

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

Rusk Q

Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas Schoenbaum

circa 1985

RICHARD RUSK: --Interested to know that the subject of this tap, Pop, will be the Bay of Pigs. (laughter) My first question about the Bay of Pigs will be related to John [Fitzgerald] Kennedy and his campaign rhetoric and pledges of 1960. During the campaign Kennedy advocated aid to anti-Castro exiles; and also criticized [Dwight David] Eisenhower for doing nothing about Cuba. Did this pre-election rhetoric contribute to the decision-making which was later made and perhaps led to the decision to go ahead with the Bay of Pigs? Would this be a case where the advisers may have pulled out the campaign platform and asked, "What does it say?"

DEAN RUSK: This might have had some bearing on what was in President Kennedy's own personal mind. I must confess that I had not paid much attention to that point during the campaign myself, and I don't recall that anyone at any time made any references to what Kennedy had said during the campaign on the subject of Cuba. As a matter of fact, the situation in Cuba developed a kind of momentum of its own. When Castro first made his landing and began to move in to seize power down there, there was a good deal of friendly reaction to his effort because of the terrible character of the [Fulgencio] Batista [y Zaldivar] regime, and there was a good deal of sympathy for Castro around the hemisphere, including in this country. The *New York Times* had a considerable number of very friendly stories written by Herbert [Lionel] Matthews who had gone down to visit with the Castro people, that sort of thing.

RICHARD RUSK: What was the date that Castro took power? Any idea? I think it was the late fifties.

DEAN RUSK: It was 1959, I think, some time in there. But soon after Castro succeeded in getting power he visited Washington, and at that time there was an inclination to try to work with him. I remember still a television picture of Castro and then Vice President Richard [Milhous] Nixon coming out of Nixon's office together. And Nixon put his arm around Castro and said, "We're going to work with this man." Then things began to go sour because Castro's idea or promise of having elections proved to be false and he began to turn the administration of the country over to a small communist clique that was right around him. And a number of those who had been with him on his original landing and struggle defected from him. And he took a good many measures hostile to the United States, such as the seizure of a lot of American property down there. He finally told President Eisenhower in January, before the Kennedy inauguration, that we would have to reduce the number of people in our embassy in Havana to about eleven people. And that just made Eisenhower mad. And he asked Christian [Archibald] Herter to speak to me about whether Kennedy or I wished to comment on whether or not he, Eisenhower, should break relations with Cuba; and we decided not to comment. And so Eisenhower went ahead and broke relations with Cuba just a very few days before inauguration. So the relations with Cuba were pretty bad at the time that Kennedy took office. Now there had been in preparation a brigade of Cuban exiles down in Central America. It had been organized by CIA [Central

Intelligence Agency] under the Eisenhower Administration, and they were in course of training down there and--

RICHARD RUSK: Let me ask you a couple of questions before we get into that. The first one is, are you satisfied in your own mind that the route that Castro took was very much a prearranged plan of his own and he was not acting in response to American policy?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I am inclined to think that Castro had pretty strong communist commitments long before he made his landing in Cuba. As I remember, he had been involved in the riots in Bogota, Colombia, at the time when these riots almost broke up a meeting of the foreign ministers of the OAS [Organization of American States]. General [George Catlett] Marshall was down there at the time of that meeting.

RICHARD RUSK: Now this was prior to his taking power in Cuba?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes, yes. He had been known; but the way he held out hopes during his struggle for power with a constitutional, democratic system, based on elections and things of that sort, caused people to take the view that we should just wait and see how it turns out. There were very few people who had any good words to say about the Batista regime. So the Eisenhower administration was not inclined to assist Batista against these fellows.

RICHARD RUSK: Was there ever any evidence that Castro was active in the Americas, either Central America or South America, prior to the Bay of Pigs incident?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes, I saw--Oh, you mean tinkering with other countries? No, I think he was concentrating in the first instance on the seizure of power and consolidating power in Cuba

RICHARD RUSK: So his activity came after, and not prior?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Now by the summer of 1960, before Kennedy took office, and at a time when Eisenhower was saying that we would never permit a communist regime to seize power in this hemisphere, the CIA reports in the summer of 1960 said that we must assume for all practical purposes that Cuba is a communist regime. So during the year of 1960, it was clear that the communists consolidated power there in Cuba, and imposed a communist dictatorship, and cancelled any idea of free elections or things of that sort. There were large scale arrests, and a lot of people fled Cuba, and [there was] just quite a mess there. But before Inauguration Day, in my briefings in the State Department about things that were going on, I was told that there was something about Cuba that I should be briefed on as soon as I took office. I had not been given a clear briefing on the Bay of Pigs brigade until we took office. But then I got the briefing very quickly after that.

RICHARD RUSK: Apparently President-elect Kennedy was briefed on November 18 by the Eisenhower administration or the President himself about the exile force and the operation that was being proposed. Now, in the course of his being briefed, do you suppose that he was asked to comment or asked for his endorsement?

DEAN RUSK: I doubt that he was asked for any endorsement. I think it was simply a matter of information. But I don't know how extensive that briefing was and whether he made any comments to Eisenhower or anybody else about it. But he and I never discussed it before we took office. So, for the reasons I set forth in that memorandum, this was caught up in the problems of transition from one administration to the other, and so it was not a very good time for us to have to look at a problem of that seriousness.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you have any insight as to why Eisenhower might have either broken relations so late in his administration or gotten involved in an operation of this type, knowing that it could not be completed within the course of his administration?

DEAN RUSK: Well Eisenhower had become increasingly hostile toward Cuba; and he had imposed sanctions on Cuba. For example, he had cancelled two or three million tons of very valuable sugar quotas for Cuba in reaction to the seizure of American property down there. So the relations were very bad indeed at the time that Castro told him that we would have to reduce our embassy in Havana to something like eleven people. So Eisenhower just got fed up with it--got mad--and decided to break relations. I don't think Kennedy had any negative reaction to the breach in relations because he was pretty mad too after all the things that had been going on.

But then we had to look at this operation at a time when we were not suited as a team to look at something like that. Kennedy had not worked out his own methods of administration in his own mind. In retrospect, he should have turned to his Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense and said to them, "I would like a recommendation from you fellows on this." But he kept talking to all sorts of people, including junior staff officers, as though we were all equals in the responsibilities we carried. I remember one session--he used to hold his news conferences over in the auditorium of State Department. And after one of these news conferences he and some others came up to my office and we sat in a little side room there and discussed this. There were about eight people around the table, some of them pretty junior; and he went right around the table asking each one of them to give his views on this Bay of Pigs thing.

RICHARD RUSK: This is in the planning phase of it, not in the operational phase?

DEAN RUSK: That's right, in the planning. And I was the only person there who expressed any reservations about it. All these others--but they were all juniors. They weren't really carrying responsibility. Well, I did not let that kind of thing happen again. I would not take part in that kind of sewing circle.

RICHARD RUSK: I have a question for you which has been raised by others. Some say that John Kennedy may have thought that he authorized some exiles slipping ashore to form a Castro style resistance movement; yet the agencies developed an invasion plan thinking that the President would have to commit full support if trouble later materialized. Is there substance to these claims? Do you think that the President had one type of operation in mind, and the CIA was working on another, and they just never connected on these two concepts of what each had in mind?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I am completely convinced that at no time did President Kennedy give any consideration to the use of American forces in this operation. Now, whether there were those in CIA who thought that if the brigade got ashore and got into trouble, that we would have to send in American forces in support of, I don't know. But if that was in their minds, then they simply misread the President and played with that idea without any authorization, because this was never in Kennedy's mind. The idea was--Well, you see President Kennedy was given a lot of-- We were given a lot of information about the situation in Cuba which just turned out not to be so. The same people who were promoting the operation were the same people who were furnishing the information on which a judgment was to be based. And that we remedied very clearly after the Bay of Pigs disaster by separating out those two functions because we were told, for example, that there would be elements of the Cuban armed forces that would defect and join the brigade. We were told that there would be mass, popular uprisings throughout Cuba and all sorts of things were going to happen when the brigade hit the beach. It just didn't happen. I think a lot of this information that CIA was passing on came from very biased speculation by Cuban refugees, who were very anxious to topple Castro and get back into Cuba. And I wasn't permitted myself, it was held in such a small group, that I was not even permitted to consult my own Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the Department of State.

