

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

Rusk TTT

Dean Rusk interviewed by Thomas W. Ganschow, Richard Rusk, and Thomas J. Schoenbaum
1985 April

RICHARD RUSK: We're talking with former Secretary of State Dean Rusk on China policy. Doing the interviewing are Professor Tom Ganschow and Tom Schoenbaum and Rich Rusk. This is April 1985.

GANSCHOW: I'm going to pick up a couple of the places, a place where we stopped.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, you lead off. I've got about an hour, not more than an hour.

GANSCHOW: At the end of the Korean War, Professor Rusk, when you looked back over it, were you hopeful that, or were you expecting any sort of change in our relationship with China? Or had things so soured during the war that it was set in cement now? We were going to have a hard relationship with China.

DEAN RUSK: Well the end of the Korean War coincided with the [Dwight David] Eisenhower administration, and during that decade of the fifties relations were estranged. President Eisenhower himself had strong personal feelings about China and himself strongly opposed the admission of China, the People's Republic, into the United Nations or any bilateral recognition. Secretary Dulles was willing to consider some change in our position. I think John Foster Dulles might have been tempted toward a two-China policy. He'd suggested that in an article he'd written just before he became Secretary of State. But had he moved in that direction both Chinas would have strongly opposed it because the one thing that Peking and Taiwan have both agreed on is that there is one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. So he probably would not have gotten very far with his two-China approach, although there would have been considerable support internationally for a two-Chinas approach.

GANSCHOW: Would you have supported that at the time?

DEAN RUSK: I could have supported it but it really had no reality in it because of the attitude of the two Chinas. You see, if you base things like recognition, membership in the U.N. [United Nations], on the real situation, the real situation suggested two Chinas because there were two Chinas: there was Taiwan and there was the mainland. But neither of them could accept the two Chinas approach because they each were committed to a unified China of which Taiwan would be a part.

GANSCHOW: But we could have enforced that if we had wanted it, couldn't have we? I mean, we could have said, "We're going to just go ahead and do it and China try to do something about it," and China really couldn't have.

DEAN RUSK: I don't think that we really could have forced it in the sense that if we'd tried to

recognize the People's Republic of China on that basis, they would have refused recognition; they would have refused normalization of relations.

GANSCHOW: Oh, I see. Uh huh. Uh huh.

DEAN RUSK: And if we had elected them to membership in the United Nations they could have refused to take their seat. So, no we couldn't have forced it against their strong objections, and their objections were strong.

GANSCHOW: In November of 1951, this was a month before your resignation from the State Department; you gave a speech entitled "The Underlying Principles of Far Eastern Policy." Do you remember that speech and do you remember perhaps what you were trying to sum up in terms of our relationship with China?

DEAN RUSK: I'm afraid I don't remember the particulars, so you might want to remind me or ask me any questions of anything that I said in that speech.

GANSCHOW: I am sorry, I just thought [you might]. During your time in the [John Davison] Rockefeller Foundation, as president of the Rockefeller Foundation, was there any, did you maintain any interest in China?

DEAN RUSK: Interest yes. You see, the Rockefeller Foundation had, in the early part of the century had built the Peking Union Medical Center. It was the finest medical school and medical hospital in all of Asia. In retrospect, perhaps we built it on too lavish a scale because that meant that it could not be easily reproduced in other places. But it was a very important center where both American and Chinese doctors were trained and worked. Well during the fifties we would occasionally get, very indirectly, a message from one of our former colleagues at the Peking Union Medical College saying, "Don't worry too much about all the things you hear. We are still here and doing our work." But we followed that pretty closely. But then we also felt that we ought to put some funds into the study of the People's Republic of China. For example, we made funds available, I think to Harvard, to begin training some people in Chinese law. Now some of the top experts in Chinese law are people who came out of that program. Because we felt that in the longer run, People's Republic of China was going to be extraordinarily important and we ought to have people familiar with it. We put money into Chinese studies in other places here and there. But there was not much that we could do as far as direct contact with the Chinese on the mainland was concerned.

GANSCHOW: I was helped with a [Henry] Ford Foundation grant rather than a Rockefeller.

DEAN RUSK: Right. Right. Right.

GANSCHOW: As you look back, probably, I would ask it in two ways--as you looked back at the time and as you look back now, and I'll ask this same question later, but in the early 1950s would you have done anything different or would you have wished there had been some different policies with respect to China? Did we, for example, should we have joined with the other powers to recognize China? Perhaps that would have avoided some of the later problems or is

that one of those questions that, well there's nothing you could do about it? But did you look back at the time and say as you were sitting in your chair in the Rockefeller Foundation, "I wish we would have done some things differently with respect to China.

