

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection  
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Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas J. Schoenbaum  
1985 November

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, how about starting with some generalized comments.

DEAN RUSK: Well, let me make a preliminary remark about the Halberstam book [*The Best and the Brightest*]. He put a good many words in my mouth and thoughts in my mind in different places in that book. But at no time did he ever try to be in touch with me during the preparation of his book: not a letter, not a postcard, not a telephone call, and not an interview. The result is there are a number of factual errors in the book which he could easily have avoided simply by being in touch. So in terms of reportorial technique, it's a pretty faulty book in my judgment.

RICHARD RUSK: It was a significant book, widely read, and it's been referred to and often used as a source for a lot of comment on Vietnam. I don't think it's necessary that this tape should be regarded as your response to David Halberstam. I'm more interested in whatever additional insights and anecdotes that some reference to this book might elicit from you, Pop. And maybe we can approach it from that point of view. Any other general comments about this book?

DEAN RUSK: It was a widely-read book. It was, I think, a best-seller for a while. But it is not history because he did not cite sources in the way that historians are expected to, so that other historians can check on the same sources, and check on whether they thought Halberstam's interpretation was correct. As I said earlier it's a bad job of reporting, but it was a readable book. And it elicited a great deal of attention and sold a lot of copies I'm sure.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you ever meet David Halberstam?

DEAN RUSK: I may have on one or two occasions, but I forget.

RICHARD RUSK: Okay. Page six, Pop. Will you comment on Dean [Gooderham] Acheson's relationship with Harry Truman?

DEAN RUSK: Well, Dean Acheson was a very strong supporter of Harry Truman and admired him very much. During the campaign of 1948 Dean Acheson was one of the few people in public life who demonstrated publicly his attachment to Harry Truman. I remember on one occasion Harry Truman came back to Washington from one of his railroad trips and the only person who was down at Union Station to meet Harry Truman was Dean Acheson. No, I think Acheson did not take a snobbish attitude toward Harry Truman. He respected Harry Truman's ability to grasp the essentials of a situation and to make decisions, sometimes courageous decisions, and live with the results. Now Dean Acheson's manner--his mustache, his impeccable clothing, his aristocratic appearance--may have left the impression that he patronized everybody. But this was not true in the relations between Acheson and Truman.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. Page eight. He makes a notation about talking about [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy lunching with a man [Robert Abercrombie Lovett], "--who not only symbolized a group, the establishment, and was a power broker who carried the proxies for the great law firms and financial institutions, etc...Kennedy believed in the establishment mystique." What about this talk about an establishment? Do you believe in it? Does it exist?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think it's nonsense to suppose that there is an establishment in the sense of a boterie of people who assume the right to run the foreign policy of the United States. I have been called a member of the establishment, and I've speculated as to when it was that I entered the establishment. I sure wasn't a part of it in Cherokee County, Georgia, (laughter) nor going to Lee Street School, Boys High School, Davidson College. I suppose that I qualified for the establishment when I became president of the Rockefeller Foundation in New York. But it's natural that any President is going to call upon those who have had a longtime interest in and involvement with our foreign relations. And that means that there will be a group of people in places like New York, Washington, perhaps San Francisco, who are in that group. Presidents don't like to surround themselves with complete amateurs in such matters. So when you have people like a John J. McCloy or a Henry [M.] Wriston, longtime president of Brown, or David Rockefeller--people of that sort--you call upon their views because their views are valuable to you. You may not always agree with them. But I do not myself believe that the Council on Foreign Relations in New York or the Trilateral Commission somehow are combinations that run the foreign policy of the United States. They are basically discussion groups. I was a member of the Council but never a member of the Trilateral Commission. Within those groups are the greatest diversity of opinions. There is no corporate view on foreign policy matters in the Council on Foreign Relations or the Trilateral Commission because of these wide differences of view. I'd be glad to see a Council on Foreign Relations in every sizable community in the United States, to promote the discussion of and interest in these great issues of foreign policy. But I think the notion of an establishment has been greatly overdrawn. I was not waited upon by representatives of big business, groups of that sort, pressing me to move in one direction rather than another on foreign policy matters. Almost every bureau in the Department had a panel of outside advisors, some advisory group drawn from academicians as well as people who had practical experience in some of these matters. And sometimes those advisory groups proved to be very useful. Dean Acheson, by the way, was rather k disdainful of such groups. He called them "just another bunch of sons of bitches from out of town," because the members of these advisory groups don't share responsibility. They have a free ride. They can express any opinion they want to and nothing happens. They don't have to live with the results like people in government do. But it became a fad in the fashion for a while for people to talk about the establishment. But I think that's been greatly overdrawn.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah, very good. We head to page twenty-two. And this section of the book starts out with: "The second wing of the party had its roots in the [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt era. And its chief proponent was [Anna] Eleanor Roosevelt."

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, any comments about Adlai Stevenson, either his relationship with John Kennedy or his influence on the Democratic party?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I was a very strong supporter of Adlai Stevenson in 1952 and 1956. I had known him in the early days of the United Nations and had a great regard for him. He was brilliant on the platform in producing ideas that were worth thinking about, and he was eloquent, articulate. In his campaign of 1952 I think he made a genuine mistake when he tried to run as though there had never been any such President as Harry Truman. He tried to sweep Harry Truman under the rug. Now there were millions of people around the country who had great respect and affection for Harry Truman. And I think that was a tactical mistake on Adlai Stevenson's part. Now perhaps no Democrat could have defeated the war hero, Dwight [David] Eisenhower. But I supported him in both campaigns while we were living in Westchester County. He once came to Scarsdale to make a talk.

