

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection
Rusk QQQ QQQ: Part 1 of 2
Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas J. Schoenbaum
1986 June

The complete interview also includes Rusk RRR RRR: Part 2.

RICHARD RUSK: We're talking with Dean Rusk. These are some follow-up questions about the Kennedy years. Tom Schoenbaum and Rich Rusk are the interviewers. This is June 1986. Okay Tom.

RICHARD RUSK: This is Tom Schoenbaum and Rich Rusk, June 12, 1986. These are some miscellaneous questions about the [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy years covering some points that I noticed from a few of the transcripts that we hadn't covered or had brushed over. On the Angola resolution, Mr. Rusk, that's of course a small matter compared to the many large matters you dealt with during the Kennedy years. Of course that was a Portuguese colony at the time. There was apparently a lot of pushing and pulling in the State Department and the White House, and in the State Department in particular, between the European desk people, the Europeanists, and on the other hand the African desk people over the question of the U.S. vote in the U.N. [United Nations] on Angola. And there was up for renewal at that time the U.S. air base in the Azores. And I think you saw [Antonio de Oliveira] Salazar at that time. Could you shed a little light on the internal workings of the State Department and your conversations with Mr. Salazar at that time?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. I think the future historians are going to look back with some amazement at the process of decolonization that occurred after World War II: the laying down of so much power by the colonial powers with a minimum of violence. There were some disturbances in India, there was a little fighting in Indonesia, and a few things like that. But by and large, more than eighty independent nations emerged from western colonial empires. There was really minimum violence. The United States had been in support of that decolonization process throughout the postwar period, whether it was India, Burma, Indonesia, or the African colonies. But we knew, I think from the very beginning, that the most difficult problems would remain for the end: such as Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, the Portuguese colonies, and South Africa. Although South Africa was not typically a colonial issue, it had the same kind of racial overtones. Well now, we were caught between our interests in Portugal as a NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] ally, and indeed in the Azores base on the one side, and our feeling that the independence of Angola and Mozambique was simply inevitable. We made really no headway on that problem while Salazar was still, in office. He said to us on one occasion that he could not give to the people of Angola and Mozambique what he could not give to the people of Portugal: any kind of reelections and predetermination and things of that sort. I did call on him, but it was rather an eerie experience. We met in a large room in his palace. The curtains were drawn and lights were very low. And he sat there, almost like a ghost, saying very little. And I had the impression that what I was saying to him just did not register, did not make any imprint at all. But we had no doubt that Angolan and Mozambiquan independence would come at some point.

We rather doubted that it would come so long as Salazar was in power. There's one interesting element in the Portuguese colonies in Africa, and that is a relative absence of the racial issue as such. The Portuguese had intermarried with the local people, the processes there were not severely divided on a racial basis. And so, although there was a colonial issue there, there was not a sharp racial confrontation as there has been in South Africa or as there was for a time in Rhodesia. But we just felt in this postwar period that the time of classical colonialism was over. Now part of this was sentimental on our part because we were the first of the colonies to become independent ourselves. I once considered whether we should call an international meeting of all the countries that had emerged as independent states from colonial empires, perhaps with the former mother countries as our guests of honor, or something of that sort. But that didn't pan out.

SCHOENBAUM: One follow-up question. Was there a struggle over the renewal of the Azores base? Did he renew them on acceptable terms or do you remember?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I had a number of discussions with the Portuguese foreign minister on that subject. And we sent other negotiators to talk with them about it. I don't know a question that the Portuguese foreign minister, whose name I forget at the moment, tried to use the Azores bases as leverage on our position toward the African colonies. And indeed he was very active in reminding us that Portugal was a NATO ally and therefore we should not be disagreeable to Portugal. We had some difficult times in the meetings with the NATO foreign ministers where almost all of them were opposed to the Portuguese position on their African colonies. And sometimes getting out of communique was difficult because some of them, such as the Scandinavian countries, wanted to refer to these African colonies and the Portuguese were insistent that no reference be made to them. And of course with a NATO communique it has to be unanimous. One member can block it. So it was a troublesome issue. And in Washington there were those in the Department, and some outside the Department, like Dean [Gooderham] Acheson, who were strong supporters of the Portuguese point of view. But then the African Bureau, under the leadership of [G.] Mennen Williams, and many of the rest of us felt that we simply could not stand in the way of an inevitable Angolan independence. Indeed we did sneak out of Angola and Mozambique a number of younger people for training in American universities in the hope that at least we could help provide a cadre of trained leadership for a future independent Angola. And that educational program stirred the resentment of the Portuguese in Lisbon. And there were times when we were in the position officially of denying to Portugal what we were in fact doing under the rug. And that's as close as I think I ever came to deceiving or trying to deceive another foreign minister.

