

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection  
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Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas J. Schoenbaum  
1986 May

RICHARD RUSK: We're interviewing Dean Rusk and talking about various policies during the Kennedy administration. Tom and Rich are doing the interviewing. This is May 1986. Some follow-up questions on the Kennedy years.

SCHOENBAUM: Okay. The first question deals with Defense policy. I was reading that General [Lyman] Lemnitzer, who was Chief of Staff--

DEAN RUSK: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

SCHOENBAUM: He was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thank-you. And George [Henry] Decker, who was the Army Chief of Staff were at one point early in '61 talking about twenty divisions in Laos as necessary to fulfill what [Dwight David] Eisenhower wanted you to do: to introduce troops into Laos. It apparently dawned on people that twenty divisions was more than the U.S. Army had at that time and that it would be necessary to use nuclear weapons to do anything in Laos. And at that point came a rethinking of strategic policy. And [Robert Strange] McNamara and Rusk started the trend away from over-reliance on nuclear weapons and build-up of conventional forces. Is that an accurate summary? And what part did you play in that rewrite of the strategic policy in the early months of '61 right after you took office?

DEAN RUSK: During the first term of President Eisenhower there was a good deal of talk about massive retaliation. Some people described that talk as "a bigger bang for a buck," as though somehow our defenses could be on the cheap simply by relying upon nuclear weapons. But about the beginning of Eisenhower's second term, the Soviet Union had reached a full capability of delivering a nuclear strike against both western Europe and the United States. And so that changed the thinking very drastically because the earlier trip-wire theory, plate glass theory, that NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] had been working on simply had become incredible. The notion that if two or three regiments became engaged across that dividing line in Germany that somehow you'd move immediately to nuclear weapons became so utterly irrational that it was no longer believable. And so we felt that it was important to build up conventional forces and give ourselves the option of a flexible response in order to give credibility to the nuclear deterrent. You see, if you had conventional forces, of a sort, that would force the Soviet Union to make a full disclosure of its purpose, its war aims, what it was up to, then you would know whether you were in for nuclear war or not. But we simply knew that neither we nor the heads of governments of western Europe would move to the destruction of their own countries as a result of smaller engagements there along that dividing line.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you remember whether it was Laos that triggered this idea?

DEAN RUSK: Not really. I think the NATO question and the Laotian question were rather separate. It's true that President Eisenhower, on the day before inauguration, recommended to President [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy that he put troops into Laos, as he put it, "with others if possible, alone if necessary." So we looked at Laos very intently as soon as we took office. Laos, in fact, was where the major action was at that particular time. The North Vietnamese were moving into Laos. They were supported by Soviet airlift. There was much less going on as far as South Vietnam was concerned. But the more we looked at Laos, the less inviting became the prospect of putting American forces in there. It was a landlocked country. It was difficult terrain. You'd have to go through somebody else's country just to get there. And then we had a strong impression that the Laotians had very little interest in killing each other.

RICHARD RUSK: That we've got.

SCHOENBAUM: I wanted to pin you down a little more about--

DEAN RUSK: But there was no possibility that we would have put several divisions into Laos. It was out of the question.

SCHOENBAUM: But I wanted to pin you down as to your role, Dean Rusk's role and the State Department's role, in this reformulation of strategic policy right after Kennedy took office, and how you worked together with McNamara on that. The record shows in February of '61 there is a State Department report which was submitted under your name that talked about lowering the threshold of provocation of a nuclear war and building up conventional weapons and getting away from the overreliance on nuclear weapons, and as you say to--

DEAN RUSK: Raising the threshold of nuclear weapons.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, raising the threshold and lowering the provocation.

DEAN RUSK: Postponing the moment when the nuclear question would arise.

SCHOENBAUM: Right. What was your role?

DEAN RUSK: Well I had several talks with Bob McNamara on that matter, because one of the questions that we had in front of us was that if we wanted to move toward stronger conventional forces and a strategy of flexible response, we had some persuasion to do among our allies. They had become rather comfortable with this theory of trip-wire, plate glass. And a change on what would seem to them to be a basic concept would take some doing in terms of explanation, persuasion, and so forth. And so I was very much involved with Bob McNamara in moving to the flexible response idea. Now, he carried the ball among the NATO defense ministers. I did not have to go into that in great detail with the foreign ministers of NATO. But we kept in close touch on that, and we were in agreement that we had to move toward flexible response. Now one of the elements of resistance was that our allies were reluctant to undertake the additional costs of building up the conventional forces. So they were having it on the cheap under their earlier doctrine. And so it took some persuading in NATO, and also raised among some of the NATO members the question as to whether our change in strategy was not somehow a weakening of our

support for NATO as though, perhaps, we were prepared to see a large conventional war in Europe without our heavy participation and without the major destruction of our own country.

SCHOENBAUM: And this was very much State and Defense acting together and Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara acting together, and you had prior consultations on this?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. On that point no question. No question about it, we talked about it a great deal, just the two of us.

SCHOENBAUM: And that must have been about the first important issue that you worked on because the report was in February of '61.

RICHARD RUSK: Hold on here. Hold on. Okay, go ahead.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. It came very early in the administration. But again, the NATO strategy and Laos were not really connected.