RICHARD RUSK: You made this point in your other letter, Pop, that the intelligence implanted was so tightly held that other parts of the government that should have been involved in this were not.

DEAN RUSK: That's right. The contrast--

RICHARD RUSK: Even to the extent that briefing papers and position papers that were passed out at the beginnings of meetings were picked up at the ends of meetings. Why this obsession with such a tightly-held operation?

DEAN RUSK: Well, it was supposed to be a so-called covert operation. Secrecy was the essence of it. Any kind of leak would be certain to frustrate the operation, and things of that sort. CIA had a pretty fanatical commitment to secrecy on something like this.

RICHARD RUSK: Did anyone ever challenge either the CIA or the President and the executive group that was meeting on this issue? Did anyone ever raise that as an issue, raise a question about the tightness in which everything was being done?

DEAN RUSK: Not really, but there were several consequences. We didn't have a crack at that kind information by others who were also informed about Cuba. And also, it tended to concentrate the responsibility for this whole business in the hands of CIA. For example, I am convinced that the Joint Chiefs of Staff never really looked at this in terms of a professional responsibility as soldiers to make a serious judgment as to whether this brigade had any chance at all for success. For it was a CIA operation and they sort of brushed their hands on it. And the thing that should have been obvious to all of us was that there was no way for an operation of this scale to be covert. It was bound to be a major public affair, including our part in it, at the moment those fellows started for the beach. And that was something that we didn't grapple with

because, again, we were all sitting on our little posts of responsibility and not looking at the problem across the board the way the President had to look at it.

RICHARD RUSK: In a situation like that you always run into the "what ifs." What if certain things had been said. You mentioned in your own letter that you felt you may have failed the President slightly by not asking the Joint Chiefs to make their own assessment.

DEAN RUSK: Well, in retrospect I think I should have insisted that the President ask the Joint Chiefs a question which was not asked. He should have said to them, "Now I may want to do this with American forces, so I want the Chiefs to come in here by noon tomorrow and tell me what American forces we would need if I asked them to do it." And they would have come in with very large demands for sustained preliminary bombing attacks on Cuba and a couple of divisions going in on the first wave backed up by Army, Navy, and Air Force. It would have been apparent then to Kennedy, that the contrast between what our own Chiefs thought would be necessary and what this little brigade could do, was a clear indication that the brigade couldn't cut it.

RICHARD RUSK: Had that issue been raised, he may very well have put a halt to the deal based on that analysis--at least, based on that comparison.

DEAN RUSK: Well, there was another point which I know was on Kennedy's mind, which I know troubled him. And that was the question that if he did not let this brigade make its try to go ashore, what in heck would you do with the brigade? If you disbanded the brigade, there would be several thousand of these very outraged Cuban exiles raising all sorts of hell in this country and elsewhere for not going ahead with it. Politically that could have been very difficult indeed for Kennedy. He was bothered by that, and he was bothered by the effect in the hemisphere of a communist regime being established and surviving. And he didn't like that kind of intrusion into the hemisphere, part of the hangovers of the Monroe Doctrine and things of that sort.

RICHARD RUSK: A strong morale case could have been made, or probably was made, on behalf of an operation like this: the fact that Castro had subverted his own revolution.

DEAN RUSK: Well, Castro has betrayed his own promises that he made during his contest for power, just sweeping them all under the rug when he became dictator down there.

RICHARD RUSK: Batista was in power during the latter years of the Eisenhower administration. Had we pretty much cut off any support we were giving him?

DEAN RUSK: Well, Eisenhower had sent--the Batista regime was so terrible that Eisenhower had sent some special envoys down to talk to Batista to try to persuade [him] to turn over to a constitutional government and leave the country. But Batista wouldn't do it. And when push came to shove, Batista did not have the kind of popular support around the countryside that he would have needed to fend off the Castro effort. The regime was cruel; it was corrupt; it was a disgrace in the hemisphere, what was happening there. So Eisenhower was not in any way backing the Batista regime. He was trying to get Batista out of the country. But I have never made public my own personal advice to Kennedy on this, and I would have to wrestle with you a bit about whether you could make it public in your own book. But I opposed the Bay of Pigs to

him privately. I did not do so in meetings. Perhaps I should have organized within the administration a block of opposition to the idea.

RICHARD RUSK: You mean found supporters of your position?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, talk to Robert [Strange] McNamara, maybe the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and some others, and confronted Kennedy with a much stronger opposition than I as an individual could give him.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you consider doing that in this particular case?

DEAN RUSK: Well, not really because I don't like the idea of sort of conspiring against your own President. And also, we were all new to each other and that was a very key point in this whole thing. We had not learned to work together as a team on matters and we learned the hard way in the Bay of Pigs. There is one little anecdote for your own private information. After the Bay of Pigs I went to England with Kennedy. Before we left we had dinner with Prime Minister [Harold] McMillan in his country home, not very far from the airport. After dinner we went out to the airport, and by the time we got to the airport Harold McMillan was about three sheets to the wind on highballs. And at the airport he came lurching up to me and put his arm around my shoulder and said, "Rusk, I have got to know you better. Jack tells me that you were opposed to the Bay of Pigs but then when it happened, you acted as though you had done it yourself." So President Kennedy knew that I opposed the Bay of Pigs, but I didn't go around town telling others that I opposed it. And when the disaster came, I closed ranks with him and tried to make the best of it.

RICHARD RUSK: Looking back over the years, do you remember the basis of your own opposition?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. During World War II I had been Chief of War Plans for the CBI [China-Burma-India] theatre. And as a colonel of Infantry, I knew in my own mind that this brigade didn't have the chance of a snowball in hell.

RICHARD RUSK: This was the type of thing you relayed to Kennedy?

DEAN RUSK: Well no, I didn't speak so much in military terms as in political terms to him. I must confess that--because you see, in the spring of 1961 I was not a colonel in Infantry, I was the Secretary of State. And I was still playing my role rather carefully and not reaching beyond my role into military and other matters. And that, in retrospect, was a mistake. But on the political side, to do this operation, to try to do it covertly, did not give you chance to mobilize any kind of overt support that you might get from others members of the hemisphere or your own people. And so it was on--now, had the operation succeeded, it would have justified itself. Success brings its own justification in these matters. And afterwards when there were groans in the hemisphere, my clear impression was that the other nations in the hemisphere were appalled, not so much by the policy of the United States as by the failure. Most of them would have been delighted to see it succeed, but they couldn't attach themselves to a failure, so they didn't.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember specifically what kind of endorsement or support you may have gotten along these lines?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I think had a new government taken over in Cuba that it would have been recognized promptly by the other nations in the hemisphere and they would have welcomed a constitutional government in Cuba. But there was also that point that I made in that paper about the lack of effective communication between Kennedy, on the one side, and a brigade in Central America. And for that CIA was heavily responsible. For example, the point that at no time did President Kennedy contemplate use of U.S. forces in support of this operation, and the brigade clearly had the view that if it got into trouble, we would come roaring in behind them. We were told in Washington that if the brigade got into the trouble, they would simply melt away into the countryside and become guerrillas, just as Castro had done. Well, when that moment arrived, we were told that the brigade had not had one hour of guerrilla training and therefore they were incapable of simply turning into guerrillas. I did recall my own military days in one respect. The original landing site was out in eastern Cuba. And for some reason problems developed about that land site, and so they were looking for alternatives. Well, I suggested that if we were going to let them go ashore, to let them go ashore immediately east of Guantanamo. And then if they got ashore and got into trouble we could rescue them into Guantanamo; or if they began to succeed, we could support them from Guantanamo. But the Joint Chiefs turned that down immediately because they didn't want to lose the virginity of Guantanamo by getting mixed up in this particular operation. So they moved the landing site over to the Bay of Pigs, which is considerably further west than Guantanamo.

RICHARD RUSK: Was that option seriously considered: the one you put forth?

DEAN RUSK: Only to turn it down.

RICHARD RUSK: Was the landing in that part of the coast feasible at all in a military sense?