SCHOENBAUM: I want to skip over to Berlin for just a minute. I think Rich is familiar with what our friend Professor [Arthur Meier] Schlesinger [Jr.] wrote about Berlin. And I don't know that we've ever cleared the record on some of his statements about Berlin, and I'd like to do that. On page 283 of Mr. Schlesinger's book, *A Thousand Days*, he starts his treatment of Berlin, and he talks about Dean Rusk being "circumspect" on the issue of Berlin. And it's another one of his statements that no one knew where Dean Rusk stood. And then he talks about the reaction to the Acheson position paper on Berlin. Do you want to clear the record on that? The implication of Mr. Schlesinger is that you had a hard time making up your mind. And that's not what we've been, of course, getting from the tapes. And I just wanted to ask you that question: your initial reaction to the Berlin crisis and to the ultimatum at Vienna.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I was not one who pounded the table at the beginning of a problem to assert an off-the-cuff point of view. I had learned from George [Catlett] Marshall that one ought to listen to one's colleagues carefully before making up one's mind. But with regard to that ultimatum on Berlin, I felt that it was vitally important for us to continue to assure the safety of West Berlin and the access routes to it. I think that had we accepted a Russian or East German takeover of West Berlin, or a throttling of the city by a closing of the access, that that would deliver a devastating blow to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], particularly by way of the West Germans, and that this was a vital interest of the United States. I never had any doubt about that. On the other hand, I was aware of the fact that from a strictly military point of view the city of West Berlin was not defensible. We had limited numbers of troops there in West Berlin. The Russians and East Germans had several divisions surrounding the city. They could have seized West Berlin militarily in any twenty-four hours that they decided to move. And so I wanted to be sure that we did not, on our side, start down a path which had no ending but general war. NATO had a team put together to devise a NATO strategy toward Berlin. And this was based upon a series of ascending steps: small action to begin with, then larger, then larger. And at the end of the trail was the real prospect of nuclear war. I suppose that some of that NATO planning reached Russian ears. And this, indeed, might have helped persuade them not to persist with [Nikita Sergeevich] Khrushchev's ultimatum on Berlin. But after the Vienna meeting when Sir Alec Douglas Hume and I had to have follow-up talks with Mr. [Andrei Andreevich] Gromyko on this subject, we did not see any possibility at that time of any agreement on Berlin which could be accepted by both sides. And so he and I decided in that situation that we would simply try to talk the problem to death. We talked and talked, just as long and just as repetitively as did Mr. Gromyko. And finally Mr. Khrushchev lifted his ultimatum on Berlin.

SCHOENBAUM: So this was a conscious strategy to, as you say to, talk the problem to death on your part?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes. You see, President [Charles Andre Joseph Mario] de Gaulle at that time would have nothing to do with any talks. He wouldn't even let any reference to talks get into a NATO communique. As a matter of fact, the NATO foreign ministers, to our shame, spent an entire day arguing about whether one particular word indicating talks could be in the NATO communique. And I remember going to de Gaulle's foreign minister in the corridor at the NATO foreign minister's meeting and urging him to telephone President de Gaulle and get his permission to ease this impasse. And he simply said to me, "One does not telephone President de Gaulle." Well many years later I learned that he had in fact called President de Gaulle and de Gaulle had told him to stand fast.

SCHOENBAUM: And not include the word?

DEAN RUSK: That's right. And this made the other foreign ministers pretty angry. As a matter of fact, at that time I announced that I would never again spend more than fifteen minutes in the consideration of a NATO communique, that if it took longer than that I would simply withdraw it from the meeting, because it was a rather disgusting performance. But the West Germans were very nervous about talks with the Russians. But nevertheless they went along rather grudgingly and with suspicion. But Alec Douglas Hume and I decided that we had to talk with the Russians.

It's better to talk about it than fight about it. And so we had several talks with Mr. Gromyko on the matter and eventually, as I say, sort of talked the problem to death. And many years later, during the first years of the [Richard Milhous] Nixon administration, they did in fact achieve a new four-power agreement on Berlin which has gone some distance in removing Berlin as a flashpoint of violence among the great powers. But during the early sixties I was once asked by a reporter what my real object was with regard to Berlin. And I said, "I would hope to pass this problem along to my successor." Because at that time that looked like a considerable achievement, to pass the problem along rather than have it blow up in our faces in general violence.

SCHOENBAUM: Now you mention de Gaulle. And the record at that time, of course, shows that you saw de Gaulle at least, I think, three times that first year: once, if I'm not mistaken, in Paris in May of 1961 right before the Oslo foreign ministers' conference; and then, of course, when Kennedy went to Paris just before Vienna; and then you made a special trip to see de Gaulle in the summer in July of '61 to--well the newspaper accounts say that the purpose of your visit then was to make a personal friendship with him and also to convince him of the necessity of an Atlantic Europe. Now we have some things about your impressions of de Gaulle, but do you remember any specific conversations on those issues at those times?

DEAN RUSK: Well de Gaulle was a very complex man. He could be great at moments of crisis: for example, during the Cuban Missile Crisis. I think you already have that on tape.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. We have that.