SCHOENBAUM: That's good to clarify that. I wanted to turn your attention, if I may, to the Bay of Pigs just for a couple of follow-up questions that I don't think we have in the previous interview. Just to review the basic facts: The original plan, as I understand it, was to put about a thousand men ashore near the town of Trinidad and to allow U.S. air power to take out the T-33s and then allow the exile's B-26s to take over from the American air power, but use American air power. And on April 4, apparently there was a big meeting with [Richard Mervin] Bissell [Jr.], and Allen [Welsh] Dulles, and Dean Rusk, and [James William] Fulbright. And that's where Fulbright expressed his opposition. But the plan at that point seemed to have been modified. And this is on April 4, and whether this is the right stuff or not: It was modified in two respects. One, that no U.S. air power was to be used and the B-26s were on their own against the [Castro's] T-33s on the ground. And then the second modification was that B-26s would be allowed only two strikes before the invasion. And then, at another point there was another modification to eliminate Trinidad as the landing site and substitute the Bay of Pigs. And there's some indication that this may have been at your insistence to keep the raid unspectacular and minimize the U.S. role. And another modification was to strike the arrangements for trying to arouse the populace: the radio broadcasts and things like that, leaflet dropping and things like that. Could you comment on that?

DEAN RUSK: Well Trinidad looked uninviting as we neared the time. If I am not mistaken, I think there was no air strip at Trinidad.

SCHOENBAUM: That's right. Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: I'm not sure about that. But also it was a long way from any--

SCHOENBAUM: There was one at the Bay of Pigs.

DEAN RUSK: --significant target, in terms of establishing some kind of a position. Well, when doubts were raised about Trinidad, I suggested that the brigade go ashore just east of

Guantanamo. My theory was that if the brigade landed there, then if they got in trouble we could rescue them in Guantanamo, or if they began to succeed that we could supply them and support them from Guantanamo. The Joint Chiefs were very strongly opposed to involving Guantanamo in this thing at all because they did not want to compromise the virginity of Guantanamo by having it mixed up with the Cuban brigade.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, let me interrupt. Did you make that as a serious proposal?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, sure.

RICHARD RUSK: That contrasts with your later position on trying to keep the American presence out of this operation.

DEAN RUSK: Well, no. That was a serious proposal on my part because this would not have involved the use of American forces in the landing or naval and air power in connection with the landing. But in any event, the Joint Chiefs turned down this idea of landing just east of Guantanamo. So then they looked around and settled upon the Bay of Pigs where there was a landing strip. And the idea was that they would seize that landing strip and begin to operate some planes off of it, much more readily accessible to Cuban targets.

RICHARD RUSK: Was it called the Bay of Pigs at the time?

SCHOENBAUM: The Bay of Cochinos, I think, in Spanish.

DEAN RUSK: Now one of the great weaknesses in that whole plan was the ridiculously low air power that was in the plan. These two-engine bombers, B-26s, flying out of Central America had really very little capability of putting out of action [Fidel Ruz] Castro's air fields. Now there were a few aircraft visible on the air fields themselves, but that did not include aircraft in hangars. And as a matter of fact, my impression during the operation was that the planes which actually knocked out the landing groups' ships were not the planes that were visible on the air strips that would have been targets to be knocked out, they were planes that probably came out of hangars somewhere. So one or two additional strikes of that character would not have made any difference, in my judgment. But after the first strike Richard Bissell and General [Charles Pearre] Cabell came to see me in my office--

RICHARD RUSK: That we have, Pop.

DEAN RUSK: Oh, you have all that? Okay.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, I think--well, maybe it would be good to--

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah, Tom, it's in the transcript.

SCHOENBAUM: But is that--I read some accounts. As a follow-up question on that, did you offer to pass the phone to Bissell and to directly talk to Kennedy?

DEAN RUSK: I offered them my phone in order to talk to the President.

SCHOENBAUM: And they turned that down?

DEAN RUSK: But they did not want to do that. They wanted me to embrace this idea and wanted me, myself, to take this to the President as my recommendation. And I was just not prepared to do that.

SCHOENBAUM: And in the elimination of the American air power in the planning stage against the T-33s, were you not concerned about that? You were concerned about the lack of air power, but that was done relatively early.

DEAN RUSK: When I put on my former military hat, I was concerned about the whole darned operation because I just did not see how it could succeed unless the Cuban armed forces themselves revolted against Castro and joined the brigade and turned Castro out. And I saw no real evidence of that, although we were told that various units of the Cuban armed forces would rebel at that point. These were reports probably based upon wishful thinking on the part of Cuban refugees with whom the CIA was in very close contact during that period.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, Allen Dulles has since blamed his own insufficient communication with the Secretary of State as being among the reasons for the failure of this thing. I'm not inviting you to get into a slanging match with Allen Dulles, but would you care to comment on that point?

DEAN RUSK: Well, he and I did not have private bilateral contacts during this period. The contacts were those which Dulles and Bissell presented to Kennedy and half a dozen of us at the Cabinet table there in Washington. Now--

RICHARD RUSK: But the two of you didn't personally talk out in detail the nature of the plan?

DEAN RUSK: No. One thing that--I don't wish to speak ill of the dead, but after the Bay of Pigs, Allen Dulles told me personally that he had had grave misgivings about the entire Bay of Pigs operation. And I was somewhat surprised by that because he did not express any such misgivings to President Kennedy in our meetings. And I felt that perhaps he should have done so.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you ask him that?