DEAN RUSK: Could have been; certainly was as easy as the original landing spot, which was further east from Guantanamo. But that might have, in the event of failure, might have led to the expulsion of the U.S. from Guantanamo because there would have been great international pressures for us to get out, particularly if we were going to use it for that kind of purpose.

RICHARD RUSK: Looking back on your specific advice to Kennedy, did you ever put that into written form? [Warren] Cohen refers to a memo you wrote to the President during this period that is in the Kennedy archives up there in the JFK Library. He quoted from it. I guess he go a look at it. But do you remember giving him a memo?

DEAN RUSK: No, I think not. I might have written something at some point, but my most direct advice was given to him orally with just the two of us present.

RICHARD RUSK: I've got no qualms at all about leaving out whatever you want left out or whatever you want kept confidential between you and Kennedy.

DEAN RUSK: Well, in Arthur [Meier] Schlesinger's [Jr.] book, he hints that I opposed, so you can quote him if you want to. I forget what Warren Cohen said about it.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you oppose it on any other grounds other than the political problems of doing it covertly as opposed to overtly and the international law problems?

DEAN RUSK: There were some international law problems involved which Kennedy wasn't disposed to pay much attention to at that point. He did later, having been burned by the Bay of Pigs. As a matter of fact, the international law aspects of the handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis were very important to him. But if you will make a list of the reasons for the mistakes of the Bay of Pigs, you will see that in the later handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis that we had learned a lot of lessons the hard way and put them to good use during the Cuban Missile Crisis. There were hundreds of people in the government who were called on to help out on the Cuban Missile Crisis.

RICHARD RUSK: And in that sense, despite the loss of life and the fact that it was a dramatic setback for the U.S., in terms of the value gained from the experience, the lessons that were learned, in a sense it almost came cheaper in terms of the consequences of what can go wrong in foreign affairs.

DEAN RUSK: In a sense it was, but it was a heck of a way to learn a lesson. But we all learned very quickly, and there was not much chance that we were going to fall into that kind of thing again.

RICHARD RUSK: Maxwell [Davenport] Taylor conducted the postmortem for Kennedy--

DEAN RUSK: He and Bobby Kennedy?

RICHARD RUSK: Bobby too?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you conduct one on behalf of yourself or the Department other than this letter that you showed Tom [Schoenbaum] the other day?

DEAN RUSK: No, this study of the disaster by Maxwell Taylor and Bobby Kennedy, on the whole, was a pretty good examination of all the problems that were involved. And, one thing again--Another reason why I am not writing memoirs: Allen [Welsh] Dulles was then head of CIA, and he and Richard [Mervin] Bissell [Jr.] came in there to these meetings and discussed and fought for their plan and everything else, you see. Well, after the Bay of Pigs, Allen Dulles told me that he had had great personal reservations about this operation. But he didn't express those to Kennedy. So after the Bay of Pigs, it was clear that Allen Dulles and Dick Bissell were going to be on the way out because they could not help but bear the principal responsibility for the difference between promise and result of the Bay of Pigs.



RICHARD RUSK: After the President set the example of personally taking blame for everything that happened, did the rest of the players, the rest of the participants, in that planning and operation do their job and do a good job of biting their lip and taking the blame as--

DEAN RUSK: Well, not really. Some of the people around Kennedy tried to leak the word to the press that after all Kennedy was only carrying out an operation that had been put together by Eisenhower. Now this infuriated Kennedy because he was a man of honor and he knew that he, Kennedy, had had a full chance to look at it and make the decision, and he wasn't going to try to dump this on Eisenhower. And so that caused him to go into a press conference and take full personal responsibility for whatever role the Americans had in this thing. And he just wouldn't have that. But there were some others, Chester [Bliss] Bowles for example, went around town after the Bay of Pigs telling reporters, "Oh, this was terrible, a great mistake. I tried my best to prevent it." And so forth. Well, this immediately got back to the President. [There is] no way these things can be kept from a president. So, that just about cooked Chester Bowles as far as Kennedy was concerned.

RICHARD RUSK: Now, Cohen quotes Chester Bowles as having given you a memo stating Bowles' opposition to the Bay of Pigs, and apparently you chose not to forward that to Kennedy. Do you remember what your reasons may have been?

DEAN RUSK: Well, Kennedy had in front of him a very strong two- or three-page letter from Arthur Schlesinger, on his own staff, opposing the Bay of Pigs for all the reasons that Chester Bowles set forth. And I reported to Kennedy that Chester Bowles was opposed to it. But I don't know whether or not I passed along Bowles' letter to the President. The President didn't care much about having a bunch of memos stuffed at him on things like that. He didn't even like that in handling the Cuban Missile Crisis. He wanted to hear what you had to say; then he would think about it and make up his own mind. Bill [James William] Fulbright was opposed to it and told the President so. There were very, very few. I don't know if there were any other private consultations between Kennedy and other members of Congress. But I doubt it, because the fear of leaks was so serious that there was a minimum of consultation around town. But I think we have to assume, looking back on it, that Castro had infiltrated this brigade with some of his own people and he was pretty well-informed about what was going on.

RICHARD RUSK: Did this thing affect your relationship with John Kennedy at all? Either for the better or for the worse?

DEAN RUSK: No. I think, if anything, it strengthened my relation with Kennedy, particularly the fact that I showed complete solidarity after the thing had happened. Now Bobby did do a good job of raising private money, with tremendous help from [Francis] Cardinal [Joseph] Spellman, the Cardinal up in Boston, to ransom the prisoners. We ransomed those with drugs which Castro badly needed. So we got most of the Bay of Pigs prisoners back out of there through that operation. That was Bobby's work and he did a good job on that.

RICHARD RUSK: How did President Kennedy personally take this? People have said that this was the first real setback in his history, maybe the worse setback of his administration. There were guys who were killed in this thing and--

DEAN RUSK: Well he took it hard; he took it hard. But he was a man of guts and he took the pieces and went on from there, and he didn't let it tear him to pieces. In the first draft of Arthur Schlesinger's book--this appeared in an article in *Look*--Schlesinger talks about Kennedy crying in Jacqueline's [Bouvier Kennedy] arms in their bedroom over this Bay of Pigs thing. Well, that was a pretty obscene thing for Schlesinger to put in there: peeping through the President's bedroom keyhole. So between the article in *Look* and the book, Schlesinger took that out. But it hit Jack pretty hard. And I think because it shook his confidence in some people that he had had great regard for. After all, when he was elected President, after the election, the first personnel move that he made was that he announced that he was asking Allen Dulles and J. [John] Edgar Hoover to remain at their posts. He did that before he appointed any of the rest of us. And he had great regard, originally, for Richard Bissell. He was indeed a very able fellow. So this kind of shook him and increased his tendency to be skeptical about everything he was told: pretty healthy position for a President to be in.

RICHARD RUSK: Tom had a question. It relates to the fact that much of the history about Kennedy and some of the best history about Kennedy has been written by some of the fellows when they were sitting around the table as participants in this decision making. You would deliberately not expose your views. And as a consequence--we're talking about Arthur Schlesinger and Ted [Theodore Chaikin] Sorensen--and as a consequence Tom was speculating that it happened for more than the Bay of Pigs. It happened--this type of reporting and this type of impression of your real role and the amount of your influence in the Kennedy Administration have been down played. Now Kennedy himself has been quoted as saying that you were the primary adviser for foreign affairs in his administration. Does Tom have a point to be made there?

DEAN RUSK: In his book Arthur Schlesinger commented that I used to sit in those meetings in the Cabinet room silent like an old Buddha. Well that was true when there were thirty-five people sitting in there--all these staff people around the walls--because I knew that there was a high chance that whatever was said would be in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* the next morning. So my practice was either to talk with the President before such a meeting or to suggest to him that I talk to him after a meeting, before he made up his mind, so that I would give my advice as much as possible to the President on a one-on-one basis--sometimes with McNamara alongside, because I just didn't think--the Kennedy administration was a very leaky administration. There were a lot of these people who were trying to play "Mr. Big" and there were people who were trying to make their own brownie points with particular reporters and so forth.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember offhand some of the more flagrant examples of outrageous leaks?