DEAN RUSK: He could also be rather petty, as he was at the time of the Dominican affair where he blasted us from the housetops publicly but then privately asked us to move our marines over in Santo Domingo four more blocks to pick up the protection of the French Embassy, which we did, and for which we got no thanks. But he had rendered great services to France and to the west in the totality of his postwar performance. But he had a mystical view of France and its position in the world. He thought of France as a France of Joan of Arc and Louis XIV and Napoleon. And yet he had lived through some humiliating days in the history of France just before enduring World War II. So he came out of the war with a passionate desire to restore the position of France in world affairs. That caused him to propose to President [Dwight David] Eisenhower a three-nation director--France, the United Kingdom, the United States--in effect, to guide the destinies of the free world. Eisenhower turned that down, not because of France but because he was not prepared to nominate the United States to be a member of such a director. After all there was Canada and Germany and Japan and Brazil and Mexico and all sorts of other countries. It would be presumptuous of us to assume that role. Then President de Gaulle repeated the same proposal to President Kennedy and, for the same reasons, President Kennedy turned it down. De Gaulle never forgave us for that. Some years later, I remember, we asked for his cooperation on something and he said, "No. I told you how you could have the cooperation of France and you rejected it. It is now too late."

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember what that issue was?

DEAN RUSK: No, I don't remember the issue. But talking with de Gaulle was not easy, at least for me. When I was in Paris I would usually pay a courtesy call on him at his office there in the Elysee. And I would begin by simply bringing the greetings of our President to him, and he would reciprocate by good wishes for our President. And then he would say, "Well, Mr. Secretary, I am listening."

SCHOENBAUM: "J'ecoute?"

DEAN RUSK: J'ecoute. He never volunteered subjects of his own that he wanted to discuss.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, according to your colleagues he had the capacity to really irritate you in a fashion that few other leaders did. [James] Harlan Cleveland and some people we've been talking to said that you'd really get angry.

DEAN RUSK: I don't think I ever became angry. I suppose one would call it irritation. But you see, the tragedy of de Gaulle is that had he been thinking of restoring the position of France, he could have achieved that if he had thrown himself into the leadership of the European movement and then transatlantic cooperation. But he went the other way. I mean, if he had moved in that direction, he would have become the spokesman of continental Europe.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you tell him that?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, one doesn't say that. But the very tactics he chose right up to the point where, in NATO, for example, we didn't care what de Gaulle thought except on those matters where he had a veto. And so we worked out arrangements by which we could proceed without de Gaulle. And so it's ironic that his very tactics blocked his own objective. I remember on one occasion he became icily furious, I would call it, when I raised with him the question of his attitude toward the French base at Beserde in Tunisia. This was a matter of great controversy at the time. And of course we felt that France ought to come to terms with Tunisia on that subject. Well he took this as an outrageous interference in a matter which is wholly French in character. And he gave me some very icy and cutting remarks on that subject. But on the whole he was polite, very dignified, no sense of personal warmth whatever. And I think I've said elsewhere that it was my impression that de Gaulle was conscious of the fact that he was the last of the major figures of World War II. [Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili] Stalin was gone, [Winston Leonard Spencer] Churchill was gone, Franklin [Delano] Roosevelt was gone. And we who had come later were just hoys. I think he did not have a high regard for that following generation that took over after those giants of World War II left the scene.

RICHARD RUSK: You personally didn't raise with de Gaulle these self-defeating tactics?

DEAN RUSK: No. No, I didn't feel it was up to me to lecture de Gaulle.

RICHARD RUSK: Would the American mission or the Department of State have brought this to the attention of the French government in a more diplomatic way?

DEAN RUSK: Not really.

RICHARD RUSK: Really? Why is that Pop?

DEAN RUSK: Because that would simply infuriate him. He wasn't going to take any lecturing from us on a subject like that. I remember when, during the Kennedy visit, we met in de Gaulle's office one morning for a talk between Kennedy and de Gaulle. And the Prime Minister of France and the Foreign Minister, [Maurice Jacques] Couve de Murville, came in after we on the American side had arrived. And I watched with some amazement to see how the Prime Minister of France went up to de Gaulle, clicked his heels, and with a short little schoolboy bow, acted like a cadet at St. Cyr in presenting himself to de Gaulle. And his Foreign Minister, Couve de Murville, did exactly the same thing. And it sort of astonished me to see that the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of France would conduct themselves that way in the presence of de Gaulle.

RICHARD RUSK: And in the presence of the rest. St. Cyr, how do you spell that?

DEAN RUSK: St. C-y-r. And someday I'll tell you my favorite story about St. Cyr.

RICHARD RUSK: Go ahead.

SCHOENBAUM: Why not?

DEAN RUSK: Well it was in an Alexander [Martin] Wilcox book. There was a story about the Cadets en St. Cyr. And it's a story that reflects certain French attributes. There was a ravishing courtesan in Paris, a lovely beauty, but very expensive. And the cadets en St. Cyr decided that they would hold a raffle, that each cadet would put in five francs and then they would draw lots to see who had an evening with this lovely courtesan. And they held their raffle and the winner went into the commandant to get leave for a day. And when the commandant heard the story of what had happened he said, "Ah, you are a very fortunate young man, but the cadet who came up with this idea, there is a future marshall of France." (laughter) But anyhow, this young cadet sought out the courtesan and spent the night with her and the next morning the courtesan saw this beardless youth lying beside her and she asked him how it was that he came to be there. And so the cadet told her the whole story about the raffle and all the rest of it. And the courtesan was so touched that she gave him his five francs back. (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: That's kind of a cute story. (laughter)