RICHARD RUSK: That one we've got.

DEAN RUSK: Okay. Now, when I met with President-elect Kennedy in his house in Georgetown, December 1960--the first time I had ever met him--we talked about various possibilities for Secretary of State. He had two or three names on his mind, and I added two or three names. But the first name I raised with him was that of Adlai Stevenson to be Secretary of State. But it was clear that he shied away from that possibility, perhaps for a combination of reasons. I suspect one of them was the role that Adlai Stevenson had played in the Democratic Convention of 1960. He was on again, off again. He apparently refused to make a nominating speech for John F. Kennedy. He was a complicating and rather indecisive factor at the time of the Democratic Convention.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah, he was sort of a complicating and indecisive man.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I'll come back to that in just a minute. One of the things that I had to tell Kennedy myself before he learned it from somebody else was that, during that Democratic Convention of 1960, I, as one of the leading Democrats in Westchester County, sent a telegram to [William] Averell Harriman, who was the head of the New York delegation, saying, "Don't be a damn fool; Support Adlai Stevenson."

RICHARD RUSK: See what happens when you sign those telegrams, Pop? When you commit yourself in writing.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. I told Kennedy that before he announced my appointment, and he laughed. But I think there was also a thought in Kennedy's mind that he did not want to be in any way dominated by Adlai Stevenson. After all, Adlai Stevenson had been the standard bearer for the Democratic party in two campaigns. He was perhaps much better known around this country, and around the world, than was John F. Kennedy. But in any event, it was clear that he had no intention whatever of making Adlai Stevenson Secretary of State. I did press him very hard during that morning's talk we had down at West Palm Beach to telephone Adlai Stevenson right then and there and do his best to persuade him to take the United Nations job. And Kennedy did so. And it was a rather long conversation. Now when a President tries to get someone like that to take that U.N. job, he has to build up the job in the mind of the other fellow. And as I listened to what Kennedy said about the importance of that U.N. job I wondered what role was left for the

President and the Secretary of State. (laughter) But that's par for the course. That's happened before. On Adlai Stevenson's alleged indecisiveness, apparently those who knew him when he was Governor of Illinois did not find that to be a problem. But some of that came out during the campaign when some of his close advisors felt that he would not come down and make a decision on a particular point and go with it. That he kept playing with ideas. He was a very imaginative and very intelligent fellow. And he could see the disadvantages of almost any course of action. Also he was a man who loved the exchange of ideas. In that sense he was very much like John F. Kennedy. And he sometimes would play the role of the devil's advocate in order to get other people to develop points of argument that he himself might want to make later, when he was taking the point of view they were advocating. My chief experience with him on this point had to do with his role at the United Nations. He was brilliant in his speeches, a very articulate fellow. He was a rather poor negotiator.

RICHARD RUSK: That point we have.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. But he sometimes would grumble privately about getting too many instructions from the Department of State. But my experience with him was that he was very happy to get those instructions, because he did find it difficult to make up his own mind as to just what we ought to do.

RICHARD RUSK: Page twenty-three: Halberstam tells a joke about Stevenson. It reads: "In the great drawing rooms of Georgetown, such as the Harrimans', they would tell their Stevenson jokes." Stevenson about to give a speech and being told that he would go on in five minutes, asking an aide "Do I have time to go to the bathroom?" Being assured that he did, he then asked, "Do I want to go to the bathroom?" (laughter) You've got your Stevenson jokes, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: I suspect a lot of that, some of that, is manufactured by Halberstam. He puts a lot of words in people's mouth without direct evidence that they, in fact--that's authors' license, I think.

RICHARD RUSK: Anything further about Adlai Stevenson?

DEAN RUSK: Not at this point. No. Adlai Stevenson was a charmer. He could, when he let himself go, he could be a very persuasive and enchanting kind of fellow. He charmed your sister, Peggy [Margaret Elizabeth Rusk Smith].

RICHARD RUSK: That's right, in that ride across town.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: Can you tell that story?

DEAN RUSK: Well, just in general, our daughter Peggy, in her teens, thought Adlai Stevenson one of the greatest fellows in the world, as perhaps he was.

RICHARD RUSK: He took a real interest in kids, you know, unlike a lot of official people who sort of gloss over children.

DEAN RUSK: Adlai was himself a fellow who loved the social life. That was true when he was at the United Nations. He took an active part in the social life of New York City. Indeed, there were times when I thought that he was spending so much time on social activities that he did not give very much attention to the delegates to the United Nations from many of the smaller countries. He seemed to be in a position of being friendly toward the nonaligned countries, but he did not spend all that much time with their delegates up there in making that clear to the delegates.

SCHOENBAUM: He didn't do the nitty gritty? He wasn't a good nitty gritty person?

DEAN RUSK: He did not go after their votes in the way that an Eleanor Roosevelt or John Foster Dulles would do when they were on the U.N. delegation. You see, those two would start off at breakfast in the morning and go right through to midnight, meeting with these people and talking with them, letting them understand that we thought it was important to us as to what their views were. Adlai didn't do that nearly to the same extent. Of course it became a physical problem to keep in personal touch with 140 delegates or so, now 158. Because, you see, the heads of these other delegations don't like to be in touch just with liaison officers on the staff of the U.S. delegate. They want to be in touch with the principal.