DEAN RUSK: Well, the fact that Chester Bowles went around telling newspaper people what a terrible thing this was, and he had tried to prevent it, and so forth. And Kennedy himself would do a fair amount of leaking. Of course, he had the authority to leak because he could declassify any piece of information And you get to know who the leakers are, because in fact the reporters do not conceal their sources nearly as much as they claim to. I usually had no problem in finding

out from a reporter in one way or another who had leaked a particular story to him. Because after all they had to make their living around that building, and if they wanted to do it in comfort they had to pay some attention to what I wanted from them.

RICHARD RUSK: Back to the operation. Was the thing at all close to succeeding, or was there ever a point where it looked like the operation might have been able to succeed, or was it a loser from the beginning?

DEAN RUSK: It was a loser from the first moment, in retrospect. It never could have succeeded.

RICHARD RUSK: What level of intervention would it have taken by the Americans to have made that possible?

DEAN RUSK: Well it would have taken the immediate establishment of full air control over Cuba; it would have required a quick build-up of capabilities of little airstrip that was there at the Bay of Pigs; and it would have required forces that could take on the tanks that Castro was moving in there and things I like that.

RICHARD RUSK: The fact of the matter is he seemed to have pretty good support from the Cuban people, at least his own forces.

DEAN RUSK: Apparently, he arrested a very large number of people inside Cuba, the day before the landing. So he had rounded up any possible leadership of any kind of public outburst or anything of that sort, and his troops remained loyal to him. So it was just not on.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you have to push hard for the cancellation of the second air strike?

DEAN RUSK: No, I didn't push one way or the other on it. After it was clear that the landing was going to be in trouble for lack of more air support, Richard Bissell and General [Charles P.] Cabell of CIA came in to see me in my office one evening and asked for my permission to run more air strikes against Cuba. Well that had not been a part of the plan and I told him I couldn't give them that permission. I offered them my telephone if they wanted to call President Kennedy and ask him, but they decided not to call him. They later claimed that had those additional planes that they were asking for had made their strikes that maybe those planes would not have hit the landing ships. But that was nonsense because there were a good many planes in hangers and places where we didn't see them that we would not have bombed anyhow. We would not have seen them to bomb them. But anyhow that was their judgment not to refer the matter to President Kennedy, who was after all the only one would could have given them that authority. But it was just a messed up operation from the beginning.

RICHARD RUSK: Cohen quotes you as, after it became obvious that the thing was in real trouble and wasn't going to work, in your group meeting you very forcefully and very emotionally made the point that we must save this President. We must get behind this President.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I am sure I did. I don't remember the exact circumstances, but that was my attitude and was the attitude I tried to insist upon in the State Department. And there was a disposition on everybody's part to do that because they all liked Kennedy. But there were some who broke away. Adlai Stevenson, who hated every word of it, proved to be a brilliant advocate of this thing up at the United Nations when this hit the United Nations. He didn't like the operation; he had not been fully briefed on it ahead of time; he had been embarrassed up there at the United Nations. But he did a brilliant piece of advocacy with a poor case at the United Nations and showed some real ability in that regard, as a lawyer representing the views of a client, in effect.

RICHARD RUSK: At the time he was embarrassed by events at the U.N., apparently he came out denying that there was any American involvement in this thing and as it turns out there was. He did know what the facts of the situation were?

DEAN RUSK: Well, there was one particular fact that I feel very badly about. It was reported that a couple of Cuban planes had defected to Florida and I reported that to Adlai Stevenson. Then I was told that these were dummy defections. They didn't come from Cuba at all; they were just rigged up by the CIA to land in Florida as though they were Cuban planes. Well, now there is where I was misled and then I misled Adlai Stevenson in turn. It's that kind of thing that just made whole thing an unholy mess. But I think, on the whole, we survived that episode better than, in retrospect, we had any right to expect that we could.

RICHARD RUSK: It started with the President's willingness to take full responsibility for the whole mess. What were the other factors?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think it is fair to say that the leaders of Congress, in both parties, did not take advantage of this to beat him over the ears. They were sorry for him to get caught in this kind of situation.

RICHARD RUSK: The Republican side probably saw their degree of involvement and the fact that it came out of the Eisenhower--

DEAN RUSK: Well, the Republicans were restrained on this matter: people like Senator Everett [McKinley] Dirksen, people like that. There were some shaking of the heads in Congress. I remember when I testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the Bay of Pigs, which was not one of my most pleasant appearances before that committee. I mentioned--And this is interesting because of some of the things that happened later. I mentioned that one of the things that was in our minds was the prospect that Cuba might become a missile base for the Soviet Union. That was back in the spring of 1961, long before the missile crisis.

RICHARD RUSK: Could the case be made that this episode of the Bay of Pigs helped Castro solidify his hold on Cuba?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I am sure it did, although I think his actual physical control of Cuba was pretty complete.

One thing that has puzzled me about this whole relationship with Castro and that is why he has not made any concerted or sustained effort to get us out of Guantanamo. In the modern world it is just passé for a nation to claim that it has a right to have a physical presence inside of another nation without that nation's consent. And if Castro were really to pursue the Guantanamo issue at the United Nations, we would be in a minority of one or two at the United Nations.

RICHARD RUSK: As a matter of international law.

DEAN RUSK: As a matter of international law and practice in this postwar period. And he has not pursued it. I have never quite understood why. It may be in some curious and invaluable kind of way he thinks, in his relations with the Soviet Union, it may be of some use to him at some time to have the United States present in Guantanamo, or some other reason. I remember the last time I talked to Castro's Foreign Minister [Raul Roa] at one point he grinned at me and said, "Don't you wish we would attack Guantanamo?" And it may be that Castro doesn't really know what the United States might do if he tried to push us out of Guantanamo.

RICHARD RUSK: You personally, in view of the fact that we had broken relations with Castro, you had no dealings with Castro?

DEAN RUSK: No, but I had met Castro's representatives at the meeting of the OAS in January 1962 down at Punta del Este. That was the meeting in which the OAS expelled the Castro government from the OAS on the grounds that Marxist-Leninism was simply contrary to the international standards of the Western Hemisphere.

RICHARD RUSK: That was quite a highly successful meeting and most of the credit for that has been given to you.

DEAN RUSK: Well, we got just the necessary two-thirds vote.

RICHARD RUSK: You made the point that this thing was a serious blunder, yet the administration did manage to climb back out of it and get back on its feet reasonably well. And you mentioned the reaction of Congress, or lack of reaction, and also in your paper you suggested the international community really could have beat up on this country in terms of international law but elected not to do so.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, but again I think that part of this was the fact that most governments were just sorry that we had failed. It was regret not outrage that marked their reactions.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you surprised by anything that happened? Obviously, you had some strong opposition to this thing and some real doubts about it and it didn't come off. Did any of that surprise you at all--what did materialize--when you looked ahead and saw whatever scenarios you foresaw?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I started off with the belief that it simply could not succeed, and I was not surprised by the fact that it did not succeed.

RICHARD RUSK: Could you have blocked it if you had really gotten in there and raised--

DEAN RUSK: Well, if I had mounted a campaign within the administration and had pulled together McNamara and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and some others, I might have blocked it. I don't know. But that kind of activity I find very distasteful in terms of the position of the President and what he is entitled to from his colleagues. But I think if I were in that situation again that I would propose misgivings aside, and organize more resistance to the idea, and particularly to get the Joint Chiefs to come clean with an honest, professional, military judgment as to the possibility of success.

RICHARD RUSK: Tom had a question about the procedures. Kennedy had a lot of people around him and giving him advice on foreign policy. It was a very open-ended and freewheeling kind of thing. His question would have been: How did you two fellows exchange views? When you saw something come across your desk, were you free at any time to pick up the phone and talk directly to the President?

DEAN RUSK: I always had access to the President. I didn't have to go through any member of the White House staff to talk with the President.

RICHARD RUSK: No McGeorge Bundy or no Chief of Staff?

DEAN RUSK: Sometimes I would check in with McGeorge Bundy before seeing the President, but I could get him on the phone or I could go to see him. All I had to do was to call his personal secretary, Mrs. [Evelyn N.] Lincoln, and she would set it up straight away.