DEAN RUSK: De Gaulle, by the way, I am quite sure understood English. But he never used any English. We always used interpretation. He himself apparently spoke a kind of eighteenth century French, with the rolling periods and so forth. And the British were very cute about this. They sent an ambassador to Paris who himself was an expert in eighteenth century French. (laughter)

SCHOENBAUM: But apparently de Gaulle was charmed by Jacqueline [Bouvier] Kennedy [Onassis]. Did you observe anything of that?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I think the reception by de Gaulle for John and Jacqueline Kennedy was indescribable. They had this magnificent dinner at Versailles in their honor, and all stops were out. It was apparently a beautiful and magnificent occasion. No, I think the combination of Jack and Jacqueline Kennedy had a profound influence in France. She spoke French pretty well. He managed to butcher French pretty badly. But they were very popular among the French people. Indeed, when de Gaulle came over for the Kennedy funeral and I met him at the airport and thanked him for coming he said, "Don't thank me. The little people of France demanded that I come."

RICHARD RUSK: What about the relationships between Kennedy, [Lyndon Baines] Johnson, and de Gaulle. Do you have any anecdotes on those relationships?

DEAN RUSK: Well de Gaulle was rather unpredictable. During the Kennedy period de Gaulle himself faced the possibility of a military coup d'état in France. It was really very serious. At one point he called upon the women and children of France to block the highways and the airstrips to help prevent a military coup d'état. Well in the midst of this turmoil, President Kennedy sat down and wrote him a little personal message saying, "We're thinking of you during these difficult days. And if there's anything that we can do to be helpful, please let us know." De Gaulle was furious, apparently, with this message to think that John F. Kennedy thought that he could do anything to help de Gaulle in France.

SCHOENBAUM: Was this over Algeria?

DEAN RUSK: It had to do with Algeria, yes. Well then a few years later France was in great economic trouble. The franc was in trouble, their balance of payments was in trouble. They were really having a severe economic crisis. And President Johnson sat down and wrote a little message to de Gaulle saying, "We're thinking of you these days. If there's anything that we can do to be helpful, please let us know." And de Gaulle was most appreciative and he asked Johnson's permission to make that message public. So how do you deal with a fellow that is so unpredictable on things like that?

SCHOENBAUM: There was, of course, the historic treaty between France and Germany. And apparently you were--not you personally--But the State Department or the government was somewhat less than pleased at that treaty, at least some aspects of that treaty, thinking that that moved Europe away from the Atlantic orientation. And I think you entered into some diplomacy with [Konrad] Adenauer, Chancellor of Germany, to bring his influence to bear on de Gaulle, at some point, to--

END OF SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

SCHOENBAUM: The last sentence of the question, as I remember it, was: There was some diplomatic effort to bring Chancellor Adenauer, to use his influence, on de Gaulle to make de Gaulle more willing to accept the British into membership in the common market or an Atlantic orientation. Do you remember that sir?

DEAN RUSK: Well I was very clear on two things. One is that we did not want any special arrangements between West Germany and France to interfere in any serious way with NATO. That would have been, I think, very troublesome because it is a very important thing that the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Germany are part of NATO forces. And that is an element of security not only as far as eastern Europe is concerned but also for some of the NATO members who have not forgotten World War II. That part of it was very clear. But on the other hand, I did not object myself in any way to closer rapprochement between the Federal Republic of Germany and France, because the two most destructive wars in human history began in a war between France and Germany. And it's a very great thing to be able to say now that a war between France and Germany is almost literally unthinkable. That's a major change in history. So I had both these elements in mind. Now we had, since World War II, supported the idea of European unity for a variety of reasons. Part of it was simply the sentiment that what had been good for us here in our own country with the United States of America would be good for Europe in terms of the United States and Europe. But we also felt that the greater the cohesion, the political and security cohesion, of Western Europe, the greater would be satisfaction of our own interests. And so we encouraged it. But during the sixties I was advised by several of my NATO foreign minister colleagues that we should keep our mouths shut on this subject, because if we were to continue to speak out on it at we would alienate de Gaulle from the rest of Europe and make it more difficult for them to move toward European unity. But I once mentioned to de Gaulle the fact that we found it difficult to deal with Europe when there is no Europe, that we were dealing with individual members of NATO and there was no sufficient cohesion in Europe for us to be able to deal with Europe as a whole. And he then said, "Well what is Europe?" He says, "Here is France at the very heart of Europe: the heart and soul of European culture. Then," he said, "there are the Benelux countries." And with a kind of a scoff he brushed them aside: "Psshhh! There is Italy." Another scoff, "psshhh! There is Germany, but Germany," he said, "must be kept in its place."

SCHOENBAUM: Is that what he said? Kept in its place?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Then he said, "And there are the British. The British are not Europeans, they are Anglo-Saxons." So to him, France was Europe, you see? And it's that kind of thinking about France that did complicate matters.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you ever specifically ask Adenauer to put any pressure on de Gaulle or do what he could to convince de Gaulle of something?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I'm sure we did, but it was more or less a kind of natural exchange of views. I don't think we put any pressure on Adenauer. We simply discussed it with him and asked him to do what he could.