SCHOENBAUM: The top man.

DEAN RUSK: And it's very difficult for the top man to get around to talking to all these people. I found that out when I went up there at the beginning of each General Assembly to have bilateral talks with each of the foreign ministers present. It's a big job to get around and see them all.

RICHARD RUSK: Let me read you Halberstam's reconstruction of your phone call to Stevenson when Kennedy made you the offer. Page twenty-eight: "Kennedy, who was annoyed by Stevenson's refusal to accept the offer immediately, and who had decided upon Rusk as Secretary, asked Rusk to call Stevenson. Kennedy took no small amount of pleasure in recounting to friends how Rusk had hooked Stevenson. 'Adlai,' Rusk had said, 'the President has asked me to take this job and it is a sacrifice. But I have given it careful consideration, despite the element of sacrifice and I have decided I cannot refuse. I cannot say no. I feel all of us have a loyalty greater than our own interest. I'm going to be a soldier. I think this is necessary. We need you. The country needs you. I hope you will serve as he has asked you to serve.' In retelling the story to friends, Kennedy would chuckle and say, 'I think old Adlai was really impressed.'" That's Halberstam's reconstruction.

DEAN RUSK: I don't know. That--

RICHARD RUSK: Too much journalistic reinterpretation?

DEAN RUSK: I think a good deal of inventiveness in that.

RICHARD RUSK: An interesting Stevenson remark on page twenty-seven: "If the Kennedys thought him weak and indecisive, he in turn thought them [the Kennedys] arrogant and aggressive.' That young man!' he would tell friends of Jack Kennedy's,' he never says please. He never says thank-you. He never asks for things. He demands them!'"

DEAN RUSK: I doubt that Adlai Stevenson put it that way, partly because that was a misinterpretation of John F. Kennedy. John F. Kennedy was polite and courteous to people. He would say please, he would say thank-you.

RICHARD RUSK: You didn't find that quality of aggressiveness in Kennedy?

DEAN RUSK: I didn't find that personal quality about Kennedy.

RICHARD RUSK: Of course, he used this term in the plural: the Kennedys. The Kennedy people.

DEAN RUSK: Well, there was a bit of that with Bobby [Robert Francis] Kennedy. But I didn't find that in John.

RICHARD RUSK: Okay, let's move on to page thirty-two. And here we get to your ambition, or lack of ambition. Halberstam: "And so Dean Rusk slowly sidled into the prime position."

DEAN RUSK: I want to underline the point that I did not seek the job, and did not campaign for it. It was not my ambition. I already had the best job in the United States: the Presidency of the Rockefeller Foundation. I say the best job in the United States because that's what Harry Truman called it when I left the administration to take up that job. But I never asked anyone to put in a word for me. I was totally surprised. Well, in that first interview I had with President-elect Kennedy in his house in Georgetown, there was not a whisper of any idea that he might call on me to take the job.

RICHARD RUSK: We've got at considerable length your two sessions with him.

DEAN RUSK: Right. So the idea that I somehow campaigned for the job, or that I had a secret ambition for the job, is just nonsense.

RICHARD RUSK: What about this point in Halberstam's article here. It said that, "Similarly, Rusk had, just by chance, a willing citizen duly concerned, had written a letter to the President-elect dated November 22, 1960 on the subject of the electoral college, which also said that the President should work to heal racial scars. 'As a Georgia born citizen who believes that the Supreme Court decision on integration was long overdue,' the letter began, no southern manifesto for Dean Rusk, no Orval Faubus to take his place at the Foundation. Indeed, there seemed to be a mild element of lobbying, for on the same day that Rusk's letter on the South and the electoral college arrived, the prominent Harvard government professor William Yandell Elliott [who like Rusk, had close ties to the past Republican administration] weighed in with a

letter recommending Rusk." And then he quotes a little bit from that letter. Any recollection of any of this?

DEAN RUSK: No. I don't remember either one of those letters.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember writing the President about the electoral college?

DEAN RUSK: No, and I don't remember having any ideas about the electoral college at that time. If I wrote the letter it may be around somewhere. But I just don't remember it.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you know William Yandell Elliott?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I knew Bill Elliott very well. He was a very conservative fellow, but he and I were friends and we had exchanged views on a good many things. He would come down and participate in discussions at the Council of Foreign Relations and I would see him from time to time.

RICHARD RUSK: You don't recall asking Elliott to weigh in with. --

DEAN RUSK: Heavens, no! I didn't ask anybody to weigh in for me.

SCHOENBAUM: But it also makes the point that the Kennedy investigation of Dean Rusk was, as he says, "marginal": just a few phone calls and that kind of thing. Would you agree with that?

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah, what did he say?

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: "The first and last hint of Dean Rusk, the swinger." That's--

DEAN RUSK: When I looked around and saw how other people conducted their private lives, I thought I led a rather dull life. I was not involved in that kind of horseplay, or whatever you want to call it. But there was another point there earlier, at the beginning of that.

SCHOENBAUM: The marginal investigation? The phone call to Dick [Richard Naradof] Goodwin?

DEAN RUSK: Kennedy had in his cabinet a number of people he had never known before. I was one of them; Bob [Robert Strange] McNamara was one of them. But to show you how little I knew of the Kennedy family at the time, during that talent hunt I was told that I had a telephone call from a Sargent Shriver in John F. Kennedy's office. Well, I thought this was some sergeant in the military who had been assigned to President-elect Kennedy as some kind of military assistant or aide, you see. I had no idea who [Robert] Sargent Shriver [Jr.] was. But he had been the head of John F. Kennedy's talent search group, but I just knew nothing about all of this.