DEAN RUSK: No I didn't because it was all over and there was nothing to be gained by it.

SCHOENBAUM: Just to set the stage: The invasion was Monday the seventeenth. And is it true that on Tuesday night--that's when you were at a reception for the Greek premier and you were called away from that. And that's when there was that conversation with Dulles and Bissell and Kennedy over the use of American air power. That took place after midnight on early Wednesday morning?

DEAN RUSK: Well let's make one thing clear. There was--Kennedy did not seriously consider the use of American armed forces, including air power. The question was whether we would approve some additional strikes by these B-26s beyond those that had been in the original plan. So there was never any question of U.S. air power being used there. There was a little thought given to maybe the use of some naval forces with air support to help rescue these brigade members after the collapse.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, is your memory failing on that one point? I think in the record there was a plan for an American strike with some carrier planes and it was your own personal recommendation that that strike not be carried off. This was after the operation was in trouble. I believe Kennedy had authorized

DEAN RUSK: Well, an old man's memory can be faulty, but I must confess that I have no recollection of Kennedy's giving serious thought to the use of American armed forces in support of the brigade of the Bay of Pigs.

RICHARD RUSK: What about an emergency?

DEAN RUSK: Now this also is reflected in the fact that the Joint Chiefs of Staff never really put their professional military minds to bear upon the whole plan. They sort of stood aside. And had there been any active consideration of using American forces, the Joint Chiefs would have been in it up to their necks.

SCHOENBAUM: And at one point JFK announced, of course, that the U.S. would not intervene, a kind of a guarantee that the U.S. would not intervene militarily. Was that carefully thought out or was that essentially a feint?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes. And there was one point on which there was a tragic lack of accurate communication between the Cabinet table in Washington and the brigade in Central America. I think CIA people have to bear the responsibility for that. Because I have no doubt myself that the members of the brigade thought that if they went ashore and got in trouble that U.S. armed forces would be coming in behind them to support them. But that just wasn't part of the plan; wasn't on. And U.S. forces were not really positioned for that kind of role, to start with.

SCHOENBAUM: And then, again, before the operation, in this early April period there was American air power in the original CIA plan. And that was taken out. That was obviously taken out for political reasons. Did you have a hand in taking that out? Who was principally involved in taking that out?

DEAN RUSK: Well I think that that would have been done with President Kennedy's full knowledge and instruction.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. He would obviously make the decision.

DEAN RUSK: I just don't remember the details of who said what on that point.

SCHOENBAUM: Okay. And then I have just one last question about the Bay of Pigs, and that's the story that [Arthur Meier] Schlesinger [Jr.] put in about President Kennedy crying in Jackie's [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] arms, which he put in a *Look* magazine article. Then he did not put it in his book.

DEAN RUSK: He had that story in the original text of his book. And when this was published in one of the excerpts in *Look* magazine, there was such fury about Arthur Schlesinger peeping through the keyhole of the President's bedroom that he took it out of his book before his book was published.

SCHOENBAUM: How did he know? Do you know any stories about how he knew that? Was that common knowledge?

RICHARD RUSK: He was peeping through the keyhole!

DEAN RUSK: I don't even know whether it was true or not. It's possible that Jacqueline Kennedy made some remark to Arthur Schlesinger. But I thought it was, myself, a pretty indecent remark to talk about a President crying in his wife's arms in his bedroom. That's just beyond the pale as far as I'm concerned.

RICHARD RUSK: Why?

DEAN RUSK: Why?!

RICHARD RUSK: Why? (laughter) Presidents aren't supposed to cry?

DEAN RUSK: If my son can ask that question, I've brought him up wrong. (laughter)

SCHOENBAUM: Kennedy was pretty distraught, though, at that first meeting. And then didn't he kind of get a hold of himself at that first meeting when you were doing the postmortem?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes. This was a shock to him. And there were many elements in the shock. One was the total ineffectiveness of the brigade itself: His discovery that the brigade had no capability of melting away in the countryside and becoming guerillas, as the plan had called for, because they'd not had one hour of guerilla training during their training process; his disillusionment with a lot of the information that he had been given, much of it I'm sure from Cuban refugees; and the recognition that we had a major failure on our hands in the very early stages of his administration.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you ever see Kennedy as distraught at any other time?

DEAN RUSK: I personally did not see him emotionally distraught during that episode. He was fully in control of himself when I saw him. If he was distraught, he was distraught somewhere else.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you with Kennedy when the word came in that [Ngo Dinh] Diem had been assassinated?

DEAN RUSK: No.

SCHOENBAUM: Okay. Turning to another topic. In the transcripts of the JFK Library interview with Dean Rusk, the statement is made that JFK brooded quite a bit about whether it would be his fate to push the nuclear button. And my question is, can you go into some details or give some illustrations on that? How do you know that? Did he tell you that? Or did you see him--Of course, any sane person would brood about that at least. But how, specifically, did Kennedy transmit this?

RICHARD RUSK: Well, [Richard Milhous] Nixon didn't brood over it. He threatened to use them.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: I don't know that.

RICHARD RUSK: --push the darn thing.

DEAN RUSK: I don't believe that.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Nixon? He let out this madman theory where our enemies overseas were to be worried about his potential for pushing the button.

DEAN RUSK: Well.