RICHARD RUSK: Is this a direct channel that you took advantage of and used frequently?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I tried not to abuse it, but I used it. And I saw him a lot on all sorts of other occasions when we were together. We would draw aside and have a few words about something when we were waiting to receive a distinguished visitor out on the White House lawn or at other various White House functions, parties and things of that sort, or before and after his press conferences in the State Department. So I saw a lot of him and I had no problem in speaking my piece to President Kennedy and he speaking his piece to me. Now he did not work within the, in effect, the constitutional order of things in terms of how he thought about the advice he got from various people. I happened to believe that a President should give special attention to the advice of his Secretary of State and his Secretary of Defense. But I never wanted to see the President without getting to see him.

RICHARD RUSK: Never once with John Kennedy?

DEAN RUSK: Now there were times if I had to see him in the early afternoon he would be napping in his bedroom - he took a rest every afternoon right after lunch. And I sometimes had to see him in his bedroom and other very informal occasions. Never in his bathroom.

RICHARD RUSK: That raises the inevitable question. I guess LBJ pulled that stunt on just about everyone?

DEAN RUSK: He never pulled it on me. I never set foot in his bathroom, and would not have.

RICHARD RUSK: I guess that type of story would get out. It isn't something his biographers discovered. It was rather apparent at the time that it happened that LBJ had that rather unique method of conversing with people he really didn't want to see I guess.

Well, I've still got some more questions, but I'm quite willing to let this suffice for tonight. We can finish up when you get back.

DEAN RUSK: I think the heart of the matter on the Bay of Pigs is pretty much in that paper I wrote to Ken [Kenneth W.] Thompson.

RICHARD RUSK: I think so.

DEAN RUSK: Now there is another question that I really can't answer and that is what considerations really turned out to be crucial in Kennedy's own judgment to go ahead and let the thing happen. I just don't think I know what was really in his mind and what considerations proved decisive in his own mind when he decided to let the thing go forward.

RICHARD RUSK: Well, when he laid down his reservations in your planning session, specifically that American support was not to be used, the Joint Chiefs, the military people, the CIA were apparently unhappy about this. They had "deep misgivings" about it, but did they express those misgivings strenuously at the time he laid those down? You know. Did they fight for --I guess not. The obvious answer is that they didn't.

DEAN RUSK: Not really. To some extent I think the CIA people were kind of playing games with Kennedy, and that one they should never do. I think that there were some in the CIA side of this thing who thought that if they could just get this thing started that Kennedy would have to back it up with American forces.

RICHARD RUSK: In view of the international reaction, the apparent sympathies of a lot of people were that the only thing bad about the Bay of Pigs was that it did not succeed. Was that ever something that we should have done: gone ahead and unloaded on that island? Did you ever think that afterwards, looking at the international reaction and the reaction that domestically?

DEAN RUSK: I think we would have been in deep trouble in this country in the Congress and places like the United Nations if we had put American forces ashore there in that situation. Now had this Cuban brigade gotten control of any significant amount of Cuban territory, then they would have been recognized by a good many governments as the new government of Cuba. That would have been a different situation.

RICHARD RUSK: In your LBJ oral history, you made the point that Lyndon Johnson was very negative towards the Bay of Pigs but he remained completely loyal to the President after the thing unfolded. What was the basis of his opposition and how forcibly did he press his opposition at the time deliberations were made?

DEAN RUSK: I don't know what he might have said in his private talks with the President. After all, he was frequently in the Oval Office alone with the President talking about various things and he did not inject himself into those discussions around the table in the Cabinet Room. As a matter of fact, he didn't attend too many of those meetings. So I don't know what was in his mind. My guess is that he just thought it was not on, that it could not possibly succeed, that it was a kind of hair-brained idea.

RICHARD RUSK: There was a meeting on April 4 at which Kennedy apparently polled the room of his circle of advisers to get their final thought on the Bay of Pigs, and it was reported that everybody more or less signed on at that point. Is that the way you recall it? Tom, this may have been the same instance in which [Lyman L.] Lemnitzer and [Arleigh A.] Burke gave their endorsement and you might want to--

SCHOENBAUM: Yes. Sorensen, in his book on Kennedy, says specifically--even more specifically--that Kennedy got the okay from Lemnitzer and Burke. And also Sorensen specifically says that Dean Rusk gave the okay for State and that McNamara gave the okay for Defense, apparently at that time.

DEAN RUSK: Well, it may be that this was after I had known that Kennedy was going ahead with it and that I knew that the decision had been made. I had talked to Kennedy privately about this more than once. There was a time when he had a group of advisers in my own little conference room in the State Department following a press conference which he held in the State Department. There he went around the table and there I did not endorse it, but that was at a somewhat earlier stage.

RICHARD RUSK: Who would have been at conference? Any idea? Were there a lot of people in the room or just a few?

DEAN RUSK: I forget the actual names, but I think one of the voices that made some difference in Kennedy's thinking was that of Adolf [Augustus] Berley. Now he had long since been out of government. He just dropped in occasionally to help out here and there. But he was very, very anti-Castro and he was looking more at the advantages if somehow Castro could be overthrown. But in that little session in my conference room in the State Department that I mentioned, for some reason Bill Fulbright was there, and he objected. He expressed his opposition to it.

SCHOENBAUM: Was that still at a time when it was possible to make a no-go decision?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I think President Kennedy was in a position to abort the whole thing until the landings began because we could have turned it around at any point before the landings actually began.

RICHARD RUSK: There is a professor at Harvard named [Irving Lester] Janis who has done a little studying on this group-think types of dynamics and decision making, and I don't know if I subscribe to any of it or all of it. But do you personally think there was some sort of group-think



process involved there? Perhaps it is due to the transition and the fact that not everybody knew each other. Would they-- [have advised JFK differently?]

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BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

RICHARD RUSK: --Had they been approached individually or dealt with him individually on the matter, as opposed to taking part in a group process with everybody seated around the table and privy to each other's thinking?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think two things are wrong with the group-think approach to this particular problem.

RICHARD RUSK: Are you familiar with Janis book at all?

DEAN RUSK: I am familiar with its theme. I ran right through it, yeah. In our system there is only one fellow who makes the final decision in the Executive Branch of the government, and that is the President. And it's not so much group-think as it is what is in his mind that makes the difference. That is true whether you have Cabinet meetings, National Security Council meetings, or whatever. It is not the group, it is the President who makes the final decision. The other thing is that I suspect we would have been better off if we had had more group thinking about the Bay of Pigs. Each one of us was sitting on our own little seat of responsibility and not reaching out to embrace all the factors that were outside of our immediate range of responsibility.

RICHARD RUSK: For example, if you had spoken up on your CBI experience as a war planner?

DEAN RUSK: I mean, if I had hit harder on the straight military side of things, it might have made some different. But we had not yet begun to work as a team. We were simply individuals trying to get acquainted with each other and figure out how to work with each other. We were not, in effect, putting ourselves in the position of the President, looking at these matters as a whole, as a President has to do.

RICHARD RUSK: What was Arthur Schlesinger's role on this thing? Did he come across as well at the time as he did in his book afterward?

DEAN RUSK: He put in a very good two-page letter, I think it was, stating strong objections to the Bay of Pigs operation. And that is part of the record and I respect him for it.

RICHARD RUSK: As far as the role of the Soviet Union is concerned, how did the Soviets respond during the crisis itself and after the landings? Did the invasion bring offers of help from [Nikita Sergeevich] Khrushchev or hints that the Soviets might employ missiles to help Cuba?

DEAN RUSK: I don't think the Soviets played any role there in the Bay of Pigs. Whether they might have, had the Bay of Pigs been more successful, I don't know. But they just licked their chops and saw us in misery, and perhaps rather enjoyed it. But the fact that Castro was able to wrap up the Bay of Pigs group rather quickly prevented any kind of Soviet activity.

RICHARD RUSK: Didn't you personally get some insights as to--or did you personally raise some question that the Soviets might inject missiles into Cuba as a partial response to?

DEAN RUSK: Well, at the time of the Bay of Pigs one of the things we had in mind was the possibility that Cuba might become a missile base for the Soviet Union.