SCHOENBAUM: At one point in the Kennedy tapes you call Adenauer grumpy. That was your word. And you also say that Adenauer let you know, in sometimes insulting terms, that he really liked John Foster Dulles.

DEAN RUSK: Oh, he would--I didn't object to that because I'd been a friend of John Foster Dulles. But, yes, he would begin most of our conversations by reflecting nostalgically about the good old days of John Foster Dulles. Well I found this somewhat amusing because when Foster Dulles was Secretary of State he talked to me several times about the problems he was having with Adenauer. But that's all right. Adenauer was getting to be an old man. He also had a passionate interest in the great Teutonic-Slav confrontation. He gave me some books on this subject: the threat to the Teutons of this Slavic hoarde from the east, and that kind of thing. That was very much on his mind. But again, Adenauer was a great figure in German history and had a lot to do with bringing Germany out of the war as a constitutional democracy. And we owe him a great deal.

SCHOENBAUM: Now, turning to more problems with the allies--on [Harold] Macmillan: Did you go to Bermuda at one point in connection with the testing, resumption of atmospheric testing, before the Test Ban Treaty?

DEAN RUSK: No, I did not go with Kennedy on that visit. As a matter of fact, wasn't it Nassau?

SCHOENBAUM: Weren't there two separate trips?

DEAN RUSK: Well, might have been two separate--Macmillan had made a brief trip himself to the Caribbean. I think Kennedy popped over to visit with him. But then they scheduled a meeting. I think it was at Nassau.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, that was the Skybolt meeting in Nassau. That's the more famous meeting. I know you weren't there.

DEAN RUSK: Well, it just happened that the date they set--

RICHARD RUSK: That we have, Pop.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, we have that.

DEAN RUSK: You see, we always, some of us always had a guilty conscience over against Britain on these nuclear matters because during World War II, we and the British and Canadians were cooperating very closely in the production of the atomic bomb. Then just after the war came the MacMahon Act by Congress which simply cut off that kind of cooperation and drew ourselves back into our own little cocoon on nuclear matters. And the British felt, and I don't blame them, that they somehow had been short-changed by the MacMahon Act. And there were some in our administration who wanted us to put pressure on Britain to give up a nuclear force, to give up nuclear weapons altogether. That was not my view. I thought the British were grown

people who could make their own decisions on such things and that I, myself, never tried to put any pressure on the British to abandon their nuclear force.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you in complete accord with the Skybolt cancellation then?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think there was a kind of an unhappy factor there that caused some trouble. Bob [Robert Strange] McNamara had told the then British Minister of Defense that he was going to cancel Skybolt several months before the public announcement was made. But for some reason the British Minister of Defense did not go back and prepare his own Cabinet for that event. So when the announcement of the cancellation of Skybolt came, it appeared to be a thunderclap in London. And they pretended to be surprised and outraged, and so forth and so on, you see, when in fact they had had a warning from McNamara months in advance. But in any event, they used our cancellation of Skybolt to extract from us some concessions in the nuclear field and those were registered at the Nassau meeting.

SCHOENBAUM: The Polaris?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. That's right.

SCHOENBAUM: Was the Skybolt cancellation, then, more on economic grounds or was it really designed to end the "special relationship" to prepare--

DEAN RUSK: No, Skybolt was cancelled because of scientific and technical reasons which simply indicated that it was not going to work effectively.

SCHOENBAUM: Scientific. Yeah. Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: And McNamara decided that it wasn't worth pursuing.

RICHARD RUSK: McNamara's message to that foreign minister was somewhat ambiguous in character though, wasn't it?

DEAN RUSK: I don't know. I never saw the actual text of exactly what he said to the British Minister of Defense. But Bob's report to me was clearly that he had prewarned the British several months in advance.

RICHARD RUSK: That the Skybolt was definitely off?

DEAN RUSK: About the coming cancellation of Skybolt, yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: What I read was that he had prewarned the British that Skybolt was in some difficulty.

DEAN RUSK: Well, whatever the language. It's one of those ambiguities that one should generally try to avoid.

SCHOENBAUM: Now, this is a question on a completely different subject. I know Mr. Rusk has told this story before, but I couldn't find it on the transcripts anywhere. Would you tell us that story about the conference in Punta del Este when you were, I think for the only time, physically attacked.

DEAN RUSK: The only incident affecting my personal security came in Uruguay when I was laying a wreath at the statue of the national hero. There was a huge crowd there in the central plaza of Montevideo, the capitol city, and a big open space around the statue where the VIPs were gathered. And suddenly a tiny little man ran out of the crowd toward me. He was immediately followed by a six-foot two hundred and twenty-five pounder. Well, my security man, Bill [William] Decourcy, who was with me at the time, who had been a former Pittsburg Steeler, decided that the larger man was the greater threat and he tackled him, not knowing that the larger man was a plainclothes man trying to catch the little man, But apparently the little man just wanted to get close enough to me to spit at me, but when he got there he was so scared he didn't have any spit. The Uruguay police really worked him over. I think they ruptured a kidney and beat him up pretty badly. But that was the only incident that affected my personal security.