SCHOENBAUM: But how did Kennedy exhibit that? Did he tell you that?

DEAN RUSK: Well for example, during that session we had all afternoon in the Cabinet room for a full briefing and examination of the total effects of nuclear war, both direct and indirect, at the end of that he asked me to come back with him to the Oval Office to talk about something. And as we went through the door he, with a strange little look on his face, said, "And we call ourselves the human race."

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. We've got that.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you have other stories like that?

SCHOENBAUM: Any other stories like that?



DEAN RUSK: No, I don't have incidents in mind. But there was no question when we were talking over the contingency plans for Berlin and during the Cuban Missile Crisis, that nuclear box that goes around with the President everywhere was a heavy burden for him to carry.

SCHOENBAUM: Did he ever look at it with disdain?

DEAN RUSK: I don't remember. I never saw him in the actual presence of his nuclear box.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he ever talk about it again--that responsibility?

DEAN RUSK: Not specifically. You don't talk about things like that unless the issue arises. You don't--this is not a--the NSC [National Security Council] or the Cabinet were not confessionals. You dealt with the business at hand. No, I just know without his having to say very much about it that this was very much on his mind.

RICHARD RUSK: Was Kennedy "soft" on nukes? Could he have pushed that button, whatever the circumstances?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I think he could have pushed the button only if the United States itself was under nuclear attack. As a matter of fact, I feel very deeply that the United States is committed to a second strike and not a first strike, that we cannot consider the kind of first strike which would bring about the very situation which our policy must do everything to prevent. I'm not sure I've said this on another tape, but I, myself, have serious doubts as to whether the President or the President and Congress acting together have the constitutional power to launch a first nuclear strike, because I do not find in the Constitution a power to destroy the nation.

SCHOENBAUM: Now another question from the Kennedy Library tapes, transcripts: You say at one point that Robert [Francis] Kennedy--and I think this is a quote--"wished you long gone." Was there a specific instance when Robert Kennedy actually tried to use his influence to have you removed? It's well known the difficulties between Dean Rusk and Robert Kennedy, which many observers have commented on. But did he try to--This statement that he "wished you long-gone": Did he try to use his influence with his brother to have you removed?

DEAN RUSK: I don't know what went on between them. But Kennedy, during his lifetime, John F. Kennedy, not only never intimated to me that he was thinking about any change, but he insisted that I remain on when I raised with him whether he wanted a fresh start in that job for the election of '64. But one of the clearest incidents about Bobby, whether it's true or not I cannot say: LBJ [Lyndon Baines Johnson] once told me that then-Senator Robert Kennedy had come to him and said to him that if he, LBJ, would take my resignation and make Bill [William Don] Moyers the Secretary of State, then he, Robert Kennedy, would not run for the Presidency. And LBJ told me that in gales of laughter. John F. Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy were very different people as far as I was concerned. And I had a number of problems with Bobby. I think I've talked about some of that.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, we've got that.

RICHARD RUSK: Why do you suppose Bobby Kennedy had it in for you, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: Well, to begin with, I suppose he realized that I was not a tried-and-true Kennedy man, lock, stock, and barrel. I was serving John F. Kennedy as President of the United States.

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DEAN RUSK: In his capacity as President of the United States, I did not have a deep personal attachment and commitment to John F. Kennedy the man. And Bobby Kennedy wanted true-blue Kennedy people in the administration. I had difficulty with several appointments in the State Department with Bobby because he did not think they were true Kennedy people. And that means, if I may add the thought, Bobby was thinking of commitment to the whole damn Kennedy clan and not just to John F. Kennedy.

SCHOENBAUM: Did McNamara have that same problem, though, much less, historically?

DEAN RUSK: No, I think McNamara became a close friend of Bobby Kennedy's and also had a somewhat more personal relationship with John F. Kennedy than I did. No that was rather different.

RICHARD RUSK: Bobby Kennedy, I think, interpreted your silence at these larger meetings and unwillingness to fight for policy as gutlessness. It's funny how he and his brother, John, would have had such different opinions about you. But that's what he reports.

DEAN RUSK: As I've explained before, I was somewhat careful about how I would sound off in those meetings with thirty people around the wall.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. We've got that.

RICHARD RUSK: We've got that.

DEAN RUSK: But I would see John F. Kennedy privately, either before the meeting or after the meeting and have my say then.

SCHOENBAUM: I'd like to turn to the relationship with [Chester Bliss] Bowles, just for a minute. And we can pause and comment. We shouldn't speak ill of the dead and don't intend to. But, I read Bowles memoirs, and he is not very fond of Dean Rusk in his memoirs.

RICHARD RUSK: That's not true. Really?