RICHARD RUSK: Prior to the Bay of Pigs you were thinking this?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. And I testified on that point to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee after the Bay of Pigs. I mentioned that that was one of our concerns.

SCHOENBAUM: Doesn't this mean that the Bay of Pigs was more closely connected to the Cuban Missile Crisis than most people think--that the American failure in the Bay of Pigs really led to the Cuban Missile Crisis in that sense.

DEAN RUSK: Well, it is possible that the refusal of President Kennedy to use American forces to back up the brigade in the Bay of Pigs helped Khrushchev to think that he might put missiles in Cuba and get away with it. That is one of the factors. We don't know. We really don't know what was in Khrushchev's mind in putting the missiles in.

SCHOENBAUM: Rich, did you cover any private--you made some allusion to private conversations--

DEAN RUSK: --my view that such a brigade could not possibly succeed in accomplishing what it set out to accomplish. And secondly, that I was very dubious about some of the information we were being given about the situation in Cuba. And third, I realized that there would be a lot of both legal and political complications in this hemisphere and at the United Nations and with other governments.

SCHOENBAUM: Did Kennedy have any reaction? Do you remember what Kennedy's reaction was?

DEAN RUSK: Well, he thought about it and took it into account I am sure. But I really don't think that I know exactly what was the deciding factor in his own mind when he gave the green light for the brigade to go ahead.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you in any sense poll your own advisers or check in with your own advisers there in the department prior to or during the Bay of Pigs?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we were under such rigid rules that I was not able to discuss this with my colleagues. I couldn't even talk about this with the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the Department of State, who might have helped us raise a lot of questions about the information that was being given to us by CIA.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember specifically how the ruling went or how Kennedy set down his guidelines for keeping this a closed show?

DEAN RUSK: He did it orally and very emphatically. You see the theory was--and in retrospect this is rather foolish--the theory was that this was to be a covert operation and therefore secrecy was of the essence. Secrecy about our role in it was supposed to be maintained. Well it was just too much of an operation to be done covertly in any manner.

RICHARD RUSK: Getting back to the Soviets. Just how dominant of a concern were they in the issue, either the planning prior to it or afterwards? Reportedly there were Russian MiGs [Mikoyan and Gurevich] and crates on the docks of Cuba, for example, and obviously you were concerned about the possibility of Cuba becoming a Soviet base. But how dominant of a concern were they? Did you fear Soviet reactions elsewhere in the world?

DEAN RUSK: No, we really didn't get that much involved on the Soviet side. This was really aimed at Castro and the role that Castro might play in this hemisphere. You see, in January 1962 after the Bay of Pigs, I went to the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the OAS in Punta del Este, Uruguay. And there, with the necessary two-thirds vote, we expelled the Castro government from the OAS on the grounds that Marxism-Leninism was simply incompatible with the political institutions and traditions of the Western Hemisphere. Kennedy was very keen about getting that resolution passed. So, it was Castro who was most on our minds rather than the Soviet Union.

RICHARD RUSK: Both Cohen and other people who have written about this history have stated your role, particularly in your ability in getting this resolution out of the OAS, and that was a definite policy reaction to the Bay of Pigs. Were there other actions which we took in response to the Bay of Pigs, whether they be overt or covert? Some of this might relate to the [Frank Forrester] Church hearings in 1975 when some things were done that people at the very top of government were not aware of.

DEAN RUSK: There were various efforts made by CIA to harass Castro's Cuba by all sorts of dirty tricks.

RICHARD RUSK: This is after the Bay of Pigs?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. I vetoed a number of them as simply being foolish or unproductive. They had in mind, for example, finding some way of spoiling shipments of sugar out of Cuba to, say, Western Europe, making it inedible by the time it reached the port, but I thought that was just damn nonsense.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you hear of any plots against Castro?

DEAN RUSK: I didn't hear of any plots against Castro until I reached the Church Committee after I left office.

RICHARD RUSK: I did a tape with my dad on the Church hearings and we went into that in some detail. And that stuff apparently caught my dad as much by surprise as an awful lot of people.

DEAN RUSK: On that I remember on one occasion Llewellyn [E.] Thompson [Jr.], who was our representative on the Interdepartmental Committee, mentioned to me jokingly, with laughter, that some junior person who had been there at the meeting had said something about the assassination of Castro. And [Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson] Tommy and I both laughed and agreed that it should be knocked out the window, and it was knocked out of the window as far as that meeting was concerned.

RICHARD RUSK: Did Cuban exile actions continue against Castro after the Bay of Pigs? What happened to that?

DEAN RUSK: Some, but those were more or less held up while we were trying to rescue the Bay of Pigs brigade that had fallen into Castro's hands. But yes, there were various efforts made. I forget the details now, but one of our television networks paid some people to run a raid against the Cuban coast in front of their cameras just to get pictures of it for their use. That was pretty silly. Just as another network earlier had paid a group to dig a tunnel under the wall in Berlin before their cameras to rescue some people; and that got caught by some East Germans and some East Germans lost their lives over that one.

RICHARD RUSK: Who do you think in the Kennedy administration was behind the continuation of a degree of harassment as far as CIA is concerned? Cuban exile groups? Would that have been Robert Kennedy?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, Robert Kennedy, Thomas [Clifton] Mann and people in the CIA and to some extent President Kennedy himself because he didn't like Castro very much.

RICHARD RUSK: I have a general question for you that came out of the LBJ oral history project where you stated that--This was in 1970 or '71 when you did those tapes I think. But you said that Castroism "as an exportable commodity from Cuba to the rest of the Americas seems to be behind us." That was in 1971. In light of his durability, how would you assess that statement now?

DEAN RUSK: Well, after the Cuban Missile Crisis the standing and influence of Castro in the hemisphere dropped almost to zero. And when [Ernesto] Che Guevara went down to Bolivia, he went down there hoping to rouse the peasants in the countryside for revolution. But the peasants wouldn't buy him on their own without any interference from anybody else. We gave the Bolivians a little help--I forget just what kind--and the Bolivians rounded him up and in the process shot him. But it did appear in the rest of the sixties that Castro's ability to monkey around in the affairs of other countries in the hemisphere had greatly diminished. There was one

incident, of course, in 1964 when he was caught red-handed landing men and arms on the coast of Venezuela. And the foreign ministers of the hemisphere met in Washington and they imposed upon Castro all the sanctions that are available under the Rio Pact, with the exception of the use of armed force. But at that time, they said to Castro that if this kind of activity continues, we do not exclude the use of armed force. So they tried to give Castro a very clear warning in the summer of 1964. But there Castro was caught red-handed with the men and arms landing on the coast of Venezuela.

RICHARD RUSK: In the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs you had good success with OAS in getting members to agree on a resolution. Cohen makes the point that you had less success getting the European countries to agree to economic sanctions or other forms of action against Castro. What was the basis of their unwillingness to take concerted action on that particular issue?

DEAN RUSK: Well, the European countries are more reluctant to impose economic sanctions than the United States has been, is generally. And in Britain--then the Board of Trade, now I think they call it the Department of Trade--ran these things--these problems of trade--and paid very little attention to the Foreign Office. So the Foreign Office probably didn't have the power to impose economic sanctions. The Board of Trade said the purpose of trade is to trade, so we had some differences of view on that. Britain kept selling buses to Castro, for example. We thought maybe the infrastructure of Cuba could grind down in disrepair because most of that stuff had come from the United States and Western Europe. If they couldn't get spare parts or replacements, they'd soon be in a pretty sorry state there in Cuba. As a matter of fact they still are in a pretty sorry state in things like that.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you think Kennedy had an overdue or exaggerated preoccupation with Castro? Did Kennedy seem--you say Kennedy didn't like Castro. It seems like it consumed Kennedy.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think he was also concerned about factors that later appeared in Central America: that there is so much misery, corruption, poverty, illiteracy, and disease in so much of the hemisphere that the Western Hemisphere was rather ripe for that kind of man on horseback. But remember, at the time that Kennedy was expressing these animosities toward Castro, he also launched the Alliance for Progress. He tried to get at it from the other direction.

RICHARD RUSK: He personally had terrific rapport with Latin America and South America.

DEAN RUSK: That's right, that's right. I was with him on his trip to Costa Rica and there was an astonishing outpouring of public esteem and affection.