RICHARD RUSK: Halberstam's reconstruction of your [Chester Bliss] Bowles meeting you had, the meeting you had--

DEAN RUSK: Chester Bowles would not have put in a word for me because he wanted the job.

RICHARD RUSK: Page thirty-four: It starts with, "By chance Rusk happened to be with Bowles at a Rockefeller Foundation--

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: Did you have trouble communicating with John Kennedy?

DEAN RUSK: That was nonsense. Kennedy and I had a full and free discussion about other people. It's true there was never a word in that first conversation about the possibility that he might ask me to be Secretary of State and I came away from it without the slightest idea that I would be asked to take the job. And I told my colleagues at The Rockefeller Foundation to forget any press speculation, that I would be staying at the Foundation. It was the next morning--I've already told you this--that Kennedy called and told me that he wanted me to take the job.

SCHOENBAUM: And when you got the original call--Is that accurate? When you got the original call you were meeting in Williamsburg?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, Chester Bowles and I both were in the meeting of the Board of Trustees at Colonial Williamsburg. And two or three of us were called out of the room to take calls from Jack Kennedy.

RICHARD RUSK: At various times of the meeting?

SCHOENBAUM: Did you, in fact, ask Bowles, "What do you think he wants?"

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall that I did. I might have. But I don't think that I reported back to Bowles after the conversation. But Kennedy and I, in that first conversation, talked about Robert [Abercrombie] Lovett. But he--

RICHARD RUSK: We've got you at length about your two meetings with Kennedy.

DEAN RUSK: Okay.

RICHARD RUSK: Let me ask you. At the top of page 35--

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: We're talking about the financial cost to people serving in high positions of responsibility in government.

DEAN RUSK: Well, that was a problem.

RICHARD RUSK: And Averell Harriman's comment at the top of page thirty-five, when he said you'd have your pick of jobs when you left the Department.

DEAN RUSK: Well, that's nonsense. Averell and I never talked about that. But there was a financial problem for me in taking on that job as Secretary of State. I had not had any accumulation of any resources. The pay of the Secretary of State was \$25,000 a year. And I had one son in college and another son and daughter headed for college. And I didn't see how I was going to swing the job itself under those circumstances, because the job of the Secretary of State costs more than \$25,000 a year. And by the way that \$25,000 was subject to income tax. So my original understanding with Kennedy was that I would serve for one term. And I made that point because I didn't see how I could possibly finance more than one term. Now, it's true that when I left the Rockefeller Foundation they established a terminal settlement with me when I left the job as President.

RICHARD RUSK: Part of the old boys establishment club?

DEAN RUSK: Well, not quite that. I had some substantial claims on the Rockefeller Foundation in various respects. And so as a terminal settlement they provided a trust fund of \$100,000, payable in annual installments over a period of five years. It was a blind trust handled, I think, by the Chase Manhattan Bank. And had it not been for that, which I ate up, I simply could not have functioned on the job as Secretary of State. To begin with, I had to buy about \$2500 worth of monkey clothes. I had to get a white tie and tails, which I had never had before. I had to get a swallow-tailed morning coat, a short morning coat, striped trousers, black vests, top hat, an overcoat with a velvet collar on it.

RICHARD RUSK: You couldn't rent those things?

DEAN RUSK: And most of those things, except for the white tie and tails, I only wore once or twice during the whole time I was Secretary of State.

RICHARD RUSK: Mom sure had a closet full of stuff; I remember that. Several closets.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: You know, it's interesting that one of Halberstam's themes here is that, first of all, he makes the point about you being part of the establishment and in the establishment. Then his whole theme--I'm talking about page 36--is that "Rusk didn't fit in," and "he knew that Georgetown cut him up." This idea of Rusk not communicating is, again, a phrase that Halberstam uses two or three times in these two or three pages, not communicating with Kennedy. That's a contradiction in terms. Do you have any--

DEAN RUSK: Well, there was just never any problem about my communication with Kennedy. Now these communications were official; they were not personal. They were not gossipy, social kinds of chatter, that kind of thing. But there was never any problem of communication between me and Kennedy. So that part of it--

RICHARD RUSK: Maybe that's the wrong way to put it. McGeorge Bundy was very impressed with the meeting that he shared with you in the fifties with the Rockefeller Panel Reports. He did think, knowing what he knew of you briefly, and knowing what he had known of John Kennedy, that there might be a problem of communication on a different level, that maybe your style of communication was just different. You probably shared many of the same presumptions about government and foreign policy, but your personal styles were different. He thought there might have been some communication problems along those lines.

DEAN RUSK: Well, my background was one of modest means all through my life. I didn't have a place at Cape Cod, Hyannis Port, or anything like that. I didn't have a place at West Palm Beach. I didn't move in those circles. That was a world that I had not participated in, had no desire to participate in, and could not have afforded to even have tried to participate in.

RICHARD RUSK: You weren't even member of the local Scarsdale Golf Club, Pop.

DEAN RUSK: I didn't join that club because they then had a very sharp religious discrimination policy. And I wasn't going to join a club to which I could not invite the trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation.