SCHOENBAUM: That's the one where they daubed in the spit in the picture.

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes. There was a cameraman up on the statue itself. And when this occurred, I remember he jumped up and down saying, "I've got it! I've got it!" And then when he developed his negative, apparently he didn't see any spit so he daubed into his negative, a ball that was supposed to be spit, which in reference to the size of my head was about the size of a softball: a huge blob.

RICHARD RUSK: We have that picture. Pop.

SCHOENBAUM: We have that picture?

DEAN RUSK: That picture went all over the country with a manufactured piece of spit on it put in by the photographer. One reporter once got himself almost laid low. I was coming out of a closed meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. And a group of reporters were always outside wanting me to comment. But this time I didn't want to say anything, and so I just told them I would have nothing to say. And as I tried to make my [way] through these reporters one of them grabbed me by the arm to hold me, to restrain me. Well that was one thing that I found just infuriating. There on camera I made some very sharp remarks to him. And just before my security man was about to lay him low, he turned me loose. But I have never wanted anybody to touch me in situations like that.

SCHOENBAUM: This is another question on Punta del Este. In reading Schlesinger's account again, he makes it look like he did quite a bit in Punta del Este. And maybe that's true that he does.

RICHARD RUSK: It's his account?

SCHOENBAUM: Right, his account. And he says that he wrote your speech for you and it was a good speech. He said it's a terrific speech and Arthur Schlesinger wrote it. Do you remember?

DEAN RUSK: He might have helped work on it. But in all my speeches I would go over them myself and convert them into my own speeches before delivery. So if he helped I appreciate it. But I think the final text was my own. We did have one problem at that first Punta del Este meeting in January of '62. In our delegation I took along with me two senators: Senator [Bourke B.] Hickenlooper, Senator [Wayne Lyman] Morse, and two congressmen. And President Kennedy wanted me to get a resolution ejecting the [Fidel Ruz] Castro government from further participation in the OAS [Organization of American States] on the grounds that Marxist-Leninism was incompatible with the political conditions in the western hemisphere. Well, Richard [Naradof] Goodwin, who was in on the White House staff, had on his own made a preliminary visit to Latin America before that Punta del Este meeting. And I found that apparently he had said some things to some of these foreign ministers on that visit that made what I was trying to do more difficult, and indeed would suggest that I was unbelievable. Well, people like Senator Hickenlooper and Senator Morse found out about this in their own talks with other foreign ministers and they were furious. So I had to exert special effort to overcome some of the things that Richard Goodwin had said on his own as a member of Kennedy's personal staff.

SCHOENBAUM: What kind of things did he say?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, more or less taking a very relaxed and indifferent attitude toward the kind of resolution that we were after. But Kennedy, in his personal instructions to me, was strongly of the hope that we would expel Castro from the hemisphere. And we just barely did. We just had the exact number that made up the two-thirds vote necessary.

RICHARD RUSK: Dick Goodwin was kind of an unsavory character as far as you were concerned, wasn't he Pop?

DEAN RUSK: In some respects. He was very good at speech writing. And he was the one who built upon the work done by Milton [Stover] Eisenhower and [Clarence] Douglas Dillon in the Eisenhower administration and gave our program in Latin America the name Alliance for Progress and sort of got it started off on a new chapter. He had considerable ability. But I remember we deliberately brought him over to the State Department and gave him a job there in order to get him out of the White House.

RICHARD RUSK: Why was that?

DEAN RUSK: Well he was, from the State Department's point of view, a sort of a troublemaker in the White House. We felt that he would be safer with us than he would be over in the White House.

SCHOENBAUM: They made him [Robert Forbes] Woodward's deputy.

DEAN RUSK: So we made him a Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin America.

SCHOENBAUM: Is there a story of Punta del Este of why Argentina's [Arturo] Frondizi voted with the so-called "weak six," "soft six," and then his generals got on him and practically read the riot act to him?

DEAN RUSK: Well, since we had a very close vote every vote was important. And I had talked to the Argentine foreign minister about his vote on this. And somehow, within their own system by the narrowest of margins, they decided to vote against or abstain, I forget--vote against maybe.

SCHOENBAUM: Abstain, I think.

DEAN RUSK: Abstain?

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: And I remember at that point that a couple of generals from Argentina came up to me and said, "The government is going to pay for this. We are furious about this vote." And it wasn't long before Frondizi was out of office.

SCHOENBAUM: When you came back from Punta del Este, it, I think, can be fairly described as a personal triumph. And Kennedy met you. And there are pictures of him and he looks genuinely pleased. He looks radiant.

DEAN RUSK: Well he was very pleased about that action taken at Punta del Este. And matter of fact, I think he had himself and me on a little special television program talking about it. But he was--I think this was partly his reaction to the tragedy of the Bay of Pigs. And something like this he particularly valued.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you know what he specifically said to you, or any interesting things about what he specifically said to you?

DEAN RUSK: No, I think we talked it over fully before I went down there. So I had no doubt about what he thought.

SCHOENBAUM: But I mean his reaction to you when you came back.

DEAN RUSK: Kennedy and I did not, in fact, waste time patting each other on the back. He took it as a matter of course. He was pleased. I knew he was pleased. But he didn't elaborate with a lot of gush.