DEAN RUSK: Well we go back to 1949 when the British ambassador [Oliver Shewell Franks] came in to tell me that Britain was going to recognize the People's Republic. He and I personally expressed some regret that our policies were diverging on this important point. Then on a purely personal basis we joined in expressing the hope that in due course our policies would come back together again, depending upon the conduct of the authorities in Peking. The idea was that if the People's Republic behaved itself and acted as a responsible member of the community of nations that our policy would move in toward the British policy; but that if they misbehaved and became a total nuisance in world affairs that the British policy would swing back toward our policy. The entry of the Chinese into the Korean War just postponed that kind of consideration and indeed in *The Life of Churchill* [sic, should be "Churchill: The Struggle for Survival, 1940-1965" taken from the diaries of Lord Moran, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1966] written by his doctor [Charles McMoran Wilson Moran], his doctor reports that at one point Churchill wanted to withdraw recognition from the People's Republic because of their participation in Korea, but that the foreign office would not let him. That's the only reference I've seen to that possibility that British policy might have come back the other way. But I think that if the Chinese had not intervened in Korea there might have been some possibility of moving toward the recognition of the People's Republic during the fifties. But the Korean experience just postponed that indefinitely and hardened the attitudes of a lot of people here in this country. You see, although the question of recognition is a matter of presidential power, the President does have to take into account the predictive latitude of the Congress when he makes such a move. I think the Congress would have been very hostile toward the People's Republic during the fifties. Now during the seventies when Mr. Nixon made the dramatic decision to visit China, he himself, being a conservative Republican, blocked off principal sources of sharp criticism that might have come over such an act; and the Democrats were willing to go along with him on this visit to China. My judgment is, and I can't prove this, that if a Democratic President had gone to China like Nixon did that the Republicans would have cut him to pieces, including Richard Nixon. Just as it took a Charles [Andre Joseph Mario] de Gaulle to liberate Algeria. It might have taken a conservative Republican to open up more normal relations with the People's Republic of China.

GANSCHOW: Ten years go by and you become Secretary of State. 1961, is that correct?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

GANSCHOW: I can't help but ask you this and I know it's not--but, were you surprised? Were you surprised to get the call that you would be Secretary of State of this country?

DEAN RUSK: I was very surprised indeed. That was the last idea that I had in mind. Perhaps I'm repeating myself, but, I'd never known President--had never met him--President Kennedy until in mid-December 1960 he called me to his little place in Georgetown while he was President-elect. We talked for about an hour and a half about various possibilities to be Secretary of State. He had about three names he was considering and I suggested two or three more he should have on his list. No reference whatever to the possibility that he might ask me to take the

job. So I went on back to New York and told my colleagues at the Rockefeller Foundation that they could ignore any press speculation they had seen about me that I was going to stay at the Foundation. Well the very next morning John Kennedy called me on the phone and said he wanted me to take the job. And I said, "Now wait a minute. There are a lot of things we ought to discuss before you come to that decision." So he said, "All right. Come on down to West Palm Beach tomorrow morning and we'll talk it over." So I went on down there and we spent the morning going over a lot of things and he made the announcement. But I was completely surprised. It never occurred to me that I would be asked to take that job.

SCHOENBAUM: Can I ask a follow-up on this? I'd like to know whether you have any recall about that hour and a-half interview with Kennedy in Georgetown. Because Walt Rostow told Rich and I an interesting story that apparently, as we can figure it out, it must have been the day before that interview with you he did call up or talk to Walt Rostow. Remember that?

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: And he asked, Kennedy asked Walt Rostow about you. Do I have that right?

RICHARD RUSK: That's right. I think the chronology is correct on that.

SCHOENBAUM: It was right before this Georgetown interview. And Walt Rostow has a distinct memory that he kind of recommended you for the job and Kennedy was obviously thinking about you as Secretary of State before that meeting. And it's strange that he never-- What was said during this hour and a half?

RICHARD RUSK: Why wouldn't Kennedy have approached [you] at the time [directly about the job]?

DEAN RUSK: We talked about other people. For example, I nominated Robert [Abercrombie] Lovett, who had been Under Secretary under George [Catlett] Marshall: a really great man in my book. But Kennedy already knew that Robert Lovett had a stomach ulcer and was not able to do it. Kennedy talked about [James William] Bill Fulbright, but he was obviously concerned. Fulbright had signed that Declaration of Conscience anti-civil rights declaration, and his appointment might offend the liberals. But I told Kennedy on that that if he wanted to name Fulbright and put with him well-known liberals like Adlai [Ewing] Stevenson and Chester [Bliss] Bowles that Fulbright's native liberalism would come forward and there would not be any problem in that. But we talked about a few other people. It was all about other people; none whatever about me.

SCHOENBAUM: He didn't talk about the world and foreign affairs and what his conception of the role of Secretary was?

DEAN RUSK: No, not really. We did that the next, that morning when I went down to West Palm Beach, because a lot of those things we just had to discuss if he was going to name me to that post. Of course I had another little problem. I wasn't sure that if I did not take that post when offered by Kennedy that I would still have a job at the Rockefeller Foundation because several of

the key trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation had told me that that was the only job in government which I could not refuse. With a new Democratic administration coming in, it was predictable that I might be invited to take one or another job in government. They and I agreed that I would turn down jobs in government, that I wasn't interested in leaving the Foundation. But when this came up they said that that was the only job in government that I could not refuse. So if I had refused it I don't know whether they would have kept me as president of the Rockefeller Foundation or not. But anyhow, it was quite a change in scene.