RICHARD RUSK: I used to sneak onto that course anyway and get my nine holes in.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. But, no, Kennedy and I had quite different backgrounds. That might have led some to speculate about this question of participation, of communication. But my communications with him were those between a Secretary of State and a President. Period.

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BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

DEAN RUSK: --and he always called me "Mr. Secretary." He never called me by my first name. At a dinner at the White House once I was sitting next to Jacqueline Kennedy, and at one point she said, "You know, it's very significant that my husband always calls you Mr. Secretary." Well, I wasn't going to say, "Gee, what was the significance?" And she didn't volunteer. But my relations with him were close, but official. They were not personal. And I preferred it that way. I'd learned from George [Catlett] Marshall that there should be a little bit of an arm's-length relationship among people who are carrying high public responsibility so that personal relationships would not intrude into the consideration of public policy matters on their merits.

SCHOENBAUM: That remark of Mrs. Kennedy's sounded like this was perhaps a mark of Kennedy's regard. Is that the context in which it was--

DEAN RUSK: It sounded as though it was intended to be a compliment. But I couldn't spell it out, nor did she. But anyhow I was interested in her remark because I knew that he had always called me "Mr. Secretary." I'd never speculated why, because it was alright with me.

SCHOENBAUM: What else did she say to you? (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: Do you have any comments on Jacqueline Kennedy as First Lady?

DEAN RUSK: Well, those were tough years for her. The demands upon the First Lady are very great. But she was ill a good part of the time--pregnant. She had had a miscarriage. She was trying to carve out a little normal kind of life for her two small children. So there were times when I think she found the role of a First Lady quite burdensome. But then she went through that terrible tragedy of November 1963 and handled herself beautifully, as well as anyone possibly could under those circumstances--with dignity, courage, and the rest of it. When she married Aristotle Onassis, I dropped her a little note wishing her happiness, because I felt she had earned the right to find a touch of happiness in any way she could. And I was not among those who criticized her for marrying Aristotle Onassis.

SCHOENBAUM: Have you heard from her at all since--

DEAN RUSK: I haven't heard from her in a long time. But I have more regard for her than some of the people in the media appear to have.

SCHOENBAUM: After the assassination you must have talked to her and given her your condolences.

DEAN RUSK: You know, [William] Manchester's book about the assassination, I think, misrepresented badly one point. That is, the idea that at that time there was a great feud between the family and Lyndon Johnson. It was my job to work out a lot of the details of the funeral and the reception of all these foreign guests, and things of that sort. And I remember that when a question would come up I would ask Sargent Shriver, who was representing the family at that time, what he thought we ought to do. And he would say, "Whatever the President wants." And I would ask LBJ about it and he would say, "Whatever the family wants." They really were treating each other with great consideration during that period. But I just did not detect any sense of feuding between the two sides in that moment of great tragedy.

RICHARD RUSK: Anything further about Jackie Kennedy? Her relationship with John Kennedy that is of any interest to us?

DEAN RUSK: Well, Jacqueline Kennedy caught the imagination of the country and of many other countries. She was a leader in setting styles, her--

RICHARD RUSK: A lovely woman. Very attractive.

DEAN RUSK: A very attractive woman. She was intelligent. I never knew how much compassion she had for what was happening to people all over the country or all over the world.

But she had a very lively interest in the arts, not shared necessarily by her husband, John. I remember having to go to see President Kennedy in the Oval Office and he wasn't there. He was over in the mansion. So I had to send over and tell him that I had to see him over in the Oval Office. He came in and said, "Thanks for calling me out. I was up to here in art." And he struck the edge of his hand along his neck. But he was very proud of Jacqueline's interest in the arts and the things she did in that field.

SCHOENBAUM: How did it happen that you sat next to Jacqueline Kennedy? Did that happen quite a bit at dinner parties?

RICHARD RUSK: That's protocol.

DEAN RUSK: It was a matter of protocol. I would often sit next to her at dinner.

SCHOENBAUM: What was she like as a casual dinner guest?

DEAN RUSK: Well, normally she would have some distinguished foreigner sitting on the other side of her. And quite properly, and perhaps with my encouragement, I would encourage her to spend most of her time with that distinguished foreigner. But we talked about a variety of things, none of them very spectacular.

SCHOENBAUM: Art, music, those things?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I remember on one occasion I found that some donor had left to the government six [Paul] Cezanne paintings, on the condition that they be shown in the White House. But years before I had gotten there the National Gallery had pinched these paintings and were showing them in the National Gallery. And under the terms of the gift, they were supposed to go back to the family if they were not to be shown in the White House. So I worked it out that these paintings would be rotated in the White House, that there always be two or three of them in the White House, while two or three of them might be shown in the National Gallery. Well, that's the sort of thing Jacqueline appreciated. When we started improving the eighth floor of the Department of State under the leadership of Clem [Clement E.] Conger, a certain competition developed between the State Department and Jacqueline Kennedy because we were getting some things over there that she would have loved to have had in the White House. For example, the beautiful little desk on which our Treaty of Paris with the British was signed in 1783. That kind of competition years later was resolved by making Clem Conger also the Curator of the White House. But, no, she did, I thought, a very nice television tour of the White House. And President Kennedy was very proud of her for that job. That was a good job that she did.

SCHOENBAUM: Did she talk about her children very much in your one-on-one conversations?