SCHOENBAUM: Now turning to a few other of the strong men of the time: [Ahmed] Ben Bella. He was kind of queer wasn't he? He would come to Washington and be wined and dined and say how pleased he was and, "Oh what a friend, the United States." And then he'd go to Cuba and cotton up to Castro and chew the heck out of the United States.

DEAN RUSK: Well I've mentioned the fact that in the early period of the Kennedy administration we were trying to improve our relations with the nonaligned countries. And that included Ben Bella, along with [Gamal Abdel] Nasser and [Kwame] Nkrumah and [Achmed] Sukarno and people like that. But he was not an easy man with whom to deal. He made an official visit to Washington, and we were to have that usual military reception on the White House lawn. And it just happened that the Dean of the Corps was either ill or home on concentration, and so was the Vice Dean of the Corps. The next person in line was the ambassador from South Vietnam. And we explained this to Ben Bella. And he said, "I can't accept this because we don't have relations with Vietnam. If he turns up I won't be able to come to this reception on the White House lawn." Well I reported that to Kennedy and Kennedy said, "This is my diplomatic corps. They are not his. If he is not willing to accept the person designated by me, then he shouldn't come to the White House lawn." And it was not until--And we explained that to Ben Bella. Well it was not until about five minutes before Ben Bella's arrival on the White House lawn that we learned that he was, in fact, going to turn up. But he did not shake the hand of the South Vietnamese ambassador, as there was no reason why he should under those circumstances. But Kennedy was a stickler for protocol in that particular instance.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you hold any talks with him? Did you have any reaction to him or his personality? Was he--

DEAN RUSK: He was an intelligent man. But he marched to a different drummer than we did. And I didn't see much prospect that we could really develop any close relations with Algeria. At best we could achieve a kind of correct relationship.

SCHOENBAUM: What about Nasser during the Yemen war? Did you see Nasser or did you call on Nasser?

DEAN RUSK: No I never had a personal talk with Nasser. But he had some not only official representatives, but we had some unofficial people who talked to him from time to time, people like Eugene [Robert] Black and John J. McCloy. People like that would drop in to see him. He was an interesting fellow. Because if you talked to him privately, one to one, you found yourself talking to a reasonable and rational person. But then when he would get up in front of those huge crowds and start his screaming he could become quite irrational. During the Kennedy years, at one point we had a several hundred million dollar three-year food program for Egypt under the Food for Peace Program. And at one point I think I remember that we were feeding about forty percent of the Egyptian people. Well he wouldn't even be silent at that. We didn't expect him to get up and bow and scrape and say thank-you Uncle Sam, and that sort of thing. But he'd get up in front of those crowds and yell things like "Throw your aid into the Red Sea." And he would do this so much that he persuaded the Congress to do just that, and our aid program for Egypt whittled down to almost nothing.

SCHOENBAUM: What about [Josip Broz] Tito? In late 1961 you went to Yugoslavia to pay a call on Tito.

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Well we had a positive attitude toward Tito's Yugoslavia. It was Yugoslav defection from the Warsaw camp group that opened the way for a solution to the guerrilla

problem in Greece, for example. And we respected Tito's nonalignment, neutrality. He had done a very difficult job in keeping the various ethnic groups in Yugoslavia together so that there could be such a thing as a Yugoslavia: the Serbs and the Croats and the Slovenes and the Montenegros and people like that. And I think I--yes, I was the first Secretary of State to visit Yugoslavia and enjoyed it very much. They were very friendly in their reception. George [Frost] Kennan was our ambassador there at that time. I remember having dinner with a group of Yugoslav leaders one evening, and they spent the dinner arguing with each other about whose resistance brigades were more effective against the Germans in World War II. But I think Tito did quite a remarkable job in holding Yugoslavia together as a national entity.

SCHOENBAUM: What kind of a person was he?

DEAN RUSK: He was thoughtful, articulate, well-informed. He had a lively interest in what was going on in the world. And he saw himself and India, and perhaps Egypt as natural leaders of the nonaligned group. And for a considerable time was indeed just that.

SCHOENBAUM: Now bringing up [Jawaharlal] Nehru and India.

RICHARD RUSK: Go ahead Tom.

SCHOENBAUM: Oh, do you have something?

RICHARD RUSK: Talking about Africa: In June 1961, President Kennedy wanted to strengthen our ties with Nkrumah and Ghana and we had pledged to help them build a dam over there, the Volta dam. During that time also, Nkrumah was buddying-up to the Soviet Union and getting supplies and support from them, and Kennedy and the administration became alarmed by this. A good many of Kennedy's advisers wanted to cut off aid for that dam. You apparently said that we had made an earlier commitment and that we had given our word and we had to honor that commitment. Can you elaborate upon that, Pop? Do you recall the circumstances?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I felt that we had gone too far down the trail there to back away. And I remember the period when John Foster Dulles simply became angry with the Egyptians during the negotiations of the Aswan Dam. And Gene Black had been leading the negotiations with Nasser to build the Aswan Dam, with participation by the World Bank and our own aid program, and private capital and so forth. And so I thought we should not act in petulance to cut off the plans for the Volta Dam, that kind of thing. But the problem we had with Nkrumah lay in another direction. He was strongly in favor of Pan-Africa, with himself at the head. And his neighbors would not buy this at all. And this caused his neighbors to be nervous and fearful of what appeared to be Nkrumah's Pan-African ambitions. And we felt that it was up to us to support the independence of his neighbors. And that led to a good deal of friction between us and Nkrumah. Then also he was pretty reckless in some of his expenditures of Ghanaian funds. The British left behind a considerable capital fund and Nkrumah went through that like a drunken sailor, including a magnificent palace and all sorts of things.