SCHOENBAUM: In certain respects. I take that back. He describes conversations with Dean Rusk and puts interpretations on them that I don't think are accurate. Let's say that. Let me cite one. And that is that on the Bay of Pigs, when he voiced his objections he says that Dean Rusk clammed up and wouldn't say anything, refused to talk to him about it. And he asked him whether it would be on page one of the *New York Times*, and Dean Rusk said he didn't think so, that the plan had been greatly modified and toned down and that he shouldn't worry about it. And of course, Bowles is very self-righteous about opposing the Bay of Pigs. One wonders why--His interpretation of that, frankly, in his memoirs as I read them, was that Dean Rusk was jealous of Bowles or wanted to restrict the access directly from Bowles to Kennedy, which I don't think is the case. My own interpretation is that Dean Rusk was following the well-known junction that this had to be kept quiet and the details of the planning should not leave the heads of the few people that were supposed to know about it. And I reject Bowles' interpretation of that. Is there a comment? Do you remember those conversations?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Of course, if I didn't open up with Chet Bowles on my own views of the Bay of Pigs it was because I was presenting those views privately to the President and I saw no particular reason to take them up with Bowles. Chet Bowles and I had known each other as fellow trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation. And I had a very high regard for him as a human being. His instincts and his glandular reactions always, as far as I was concerned, moved in the right direction. He was a sort of a dear fellow in so many ways. But he did have some problems with Kennedy. At the very beginning of the Kennedy administration Chet Bowles, I believe, had resigned from the Congress in order to work in the Kennedy campaign. I'm not sure.

SCHOENBAUM: Yes. That's right.

DEAN RUSK: But Chet Bowles thought that Kennedy owed him something in terms of a major appointment. And Kennedy did not want to pick up that check. He did not feel that to the same extent.

RICHARD RUSK: Did Kennedy tell you that, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: And this was rather irritating to Kennedy.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he tell you that, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: Enough to let me know how he felt about it. But then at the time of the Bay of Pigs, Chet Bowles did oppose it, as did Arthur Schlesinger. But then Chet Bowles, apparently, made the mistake of speaking of his opposition to newsmen around Washington. And this got right back to Kennedy.

RICHARD RUSK: Bowles denies doing that in his book.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. He denies doing that.

DEAN RUSK: All right.

RICHARD RUSK: How do you know for a fact that he indeed did leak his advice to the press?

DEAN RUSK: Well I can't document it with names, chapter, and verse, but you know these news media people don't protect their sources nearly as much as they claim to. And at least, let me put it this way, and of this I have no doubt, President Kennedy believed that Chet Bowles was going around town trying to disassociate himself from the Bay of Pigs at a time when President Kennedy wanted as much solidarity in his administration as possible. And then Chet Bowles had some other problems when he was my Under Secretary. I had asked that he be named my Under Secretary, by the way. He came into that office with what I thought was a bias against the professional Foreign Service. He seemed to put them all down as old dodos who needed a new look at life and a new approach, and that kind of a thing. And he dismissed the value of their experience, and that kind of thing. And so he looked around for other people, including younger people with no experience whatever, to bring in key appointments. Some of them I let him try on, but some I didn't. But that prejudice against the Foreign Service, I thought was not helpful to him. And then it was very difficult for papers to move across his desk.

SCHOENBAUM: And he was supposed to run the Department?

DEAN RUSK: He was supposed to do a lot of this himself. But he was so full of ideas and so interested in so many things, that the business of the Department sort of stacked up there. It was very difficult to get decisions out of him and get cables cleared and memoranda cleared and things like that. So he was not a very good administrator as Under Secretary. But as soon as Kennedy made it clear that he wanted Chester Bowles on some other appointment following the Bay of Pigs, then we made him some kind of special assistant over in the White House for some of the Third World problems and then sent him off to India as Ambassador.

SCHOENBAUM: But he resisted that at first. He describes the conversation when you offered this to him and he wouldn't take the hint, and then he had to be removed.

DEAN RUSK: That's right. He realized until he was sent as Ambassador to India that he was being kicked upstairs. And, of course, he didn't like that very much.

RICHARD RUSK: You had a very uncomfortable session with him, I believe, on a Sunday where you personally were the one who gave him the news that he had to resign.

SCHOENBAUM: December 8?

RICHARD RUSK: Would you care to describe that at all, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: I forget the details. It was not a very pleasant conversation, you're right. But Chet, I think, would have given his eye teeth to be Secretary of State, and there's no way that Kennedy would have made him Secretary of State; just no way.

SCHOENBAUM: He, of course, denies that in his memoirs, but I take that with a grain of salt.

RICHARD RUSK: He wrote Kennedy a letter, and we have a copy of this letter, specifically denying that he had leaked to the press about his role in the Bay of Pigs.

DEAN RUSK: Well that itself is evidence that Kennedy thought he had, or else he wouldn't have written the letter.

SCHOENBAUM: But the impetus for that so-called December 8 massacre was from the White House. Is that right?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: The White House made the decision?

DEAN RUSK: Of course, I was developing some real problems with Chet in terms of moving the business forward. His office had become a bottleneck.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. Yeah. So you concurred.

DEAN RUSK: And we had either to change him or to find some ways to bypass the Under Secretary just to get the business done.

RICHARD RUSK: And yet when Chester Bowles retired, you personally toasted him with warm words of thanks.

DEAN RUSK: Well I liked him. I liked him very much. He was good company. He was an honest liberal. If we had five thousand issues on which we would indicate our views, he and I would probably agree on 4800 of them. And I had known him very well when he was a trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation. We visited the back country of India together, he and his wife and I. And no, I liked him personally. But this was one personal relationship where official problems did intrude into the personal relationship in time.

RICHARD RUSK: Your own personal relationship did deteriorate in time?

DEAN RUSK: Well we just drew apart and we did not keep in touch with each other over the years after we both left government.

SCHOENBAUM: He's the kind of person that in another job he would have been super, probably.

