things they've put out. But the news media here don't use it, so the American people don't have a very clear idea as to just what it is that Nicaragua is doing that we object to. But having made that factual case, then we should not hesitate, in my judgment, to act overtly to put a stop to it, because I do not believe that we can accept this kind of continuing penetration of American countries by Marxist-Leninists to support revolutionary action in countries in this hemisphere.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you subscribe to McGeorge Bundy's thesis that covert action over the last twenty-five years has been a dismal failure and it tends to undermine the very objectives that we are trying to achieve?

DEAN RUSK: It depends a little bit on the situation, because it's a little hard to generalize about covert activity. In general, I think we've expected too much from covert activity, and I tend to agree with him on that. Although, I wouldn't want to see us give up the capability of engaging in certain types of covert activity because there may be some situations where covert activity is the only alternative to war. And I think covert activity, if it had any chance of being successful, would be preferable to war. But we have to use it with the greatest discretion. I share McGeorge Bundy's skepticism about the effectiveness of covert action.

END OF SIDE 2