RICHARD RUSK: You had to push really hard to prevent the cancellation of that aid for the construction of their dam, did you not?

DEAN RUSK: Well, those who wanted to cancel had to push me, and I was hard to push.

SCHOENBAUM: Bobby [Robert Francis] Kennedy, though, was pushing hard to cancel. So you won that one over Bobby Kennedy.

DEAN RUSK: Oh yeah. Sure. Sure.

SCHOENBAUM: Any story there?

RICHARD RUSK: I'm gonna take the time to read Cohen's paragraph on that. This is page 209, Warren [L.] Cohen, Dean RUSK: One other case, in Africa, highlighted another Rusk concern, another difference between him and some of his colleagues. Kennedy had come to office determined to woo Nkrumah, the radical nationalist leader of Ghana. Nkrumah, like Nehru, was a spokesman of the nonaligned nations. In June, 1961, Kennedy wrote Nkrumah a warm letter, promising to help Ghana with the construction of the Volta Dam. By September, Kennedy was having second thoughts, as Ghana prepared to send four hundred cadets to the Soviet Union for training. Nkrumah seemed to be paralleling Soviet bloc policies in the U.N. and in his public addresses. In December, Kennedy called a meeting of the National Security Council to consider canceling the offer to build the Volta Dam. The President questioned helping Ghana, given the leftward turn it had taken internationally and the increasingly dictatorial manner of Nkrumah's rule at home. Kennedy thought he would get no support for the project from Congress. The President's brother Robert advocated withdrawing the offer and was supported by Secretary of the Treasury Dillon. They argued that Nkrumah was no friend of the United States. It was Rusk who vigorously opposed cancellation of the project. Nkrumah was precisely the kind of Third World leader who tended to outrage Rusk. He seemed to have a double standard when he criticized western actions and approved those of the communist bloc. He was creating a personal dictatorship at home. But, Rusk argued, the United States had made a commitment. The President had personally committed himself and a refusal to go forward with the plan would be misunderstood all over Africa. Rusk advocated enlisting British assistance to turn Nkrumah toward a more reasonable course and [George Wildman] Ball reminded Kennedy that his letter in June had been made "warmer" at Kennedy's insistence. Grudgingly, Kennedy continued the project. Rusk's concern for his nation's word was transcendent. Commitments had to be honored. Would you say this statement of Warren Cohen's was accurate as you recall it?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Very accurate. Very accurate. Maybe I'm old fashioned, but I think when the United States pledges its word, that that's a very important thing and that we should not allow ourselves to get into a position where our "pledged word" is not taken seriously. And this is just another instance of that.

RICHARD RUSK: You don't recall the specifics of how hard you had to push for that? Cohen called it vigorously.

DEAN RUSK: Oh I'm sure there was some vigorous discussion at that meeting of the NSC [National Security Council]. But I always tried to use--I tried not to use inflammatory words in

such debates, but I used words that were sufficiently convincing to cause President Kennedy to go ahead with it.

SCHOENBAUM: Turning to another African leader, Sekou Toure. Any reflections on Sekou Toure? Did you like him or dislike him? Or how would you compare him with Nkrumah, for instance?

DEAN RUSK: He was another one of these nonaligned people that we were trying to improve relations with.

RICHARD RUSK: Can you spell that?

SCHOENBAUM: Of Guinea. S-E-K-O-U, T-O-U-R-E.

RICHARD RUSK: Of what country?

SCHOENBAUM: Of Guinea, in Africa, West Africa.

DEAN RUSK: The independence of Guinea had come under circumstances that were very bitter for the French. And the French almost used a raised-earth policy when they withdrew from Guinea. And Sekou Toure started off with a pretty strong bias toward the west. We tried. I think we sent [Robert] Sargent Shriver [Jr.] to visit him at one point shortly after the Kennedy administration came in. He was an intelligent and able fellow, but he sent to Washington an extraordinarily able ambassador, a man named [Karim] Bangoura, who did a brilliant job of working out some projects in Guinea with the World Bank and with our aid program and with the Export-Import Bank and with some private capital. He was a very able ambassador. But many years later I heard that he had been put under house arrest by Sekou Toure. And I'm not sure now whether he was eventually executed. But Sekou Toure was not an easy man with whom to deal. He had his own constituency to worry about. And in a number of these countries, you see, being anti-American is good domestic politics. A country as large and as rich and as powerful as the United States is a natural target for the demagogues, and he built up on that. I was never too much concerned about, say, Soviet penetration of Black Africa, because my experience had been--

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