RICHARD RUSK: Was that the trip that Jackie made with him and would say a few words in Spanish to these various people.

DEAN RUSK: Yes.

RICHARD RUSK: Any memorable recollections from that tour with Kennedy and the responses from the various countries he went to there?

DEAN RUSK: Well, somehow he and Jacqueline had caught the imagination of Latin America--the people of Latin America. Well, that happened with the common people of many countries.

RICHARD RUSK: When he went on that tour, when would that have been? 1961?

DEAN RUSK: No, a little later. You know it is almost a marvel that the Bay of Pigs did not inflict greater scars upon President Kennedy and his administration. The bounce back on that really went very well and we soon recovered from it.

RICHARD RUSK: That's a tough way to start an administration. Personally, how did it feel to participate in this terrific debacle as far as foreign affairs go? It didn't hurt us badly in terms of our relations with other people and militarily it didn't hurt us at all, but personally how did it feel just to take part in something that fell apart so badly?

DEAN RUSK: Well, it was a very sad experience. And I was particularly concerned about what this would do to Kennedy and his Presidency, because it had included such things as what damage this would do with his relations with Congress, with our NATO allies. But somehow he was able to brush this aside, accept responsibility for it--brush it aside and get on with the public business. Perhaps it was a measure of the instinctive feeling that people had for Kennedy the man that made it possible for him to do that to such an extraordinary degree.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you notice any different relationship that you had with him? He knew that you had opposed it--at least questioned it. Did he ever say, "I should have asked you for more information," or "I should have done this?"

DEAN RUSK: No, he never came anywhere close to anything like an apology to me. He wasn't that kind of a fellow.

RICHARD RUSK: But you thought he had greater appreciation for your views afterwards?

DEAN RUSK: I think so, but that wasn't what I was working for. But I remember once as we approached the election of 1964--this was in the summer of 1963--I suggested to him that if wanted to make a fresh start in my job, getting braced for the election, that he should not hesitate to do so. And he said, "Ooh no. No. Don't bring that up again. I like your guts and I don't have many people around here with any guts." What was in his mind when he said that, I don't know.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you have a feeling that something like the Bay of Pigs was in his mind?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think he appreciated the fact that I closed ranks. I think I told you the little story of Harold McMillan.

RICHARD RUSK: Would the Bay of Pigs have been the best example of what Kennedy called "your guts?" Is that the issues on which you were most severely tested in terms of your--

DEAN RUSK: No, I think there he just appreciated the personal loyalty that was involved in closing ranks with him, not like what some of the other people did: going around town telling the reporters that they tried to stop it, that it was awful and so forth.

SCHOENBAUM: --Set the record straight questions because I think there are some statements in here--the book *Our Own Worst Enemy* by Leslie [Howard] Gelb, [Irving McArthur] Destler, and [Anthony] Lake--and there are some statements in here made using Dean Rusk as the authority. For instance, there is a statement of fact that Dean Rusk vetoed McGeorge Bundy as National Security Adviser [page 184] after Rusk and Stevenson both resisted Bundy's placement at State. And there is another statement that Walt [Whitman] Rostow was made National Security Deputy after Rusk vetoed him for head of State Department Policy Planning position.

DEAN RUSK: Well that isn't correct at all. I wanted McGeorge Bundy to be my Under Secretary at one point, but Kennedy wouldn't turn him loose. He wanted him for the National Security job. And I wanted George [Crews] McGhee to be the head of the Policy Planning Staff. He was an old colleague of mine in the [Harry S ] Truman administration years. I had seen him at work and valued his judgment and his energy. And so this was--no, there is just no truth in that.

SCHOENBAUM: Or in the situation of Walt Rostow--you never vetoed Walt Rostow for a--that's the language here "vetoed"--for head of the Department Policy Planning Staff?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I preferred George McGhee, that's all.

SCHOENBAUM: Then there is another statement--this is couched in a very, I think, unfair way--about Kennedy's frustration with State continued, complaining about its disorganization, dictated in a note to Rusk in August 1961 requesting "a memorandum on the present assignment of responsibility within the Department of State." They generally make the fact that Kennedy wrote this memorandum as a kind of an indictment of the State Department. Of course, that just doesn't follow the fact that even if he wrote a memorandum requesting the present assignment of responsibility, it does not have anything to do about what his view of the running of the Department was. But do you remember receiving such a memorandum? Apparently it was typed directly by Evelyn Lincoln and was not even filtered through the responsible press or presidential aide, and says, interestingly, "Some saw this sort of memo as reflecting White House disorganization where Kennedy would dictate messages which his secretary Evelyn Lincoln would then transmit, typos and all, without the responsible presidential aide seeing it." Do you have any comment?

DEAN RUSK: Well, there were a good many times when Kennedy was impatient with the State Department. Kennedy was an activist. In the State Department you find out before too long that sometimes the thing to do is to do nothing and that we should not buy into problems which are not strictly ours. But there were some procedures that were--For example, the State Department has never been able to send over to the President finished speeches and finished messages to Congress that the President would like to use just as it came over there. The bureaucracy are very poor speech writers and drafters, and they tend to get into the kind of language that when you

speaking it orally just doesn't make any sense. One small example: I suppose that I had to give 200 toasts to visiting dignitaries in my eight years. For each one of these dignitaries I would have a black book prepared: background, policy questions, and all the rest of it included in that black book. There would even be a suggested toast if I had to give a toast at luncheon or dinner. I was never able to use a single one of those. The fellows who wrote them didn't stand up and speak them to half a dozen people just to see what they sounded like when you used them orally, so I improvised my toasts. And in that little book, *Winds of Freedom*, [Ernest Kidder] Lindley included a good many of these toasts which were extemporaneous. Once in a while there would be an idea or a story or something in the materials prepared by the Department. I asked the Inspector General of the Department as he and his colleagues scramble all over the world looking at our embassies and so forth, to search the Foreign Service for people who had competence with articulate language. But a President usually has his own particular way of saying things, so most Presidents have someone nearby them in the White House. Theodore Sorensen and McGeorge Bundy were very good at putting things in final form. As a matter of fact, L.B.J. once complained to me that I used the best material that I had for myself and then I sent him the junk. Well that was because I improvised myself on the things he heard me talk about, you see. I didn't use the bureaucratic production. So this is a continuing problem. A first class speech writer is a very rare bird. It is very hard to write speeches for someone else.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you have someone who could do that for you eventually?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I never had anybody who could write me a finished piece. I had to go over it myself and change it around, brighten it up and so forth. But yes, they always tried to help me in preparing speeches.

RICHARD RUSK: Who would have been that in the Department?

DEAN RUSK: Well, Ernest Lindley was one of them.

RICHARD RUSK: Although you are more effective, you always have been most effective speaking extemporaneously than from any prepared draft. I think that is true of any speaker.

DEAN RUSK: The trouble is that when the Secretary of State makes a speech you are supposed to release the text of it to the press. I didn't have one knack that Alec Douglas-Home of Britain had. With that long training in Parliament, if he were going to make a speech, he would give the speech to the press for release at a certain hour. But then when he gave the speech, he would get up there with two or three little cards with all sorts of little squiggles on it and give a speech that was almost literally word for word what he had circulated to the press ahead of time. Well, I never had that ability. He didn't memorize but he just--

SCHOENBAUM: Do you recall receiving this memo or any reaction to it in August 1961?

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall it. I don't recall whether I replied to it.



RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall Kennedy's question of Dean [Gooderhanf] Acheson at some point in 1961, I think it was, when he asked him, "What's wrong with the State Department?" Acheson looked at him and said, "You are."

DEAN RUSK: Yes, yes. Well, Kennedy was very restless over the time that it took for the four Western powers to agree on an answer to Khrushchev's ultimatum on Berlin in the summer of 1961, following the meeting in Vienna. Well, the trouble is that when you try to get four governments to agree on the actual text of a note to the Soviet Union on something like that, it takes time. Unless the chiefs of government were going to sit down together and draft it themselves, these things had to go back and forth to the various capitals and every change had to be taken up again. So it did take time and I was very impatient about that too. But getting four governments to agree on a precise text is not a simple matter.