DEAN RUSK: Well he was a good Congressman and apparently he was a good Governor of Connecticut, and he was a fine Ambassador to India.

SCHOENBAUM: I wanted to ask you--I know you won't like this question. But in the tapes--

RICHARD RUSK: That makes it a good question!

SCHOENBAUM: In the Kennedy transcripts--and I bring it up because you brought it up. You talked about [Achmed] Sukarno and his sexual proclivities. And we've got to put something juicy in this book.

RICHARD RUSK: Simon and Schuster must be pressuring Tom, Pop. We need a little sex.

SCHOENBAUM: Is there--you brought up his behavior as being unacceptable, and specifically sexual behavior when he visited Washington. Within the bounds of propriety, do you want to elaborate on that at all? Did you run into some embarrassing situations?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I wasn't his chaperone while he was in Washington. But I'll just mention two things on that. John F. Kennedy became rather furious with Sukarno because in their Presidential talks Sukarno kept trying to draw Kennedy down the path of talking about Gina Lollobrigida and other sex symbols. And Kennedy felt that was very unpresidential and didn't like that at all. And he reacted strongly against that: to me.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember what he said?

DEAN RUSK: And then Sukarno went on home and invited Jacqueline Kennedy to visit Indonesia.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, we've got that.

DEAN RUSK: And I vetoed that Johnny on the spot. I was not going to see Jacqueline Kennedy go out there to visit that international lecher.

SCHOENBAUM: Kennedy never heard of that himself?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I think he heard of it, sure. But he wouldn't have had it either. But then, did I put anywhere the story of that Japanese wife of Sukarno's?

SCHOENBAUM: No.

RICHARD RUSK: About Sukarno's reputation being much overrated?

DEAN RUSK: Well, there was a story, which I can't confirm, that, I think Sukarno's fourth wife, maybe, was Japanese. And she was in Tokyo and someone asked her what she thought of this reputation of Sukarno as a great ladies' man, and so forth. And she said, "Well I can tell you that there's nothing to it. It's all a bluff. And on that I am an expert." (laughter) I have no way to confirm the truth of that story, but it sounds like it might have occurred.

RICHARD RUSK: Does that pretty well tap out your stories, Pop, about sex and foreign relations?

DEAN RUSK: As far as Sukarno is concerned?

RICHARD RUSK: What about any of the others?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, we had--

RICHARD RUSK: Give us some material. We might have to turn our books into novels, huh?  
(laughter)

SCHOENBAUM: Write fiction!

DEAN RUSK: Well every time I dealt with a distinguished foreigner, chief of government or foreign minister or anything, I would be given a very discrete biography of the fellow: a description of him as a personality. And a number of these include their sexual peccadillos with mistresses and things of that sort, all of which confirmed to me that I led a very dull life. Of course I was always accompanied by a chaperone armed with a pistol, called a Security Man. But, no--

SCHOENBAUM: Were these prepared by J. Edgar Hoover?

DEAN RUSK: No. Oh, no.

SCHOENBAUM: He was famous for inquiring into those things.

DEAN RUSK: But it also meant that it was very important that these highly confidential biographical skits not become public because it would have created major incidents.

RICHARD RUSK: Gosh, those must be involved sketches all right, to include that kind of information.

SCHOENBAUM: There's another--

DEAN RUSK: It's not for me to dig up these things about--

SCHOENBAUM: I came across another interesting event and an event in which Dean Rusk figured very prominently. And that was President Kennedy's forty-fifth birthday party. *Time* magazine--let's see, I think I have this right. *Time* magazine sponsored it--Or maybe I'm mixing up two things here. In Washington there was, at one point, held--I think it was for Kennedy's birthday party. It may have been the anniversary of *Time* magazine--a glittering reunion of absolutely everyone: movie stars, politicians, everyone in the country was invited. And it really was a collection of dignitaries.

DEAN RUSK: I think you may be getting two things mixed up. *Time* magazine threw a glittering dinner in New York for all those who had been on the cover of *Time* magazine

SCHOENBAUM: Cover. That's it. Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: And everybody was there but Man-O-War.

SCHOENBAUM: And you were the featured speaker and *Time* magazine included a full page quote of your speech. Of all the people there you were the one that was featured.

RICHARD RUSK: I haven't run across that. I'd like to see that.

SCHOENBAUM: I'll give that to you.

DEAN RUSK: Well I got to that dinner in a trip back from Asia. And I was wearing a white black-tie jacket. I think mine was the only white jacket in the entire grand ballroom of the Waldorf. And I made some extemporaneous remarks which Henry [Robinson] Luce thought were wonderful. And indeed the reception to these remarks by the crowd gathered there was very strong and very favorable. I don't have a text of what I said.

SCHOENBAUM: It's in *Time* magazine.

DEAN RUSK: Is it in *Time* magazine?

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. I'll give you a copy. They are beautiful remarks.

DEAN RUSK: Well now, that turned out to be a hit speech as far as the audience and Henry Luce were concerned.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. You captured--Dean Rusk captured the show. Of all of these--I mean these movie stars, and it's really a very touching thing. I'll give you that.

DEAN RUSK: Well anyhow, all right, if you want to look at it, you can.

SCHOENBAUM: But what's this about President Kennedy's forty-fifth--

DEAN RUSK: Well quite frankly, and I'm embarrassed to say this, I don't remember a darn thing about Kennedy's forty-fifth birthday.