DEAN RUSK: Not very much. Not very much. President Kennedy teased me once. I had to see him about something, and I got there early when he was still finishing breakfast or dressing. In a few minutes little Caroline [Bouvier Kennedy] came in. She was then three or four. She came out from behind a screen and came up to me and said, "Mr. Secretary"--

RICHARD RUSK: Even Caroline called you "Mr. Secretary?"

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. "Mr. Secretary, I'm worried about the Yemen. Will you tell me what's happening in the Yemen today?"

RICHARD RUSK: Caroline said that?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. (laughter) And at that point I hear some snickering behind the screen. John F. Kennedy was behind the screen and he had succeed her on to do this. (laughter)

SCHOENBAUM: Where did that happen? In the Oval Office?

DEAN RUSK: I think that might have happened at West Palm Beach during one of those visits there.

RICHARD RUSK: Page sixty-one: There's this comment by Halberstam talking about you. "The changes Rusk would bring, the openings, would be very small, more tactical than anything else--He was not, for example, a great help on the question of disarmament; he stood aside on that one-- while the Defense Department with John McNaughton and McNamara was far more helpful." Page seventy-two: "And Rusk, whose job at State really was to create a disarmament lobby, seemed the least interested in the subject." Why does this impression, or at least with people like Halberstam, show that you really weren't interested in disarmament, yet you had five arms control treaties during the sixties? And other people who were involved with you said you played a substantial role.

DEAN RUSK: Well, Halberstam was just plain wrong on that. Early in the Kennedy administration we created the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. We also established the Committee of Principles, made up of the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the head of Central Intelligence, and the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. And we worked on these questions personally. That is, we didn't send deputies or representatives to these meetings. We turned up personally and worked on these arms control matters. No, I had a very strong interest in arms control matters, and demonstrated so.

RICHARD RUSK: Why is it that your name is not associated with a lot of these endeavors in some of these accounts? Is it because, perhaps, in terms of giving credit for these things, you would allow other people to more or less play the leading role?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I wasn't very much interested in claiming credit. I wasn't running for anything. I hadn't even run for the job I had. And it was not my temperament to beat my breast and claim credit for a lot of things. If something constructive could happen during my watch as Secretary of State, I was glad for it to happen. But I didn't need to throw myself into the front rank position and say, "See what I did with my little diplomacy!" that kind of thing.

SCHOENBAUM: One follow-up question on that: At that time in 1961, that was the last in the United Nations--There was a real shift in the focus of disarmament. There was a push right after Kennedy took office, and really, coming from acting Secretary [Christian Archibald] Herter, for

so-called general and complete disarmament. And there actually was an agreed statement of principles between [Andrei Andreevich] Gromyko and [John J.] McCloy in September 1961. And then nothing came of it. And then we went into an arms limitation process that focused on more limited objectives, such as what became the limited Test Ban Treaty. Were you involved in that shift?

DEAN RUSK: Well, this slogan "General and Complete Disarmament" was basically a Soviet slogan, which they did not mean. They had no idea of moving that way. And I was always skeptical about sloganeering. But it wasn't worth the candle to go up to the United Nations and fight like tigers to prevent that kind of slogan from going into a resolution of one sort or another. But I knew that you couldn't get any disarmament that way. You had to get to work on it. Now I went to Geneva for the opening of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. And Gromyko was there. I was interested to the point that in my opening speech there I called upon the third world countries, the countries other than the two super powers, to give some thought to limitations of arms as it affected themselves.

SCHOENBAUM: Was that your idea personally?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. I had a rather strong impression that the only two countries who were interested in limiting arms as it applied to themselves were the United States and the Soviet Union. But when I called upon the third world countries to see what could be done in their regions on this subject, I ran into colossal indifference among--We could never get India and Pakistan seriously to talk about some balance of forces between those two countries. I remember that in the corridor between sessions at the Geneva Conference, the foreign minister of Nigeria came up to me in a rather chesty fashion and said, "Well, Mr. Secretary, if we can get you and the Soviet Union to begin to disarm, then Nigeria can buy arms cheaply, can't we?" I've always felt that some of these regional arms relationships should be stabilized. But there is just very little interest in it in the third world. See, you have fifty military dictatorships in the third world today. And in many of these countries the armed forces are the principal organized element in the entire society. And the governments are simply not permitted by their armed forces to take seriously any limitations of arms as affecting themselves. One major exception to this is Tlatelolco Treaty, turning Latin American into a nuclear-free zone. That was achieved under the initiative of Antonio Corillo Flores of Mexico. And that, I think, was a constructive effort. But why should not Africa be non-nuclear, a nuclear-free zone? It makes no sense.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, page sixty-two, the bottom paragraph, talking about McGeorge Bundy's relationship with you: And you are denying this statement at the top of page sixty-three there?

DEAN RUSK: The statement is just utterly manufactured. I would never had made any such statement, even had it been in my mind, to a fellow like Dick Goodwin. In any event, the relations between McGeorge Bundy and me were close, and, I think, mutually trustworthy.

RICHARD RUSK: Bundy said that the relationship started out good and it got better as years went on.

DEAN RUSK: Well, we spent a lot of time with each other. And he did not try to put a knife in my back, nor did I try to put one in his back. See, Mac played a very useful role in a variety of respects over there in the White House. He was very good at briefing the President before meetings. And he was very good at summarizing meetings afterwards. And he was very good at taking the bureaucratic kind of messages drafted in places like the Department of State and converting them into messages to Congress or speeches which the President himself could use. Bureaucratic drafting is terrible. It's--

SCHOENBAUM: He told me--and I want to put this on the record, that when I talked to McGeorge Bundy, he told me that one significant thing that he thought was a way of doing business that helped relations between the White House and the State Department was that he and JFK would never send any message to a foreign leader or would never make any move without clearing it with the Secretary of State, with you.