SCHOENBAUM: At one point too, they make the statement--they talk about the Ben Heinemen report which recommended a thorough reorganization of the State Department and a view of the Secretary of State, who would be not our chief diplomat but would be much more the primary adviser to the President on foreign policy and, I guess, much more like a National Security Adviser. Do you remember that?

DEAN RUSK: No, I didn't pay too much attention to that. There were one or two other reports. You see, I had lived through government enough to be quite disenchanted with what can be done through reorganization. I had lived through so many and very few of them had made a damn bit of difference. The key thing is not the formal structure, but getting good people to take charge of certain areas of public responsibility and do it. You can keep changing these organization charts around until the cows come home, but unless you have good people in key spots--But once in a while an organizational point will come up that will make some sense. For example, during my period we established the Operation Center there close to the Secretary. That was a twenty-four-hour-a-day operation which was the center of anything that was in the nature of a crisis or special problem. They had immediate communications with our embassies abroad. I think we had teletype capabilities with about seventy-five of our embassies, with our ambassadors, and we used to call that the Flap House because if you had a crisis you would set up a little task force in the Operation Center there to handle that particular problem. But that was one of the few organizational changes that I thought made any sense.

You see, when you try to divide an indivisible whole, there is a certain illogic to however you try to divide it up. There has been a continuing wrestling going on between the functional activities such as economics, cultural exchange, and things like that on the one side and the geographic division of responsibility, like the geographic bureaus in the Department of State. Well, there is no real answer to that because these problems are both geographic and functional. So the problem is to tie these things together rather than try to find an organization that would--

RICHARD RUSK: With good people speaking freely with each other.

DEAN RUSK: Yes that's right. Keep in touch and speak frankly, with candor.

SCHOENBAUM: In retrospect, your relations with the White House and the National Security Adviser were perhaps better than any period since.

DEAN RUSK: Well, certainly better than any period since. Now if you say before or since, you would have to look back to the time when the National Security Adviser was more or less a little donkey man who facilitated things but did not take any active part in policy. But, no, I think you can search the media closely throughout the 1960s and you won't find reports of feuding between McNamara and me, or between either one of us, or both of us with McGeorge Bundy or Walt Rostow. We talked to each other a lot by phone and in person. We all recognized we were working for the same President, for the same country, and we didn't have struggles about pad. McGeorge Bundy fully respected the position of the Secretary of State and if he wanted to make a recommendation to Kennedy about foreign policy matters, he would make it to me at the same time so that I would have a chance to get in my nickel's worth if I wanted to. And I never detected any kind of backbiting or knife in the back kind of thing from either Walt Rostow, later, or McGeorge Bundy. And I am quite sure that Kennedy would have been very impatient with that kind of thing as would Johnson.

SCHOENBAUM: There is another statement in here too--page 188--"There was," he said, "talking about the State Department. There was, as one senior associate remembers it, Rusk's failure to 'understand the telephone,' to realize that phone communications with the White House were secure, which reinforced his reluctance to engage in the verbal shorthand through which much Kennedy business was communicated." That statement isn't even very clear but the implication is a lack of communication with the White House and I suppose a reluctance to make policy judgments.

DEAN RUSK: Well, there was never any problem with communication between me and President Kennedy. If I wanted to see him, I could see him; if I wanted to call him on the phone, I could reach him. And so whatever the problems were during that administration, that was not one of them.

Now, it is true that there would be some of my colleagues who might complain that they found it very difficult to learn what I thought about a particular problem. Well now there--Two things had a bearing upon my procedures for that. One is that I copied from George Marshall the habit of wanting to know what your own colleagues, including your junior colleagues, think about something before you make up your mind so that if we went into a meeting to talk about a matter, I did not start off with stating my own views. I wanted a chance to listen and if I had stated my own views early, that is about all I would get back from these other people. But secondly, I did not disclose to the Department of State the details of my conversations with the Presidents I served. I thought that--in the first place I did not want to read about it in the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*. But secondly, I thought that a President is entitled to have a Secretary of State who recognizes the strength of the first sentence of Article II of the Constitution: "The Executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America." Period. And so, I did not write memos of conversation between myself and the Presidents. I would translate those conversations into instructions when I got back to the Department, and if the President decided something that was contrary to the views of a particular part of the Department, I would simply see that the President's views were carried out. So there

was a constitutional element in this. I did not keep diaries because I was not going to build a record over against my own President.

RICHARD RUSK: We know you didn't keep a diary. We know you didn't keep anything.

DEAN RUSK: Well, some people did. [James Vincent] Forrestal kept diaries. Harold [LeClair] Ickes kept diaries. Others have done it, but I didn't do that.

RICHARD RUSK: Robert McNamara apparently had the habit. It was his practice to sort of--on a position he would circulate his position with his circle of advisers. It would be a written memo or written document and he would get their comment on it. And if they disagreed with it, they would state in there where and put their name on it and sort of develop a departmental position. At least he did that with Kennedy. Did he continue that with Johnson? And in retrospect and at the time, how did that work out as a means, as a way, as contrasted with your own for advising the President?

DEAN RUSK: I would consult my colleagues, just as often as McNamara did. I didn't always do it in writing. And it may be that, given the size of the Pentagon and complexity of the organization and the Joint Chiefs of Staff as an institution, he felt that he'd better do it in writing. But I didn't have that complication. But if I would meet with an assistant secretary on a particular issue involving his responsibility, I would usually ask him to bring along his own juniors who were working on that problem. Sometimes the assistant secretaries didn't particularly care for that, but I wanted to hear their views and I also wanted them to have a chance to see me and talk it over with me.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you have a rule about when you would go to the President? Obviously you can't go to the President with everything. But did you have some kind of rule of thumb about when the President needs to be consulted?

DEAN RUSK: Well that is a part of the art of the matter and that art begins with the assistant secretaries. They have to make a judgment as to which things they send upstairs, and a Secretary has to make judgments every day about which things ought to be taken up with the President. On the whole, that works pretty well. But then in addition, as I indicated in an earlier tape, at the end of every day, I would send over to the President a one- or two-page legal-length paper with a series of one, two, or three line items on it: things that we had done during the day, things that we had in mind doing the next day or the next few days. And the President would see that every evening and in looking at the things we were about to do, he had a chance to inject himself into them if he wanted to. So he had a pretty good view of what was going on on the more important matters and was not very likely to be caught by surprise by the press if they ran across some of them and asked him a question about something.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember any instance when the system broke down and the Department did not take something to the President and he was caught by surprise by it?

DEAN RUSK: I don't at the moment. I suppose there might have been a time or two. President Kennedy was, of course, superb in his press conferences, but one of the reasons was that he

worked at it. Before a press conference, he would sit down with half a dozen of us and go over all the questions we could think of that might come up and talk a little bit about how he might reply to them. Well now as far as the State Department was concerned, if you left it to the State Department bureaucracy, he would answer half of his questions by saying, "No comment." Well, that doesn't get you anywhere. So we had to train the State Department to be more responsive to questions. But President Kennedy in a press conference almost never got a question which was not anticipated. And he only got maybe fifteen percent of the questions we thought might come up. So he was loaded for bear when he went into a press conference. He really worked at it.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: Alec Douglas-Home and I agreed that we saw no prospect of an agreement between ourselves and the Russians on Berlin in 1961, following the ultimatum that Khrushchev gave Kennedy in Vienna. But we also knew that our presence in Berlin was vital, not only for the people of West Berlin but also for the health and well-being of the entire NATO alliance. So he and I agreed that we would just talk to [Andrei Andreevich] Gromyko and we would talk and talk and talk--that we would talk just as repetitively and just as long as he would.

RICHARD RUSK: Lot of talk with [Anatoly F.] Dobrynin too on that, I suppose.

DEAN RUSK: A good deal, yes. In those talks the Germans were biting their fingernails a little nervously on the side wondering whether we were going to give away Berlin. [Charles Andre Joseph Mario] deGaulle wouldn't have any part of any such talks. But there we talked so long, so repetitively, that I think we talked a good deal of the fever out of that problem.

RICHARD RUSK: Mm hm. Martin Hillenbrand--

END OF SIDE 2