SCHOENBAUM: Well, the reason I ask is Marilyn Monroe was there and was featured.

DEAN RUSK: Was I in the country? Was I present for that?

SCHOENBAUM: I thought that you were--again, I read it in *Time* magazine. And again, I thought that you were listed as one of the people that attended.

RICHARD RUSK: Is that where Marilyn Monroe sang "Happy Birthday" to Jack?

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I don't think I was there for that. No. No, I wasn't there for that. I must have been overseas or something.

SCHOENBAUM: Any stories about Marilyn Monroe and Robert Kennedy?

DEAN RUSK: No, none at all.

SCHOENBAUM: Can't get him to say--

DEAN RUSK: As I've told you elsewhere, I saw Kennedy hundreds of times in the most diverse circumstances and I never saw or heard anything that could cause me to speculate about his personal life.

SCHOENBAUM: Now another speculative question: There's another note in *Time* magazine that you were mentioned to run for Governor of New York in '62. And there's a quote from you that you would--of course it's a [William Tecumseh] Sherman statement from you. But do you remember being approached to run for Governor of New York?

DEAN RUSK: No. When I was at the Rockefeller Foundation and living in Scarsdale in Westchester County, a group from the Westchester County Democratic Committee came to see me and asked me if I would run for Congress because that district had been having a Republican and they thought I might have a chance to win it. But I pointed out to this group what they were asking me to do was to resign my job as President of the Rockefeller Foundation, run for Congress, get one-third of the vote, and then start looking for another job. And that wasn't a very attractive prospect. So elective politics just has never been any interest at all of mine. I would not even run for the school board in Scarsdale, New York, with bipartisan support and with no opposition. I wouldn't even do that.

RICHARD RUSK: Explain why, Pop. Give your reasons why elective politics do not enthrall you.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I respect those who run for elective office. But it's just something I would not do. I have a revulsion about opening myself up from gizzard to gut for minute inspection by every Tom, Dick, and Harry, and then sit there on election night waiting for their verdict. That's just not my line of country or cup of tea.

RICHARD RUSK: Because of the invasion of your privacy?

DEAN RUSK: That, and a kind of loss of dignity, if you like. On that one point, I'm too much of a stuffed shirt, maybe. I don't know. But it just didn't fit my whole background of the sovereignty of the individual soul, and that kind of thing. It's just not for me.

RICHARD RUSK: Hah. That's interesting. And yet you're such a firm believer in the democratic process and the necessity of some people to run for these high offices.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. As I say, I respect those who do stand forward, particularly good people who have other good alternatives open to them. I did get two votes for the Senate when I was at Mills College. And these two votes, embarrassingly enough, were cast in my own precinct. And

one of my neighbors said to me afterward, "Gee, if we'd known you were running for the Senate we would have voted for you." But it turns out that my faculty colleague at Mills College, Glenn [E.] Hoover and his wife both wrote me in for the Senate just to find out whether or not those votes would be recorded. (laughter) So that was a rather pixie affair.

SCHOENBAUM: Now this is another subject, jumping around here: At the Vienna Summit I read a report that [Nikita Sergeevich] Khrushchev berated Kennedy over his Bay of Pigs defeat. Do you remember that?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, he might have twitted him about it, but I don't recall any--

SCHOENBAUM: Berate is too strong a word?

DEAN RUSK: Berate is much too strong a word. He didn't spend any time on it. He might have twitted him about it. But also at Vienna it was clear that Khrushchev envied President Kennedy's youth. He spoke about it several times that, "You've got a lot longer to get things done than I have," referring to himself. And he clearly was somewhat jealous of Kennedy's youth, which I thought was sort of interesting.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you?

DEAN RUSK: No! How could I be?

RICHARD RUSK: Not only his youth, but his good looks and his appeal?

DEAN RUSK: Oh no. I didn't mind that at all.

RICHARD RUSK: Didn't bother you a bit, huh?

DEAN RUSK: There was one thing that I did there in Washington that caused some of the fashion people to raise hell.

RICHARD RUSK: That we've got.

DEAN RUSK: About the white--

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, we're talking about the actual exchange between Kennedy and Khrushchev at the Vienna summit. Now what do you recall of interest?

DEAN RUSK: Well maybe I've said this before, but Khrushchev started out with a long--

RICHARD RUSK: That we have. That we have.

DEAN RUSK: Well then.

SCHOENBAUM: Go ahead. Let him--why don't we get this all down in one.

DEAN RUSK: Khrushchev started out with a long ideological harangue about communism and the world revolution and that kind of thing. And when he got through, Kennedy, in effect, said to him, "Well Mr. Chairman, you're not going to make a communist out of me and I'm not going to make a capitalist out of you, so let's get down to business." Now some of the Kremlin watchers in the administration thought that Kennedy had made a mistake by not replying to Khrushchev in kind with an ideological reply. But Kennedy was very impatient about that kind of thing. He thought it was a waste of time and he just didn't like it. Now I would have to say that Khrushchev and Kennedy did seem to make some headway on the question of Laos. And that helped to encourage the Laos conference to finally come up with an agreement: an agreement which the North Vietnamese did not respect in any way, shape, or form. But then things turned very sour when Khrushchev turned to his ultimatum on Berlin. I think Khrushchev also had something of an ill temper and a sense of jealousy because when Kennedy arrived in Vienna the Austrians turned out by the hundreds of thousands wherever Kennedy went: huge crowds waving and greeting and so forth. When Khrushchev arrived, stony silence from everybody. He just drove through empty streets with no demonstration. As a matter of fact, the contrast there was such that we ourselves felt a little embarrassed because Austria was supposed to be a neutral country. But I think this might have gotten to Khrushchev a little bit: this sharp contrast in the reactions of the Austrian people to the two of them.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you think that ultimatum on Berlin, then, might have been as a result formulated hastily in a pique, or do you think--

DEAN RUSK: No, I think Khrushchev brought that with him from Moscow.