DEAN RUSK: I think that is correct. And furthermore, it is my impression that when McGeorge Bundy made any suggestion or recommendation to the President about any foreign policy question, he would make it to me at the same time so that I would have an opportunity to put in my nickel's worth if I wanted to.

SCHOENBAUM: And may I say this seems to be a matter where there's misunderstanding, and misunderstanding comes out in Halberstam's book. McGeorge Bundy told me that he did not always clear it with the Department of State. But he always cleared it and the President always cleared it with you personally.

DEAN RUSK: I think that's true.

SCHOENBAUM: Because they avoided the bureaucracy. But they always cleared it with you personally.

DEAN RUSK: That's right. But, no, I don't think any Secretary of State could ask for a better relationship with the National Security Advisor than I had. The possibility of some conflict is built into the situation. But McGeorge Bundy and I were able to keep this to a minimum. You can search the news media throughout this period and you won't find gossip about feuds between me and McGeorge Bundy. It just didn't happen.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. The reason for that seems to be almost a personal one: McGeorge Bundy and you having a good personal relationship that got better. That's the way he described it.

DEAN RUSK: Well, this sounds self-serving but I won't apologize for it. When you are in a place like Washington, you learn the important difference between men of honor and the other kind. Now, McGeorge Bundy was a man of honor. If I may say so, I think I was too. And men of honor just don't let that kind of thing go sour. They deal with each other as honorable people. There's no undercutting, backbiting. See, I had tried to get McGeorge Bundy as my Under Secretary at one point--rather, Deputy Under Secretary. But President Kennedy decided he would rather have him in the White House and wouldn't let me have McGeorge Bundy. But I

have great regard for him. I had known him briefly, not well, when he was Dean of Harvard and I was at the Rockefeller Foundation. But he was a very able, articulate, thoughtful fellow and was a very valuable man on that job.

SCHOENBAUM: Isn't it the President's responsibility to correct any situation if the contrary is the case?

DEAN RUSK: Well, only the President can straighten out feuding at the top levels of his administration. And a President must do that, because if that feuding goes very far then the President himself is in trouble. And so--now a President doesn't have to do that with a frontal attack on the problem. There are various ways in which he can do that. For example, it soon became apparent that in his administration President Kennedy listened to me very seriously on questions of foreign policy. Then others in the administration came to know that and would act accordingly. I mean, Bob McNamara and I never feuded with each other. And you won't find any stories of that sort going around Washington at that time. It's very important, in my judgment, that the foreign governments know that when they hear from the Secretary of State, they are hearing from the government of the United States. If there is ever any question in their minds about that, then the conduct of our foreign relations becomes very difficult. Because foreign governments sometimes have the problem of figuring out who, in fact, is speaking for the United States. And it's up to us here in this country to make it very clear to them where the voices are, that they can listen to with authority as spokesmen for the United States. And my view was, and it's been the view over almost two hundred years, that if the President himself is not speaking personally and directly, that it's the Secretary of State who speaks for the United States.

RICHARD RUSK: Bobby Kennedy anecdote: page seventy at the top paragraph--

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: It's possible that something like that might have happened in the conversation between Bowles. I don't know where I was at the time that he would have been acting Secretary. I must have been away on a trip somewhere. But Bobby would intrude himself into foreign policy matters frequently. But I had a very clear understanding with President Kennedy about this. Bobby had made a suggestion or two that I didn't like at all. And I spoke to President Kennedy about it. And he said, "Well, let Bobby have his say in some of these things because Bobby is very much interested in them. But if he ever gets in your way, you let me know and speak to me about it." And so I knew that I didn't have to take orders from Bobby Kennedy. And I didn't.

SCHOENBAUM: Did he call his brother "Bobby" all the time?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, top of page eighty-one. You have this underlined. "January 1, 1945- [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt wrote a note to Edward [R.] Stettinius [Jr.], who was Secretary of State, saying 'I still do not want to get mixed up in any Indochina decision. It is a matter for

postwar. By the same token I do not want to get mixed in any military effort towards the liberation of Indochina from the Japanese." Any recollections of FDR's note?

DEAN RUSK: During World War II, FDR had expressed very effectively his thought that the great colonial areas of Asia should come out of World War II as independent nations: India, Burma, Malaya, and so forth.

RICHARD RUSK: Does that particular note--

DEAN RUSK: Indochina and Indonesia.

RICHARD RUSK: --trigger--

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Because we had our own reasons out in the China-Burma-India theatre to think that Franklin Roosevelt had pulled away from this effort. Perhaps he had batted his head up against [Winston Leonard Spencer] Churchill and was getting tired of it, or he was getting old and sick. Have I put on tape my effort to get a statement through the Joint Chiefs of Staff on our policy toward Indochina.

SCHOENBAUM: Yes, we've got that.

DEAN RUSK: Well, you see, FDR's expression to the Joint Chiefs, "I don't want to hear any more about Indochina," fits this letter to Stettinius.