SCHOENBAUM: Of course, he had given Eisenhower an ultimatum in '58. And so this was another ultimatum to give us this time.

DEAN RUSK: That's right. I think the old so-and-so had planned to do that when he headed for Vienna.

RICHARD RUSK: It's reported that Kennedy was really shaken in the aftermath of that exchange, perhaps not directly with Khrushchev in immediate response to his remarks, but afterward thinking about what has happened.

DEAN RUSK: Well I think that Kennedy was disturbed and upset with the thought that Khrushchev felt that he could intimidate this young new President of the United States in such an almost brutal fashion, and that was what bothered Kennedy more than the actual merits of the issues that were being presented there.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he say that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, you know, you don't sit down and formulate these things that way. But it was clear to me that that was Kennedy's reaction.

SCHOENBAUM: I just have one more question. This is kind of a substantive one. Were you at that time in favor of Most-Favored-Nations treatment for the Soviet Union, and do you still remain basically in favor of Most-Favored-Nations treatment for the Soviet Union in trade matters? That, of course, came up in the sixties, at least in discussion. We're hitting you with all kinds of different issues here. It's a little unfair.

DEAN RUSK: Well I was interested in developing American trade with eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union. You see, our friends in western Europe had been opening up their trade with eastern Europe to a very substantial degree. And they were getting the benefits of that trade and we were not. And I had the impression at times that in western Europe they hoped that we would remain hostile and belligerent about trading with the Soviet Union so they could have the trade. But when we began to talk trade with the Soviet Union, one of my European friends--I think he was a German, I forget now just who it was--said, "What are you doing in these talks behind our backs." And I said, "We are following you. And when we follow you, we're behind your back. We've decided to start trading just like you're trading with them." But there was--

RICHARD RUSK: Was that Gerhard Schroder?

DEAN RUSK: No, I don't think so. But I was in favor of trade, provided we would receive in the other direction things which we could use: forest products, minerals, oil, things of that sort. I was not in favor of trade financed by long-term, low-interest rate credits, because it seemed to me that was simply a subsidy to the Soviet economy and that we would not be getting very much in exchange. And there were some limits on what the Soviets thought they could send to us in connection with such trade.

SCHOENBAUM: Now, as you recall, Nixon in 1972 did negotiate a Most-Favored-Nation trade treatment for the Soviet Union which, for the record, means that the Soviet Union would get the benefit of the same low tariffs that our European trading partners or Japan get on goods.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Otherwise they would be subject to the Smoot-Hawley tariffs.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. And Nixon did reach that agreement. But of course it was blocked in the Congress by the Jackson amendment, essentially over the immigration of Soviet Jews. Now this happened in '72. Did this issue come up, specifically Most-Favored-Nation treatment come up, during your time and were you called on to take a position on that?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. We were hoping to work out such agreements with some of the smaller countries of eastern Europe. And I think we did with Poland and with one or two others.

SCHOENBAUM: But it didn't come up so much with the Soviet Union?

DEAN RUSK: But when we began to move on these trade matters with countries of eastern Europe, the Soviet Union became very suspicious because they thought we were trying to interpose some kind of separation between these countries of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. And so in order to allay that we did do some talking with the Soviet Union themselves

about trade. But then we had a good deal of trouble during the sixties with the COCOM [Coordinating Committee on Export Controls] list. This was an inter-allied list of things which we all had agreed we would not sell to the Soviet Union. And the American approach to that list was that it ought to be fairly long. Our own military took a very dim view about all sorts of things being sold to the Soviet Union. At one point some officers in the Pentagon wanted to put toys on the COCOM list on the theory that toys contribute to the morale of--

END OF SIDE 2

Conclusion of statement by Dean Rusk that was cut off by the end of Side 2, dictated by Mr. Rusk to Ann [S.] Dunn:

Regarding the COCOM list, when military people start thinking about war as total war, then almost anything can be considered to contribute to the war potential of the other side. My view was that trade would not occur unless it was of benefit to both sides and that we ourselves would benefit from trade even though the Soviets might benefit from trade. Our allies in western Europe wanted to reduce very sharply the list of items on the COCOM list. I was somewhat in favor of that approach but we had others in the government, such as Secretary of Commerce Luther [Hartwell] Hodges [Jr.], who was somewhat of a cold warrior on matters of trade. There were people in the Pentagon who were very negative about trade and, of course, people in the Congress. There are people including a good many in the Congress who think that when you trade with someone you are doing them a favor, where my view has been that you don't trade unless it is of benefit to you as well. That meant that there was always political opposition to trade with the Soviet Union that would not be present when trading with others in the world.