RICHARD RUSK: A cute anecdote about Averell Harriman at the bottom of page ninety- one: Harriman's talking about--

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: We're talking about Averell Harriman and some of his qualities.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I didn't find Averell Harriman aggressive or belligerent; certainly not in working with me. But he was a man who accepted responsibility, and who carried out those responsibilities. And he would not let underlings cut across the lines of policy that the administration was trying to achieve. And so he was undoubtedly a pretty firm team leader when he was captain of the team. And he should have been.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: But I always found it easy to work with him. And I appreciated the fact that, although he had been in Franklin Roosevelt's cabinet and held some of the biggest posts in our government over the years, that he was relatively unassuming about the chores that he would be assigned. He didn't seem to have any overweening idea of his own position. For example, he became an Assistant Secretary of State in our administration. Well, for a man of Harriman's caliber, that might appear to some to be a comedown. He didn't take it at all that way. He said he was ready to do whatever the President wanted him to do. So I have great regard for Averell

Harriman. And I also appreciated the fact that, despite his age, he was always young in spirit. Even today, above ninety, he's one of the truly young-spirited men in the country. He didn't get old, tired, and cynical as he got older. He's got a lot of pizzazz about him and always has had. And he always took the view that you ought to try, that you must never just throw up your hands and say, "The jig is up! There's no hope," that you always ought to try, because unless you try nothing good is going to hap pen. And I respected that in him.

SCHOENBAUM: Have you had any contact with Harriman in recent years?

DEAN RUSK: It's been some time. He hasn't been too well lately. But I saw a lot of him in the sixties, [interruption] Just an illustration of the sloppiness of Halberstam's work. He had Virginia and me buying a house in Riverdale, New York. Well, we had been to Riverdale only once in our lives to have dinner with Henry Allen Moe, one of the trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation. There was just nothing whatever to that! Now that was of no importance to his book. But he could have avoided that kind of an error simply by picking up the phone and telephoning me. It's just infuriating to see people do such a sloppy job.

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: We're talking about page one-hundred-three, about midway down the page: "Even at a personnel level there could be no change or reexamination."

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: I, myself, was among those who thought that a very great injustice had been done to John Paton Davies. I, myself, had been a witness in the hearings in the Department of State during the Truman administration, and I testified strongly in Davies behalf. Davies had a complete defense in those hearings if he had relied upon some top-secret information that involved the CIA. But--

RICHARD RUSK: Do you have any idea as to what that was?

DEAN RUSK: But he got pretty stubborn about it and simply would not call upon that top-secret material for purposes of clearing his own name. He just wouldn't do it.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall what that material was?

DEAN RUSK: I forget the subject matter now. But when I became Secretary of State I wanted to clear up the Davies thing as quickly as possible. But when I began to move on it I was told by Bobby Kennedy, the Attorney General, and certain law officers in the Department of State that I would have to disqualify myself from acting on the Davies case since I had been a witness for him in the earlier hearings. Well, then I called in John Davies and suggested to him that we have another round of hearings, and that on the basis of those hearings, then I could take the appropriate action. But he simply would not tolerate the idea of another round of hearings. He said, "To hell with it." So then that meant that I had to delegate this problem to others. And it

took a long time before the Department finally managed to get a retired judge to look this situation over and make a recommendation.

RICHARD RUSK: Primarily because both of your Presidents were unwilling to stir up possible controversy?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I don't think there would have been any problem with President Kennedy. There might have been a problem with the Attorney General because Bobby Kennedy was pretty rough on such subjects in those days. But I would have gone ahead and cleared John Davies myself without any reference to President Kennedy, had I not been told by the law offices of the government that I had to disqualify myself.

RICHARD RUSK: You clearly recall Bobby Kennedy signing in with a recommendation that you shouldn't involve yourself in this case?

DEAN RUSK: He told me that I had to disqualify myself from acting on the case because I had been a witness for Davies in the earlier hearings. And in a sense there might have been a conflict of interest problem, in theory, but not in fact. Had General "Vinegar Joe" [Joseph Warren] Stilwell lived and been able to testify in Davies' hearing, there would have been nothing to it. But he had died. No, I knew John Davies and his wife, Pat [Patricia Grady Davies], very well out in the CBI theatre, and had tremendous regard for him. A very able fellow. And he was on the policy planning staff during the Truman administration and involved in some top secret maneuvers that he could have used to exculpate himself before that hearing. But he wouldn't do it. He was too stubborn to do it.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you take that decision or recommendation from Bobby Kennedy back to John Kennedy and pursue it?

DEAN RUSK: No, no. Because there was just enough validity in the idea that I should simply not take executive action as Secretary of State in a matter in which I had been an advocate in an earlier stage.

RICHARD RUSK: You wanted to reopen a second round of hearings?

DEAN RUSK: So I told John I would like to have another round of hearings, as a result of which I could then make the judgment and get this thing cleared up. But he simply wouldn't do that. He wouldn't go through another round of hearings. So it took us several years before this thing was resolved.

RICHARD RUSK: 1968?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you ultimately sign something clearing him? Was that how it was resolved?

DEAN RUSK: It might have been done by the Under Secretary. I'm not sure what happened in view of my so-called disqualification.

RICHARD RUSK: Well, you want to quit there, Pop, and do some more later?

DEAN RUSK: All right. Are you fellows finding this worthwhile?

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: We're talking about Bobby Kennedy.

DEAN RUSK: I worked for John F. Kennedy because he was President of the United States. I didn't work for him because of any personal consideration, or that 31 he was a member of the Kennedy family. Now when the tragedy of November 1963 occurred, Lyndon Johnson asked me--

END OF SIDE 2