RICHARD RUSK: Any idea on your part as to why Kennedy might have had this discussion with you and never talked to you directly about it and went ahead and picked you for the job? That seems a little bizarre.

DEAN RUSK: He was probably just making his own assessment of me in this conversation. I never asked him why he might have chosen me and he never told me. Some of the later rumors indicated that Dean [Gooderham] Acheson and Robert Lovett had both strongly recommended me. But anyhow, that's that story.

GANSCHOW: I know it may have been told, but I hadn't heard it and I just wanted to ask.

DEAN RUSK: I lost fifteen pounds in the first ten days after the announcement.

SCHOENBAUM: It's just so different, the conception of this being done as on a totally systematic, scientific basis.

DEAN RUSK: Kennedy's cabinet had quite a few strangers in there that he had never known. Bob McNamara was one. He had had a so-called 'talent search' operation going on under the leadership of his brother-in-law, [Robert] Sargent Shriver [Jr.]. They did not concentrate on Kennedy's cronies. They went out and got a good many people he had never known before.

RICHARD RUSK: Did this talent search committee get hold of you prior to your appointment by Kennedy? Fill you in--

DEAN RUSK: Well, I had a telephone call once from Sargent Shriver and I didn't know him from Adam's off-ox. I thought this was probably an enlisted man who had been assigned to John Kennedy as President-elect to help him in his office. But I talked to Sargent Shriver and he simply arranged the appointment.

GANSCHOW: When you did become Secretary of State, right in those early days, you already had considerable experience in China, relationship with China. Did you have any particular views and goals that you were hoping to accomplish with respect to China?

DEAN RUSK: Have I already put on tape my first conversation with Kennedy?

RICHARD RUSK: That's right. We have that. I think, Tom, you probably have it too. John Kennedy very promptly said that he would not--

DEAN RUSK: --Reopen China policy.

GANSCHOW: That was Kennedy. But what about you, Professor Rusk? Could you in your mind somewhat think, "Now here's what I might like to see accomplished with respect to China"?

DEAN RUSK: George Marshall was once asked, when he was Secretary of State, "What is your personal view of this matter?" And he said, "Personal view? I don't have personal views on matters of public policy. My views are the views of the Secretary of State and I reach those views through constitutional process." So I didn't go in there with Dean Rusk's own platform. I was part of an administration and working for a President who has the constitutional responsibility for giving direction to the executive branch of the government, of course within the laws and the Constitution. But it was clear to me that our China policy was not then reflecting the real state of the real world and that's always a problem. When I was in the State Department in the Truman administration I helped to invent the parliamentary devices which we used to keep People's Republic out of the United Nations and maintain a seat for the Republic of China on Taiwan. But when we adopted those devices, which are very successful, I thought they might last maybe four or five years. And I was astonished to find that they lasted until I became Secretary of State in the 1960s, and indeed lasted throughout the sixties. It was not until the Nixon administration that we lost the vote in the U.N. on the Chinese seat. Much of our attitude in that period turned on Peking's attitude toward us. While they were making it clear that we were their enemy number one, they were berating us on every occasion, that didn't encourage people to think about normalization of relations very much. Now we knew they were there. It was not a case of pretending there was no such thing as the People's Republic. We were very much aware that they were there. We fought them in Korea and we did a good many things in surrounding countries to take account of their anxieties about the People's Republic. No, I didn't have a plan of my own with respect to China.

GANSCHOW: Were you surprised that this young, somewhat liberal Kennedy would not have said, would have just said the opposite, "Now I want to see a new policy toward China. I want to open up new roads to China." Were you surprised at that?

DEAN RUSK: John F. Kennedy was much more cautious than most people think of him as being. He had been elected by only a few tens of thousands of votes in 1960. He used to say, Cook County, Illinois. So he was pretty cautious about selecting the issues on which he was prepared to do battle, particularly to do battle with the Congress. He used to say to us, "If you're going to have a fight, have a fight about something. Don't have a fight about nothing." He had in front of him a resolution of the Congress strongly opposing the seating of People's Republic in the U.N. and bilateral recognition. And shortly before inauguration Eisenhower had said to him, "Now I'm going to try to support you in every way I can on foreign policy, but there's one point on which I would have to oppose you and oppose you strongly. That is the seating of communist China in the U.N. and bilateral recognition." So Kennedy, in thinking about it, decided that there just wasn't enough in it to be worth the great controversy that any such step would involve. My own judgment is, rising out of that conversation the two of us had, was that if he had been reelected in '64 with a good mandate that he might well then have reopened the China question; but not under the circumstances of his first term.

GANSCHOW: I'm going to ask you a little more of a technical question. Now, as Secretary of State you had an Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, is that correct?

DEAN RUSK: That's correct.

GANSCHOW: Who was that person at that time and, how was there any attempt for that person and you to sit down and say, "Well even if it's just theoretical should we draw up some sort of a long-term or short-term policy?"

DEAN RUSK: Well after my talk with President Kennedy in which he said he did not want to reopen China policy, as I was leaving the office he called out after me, "What's more, Mr. Secretary, I don't want to read in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* that the State Department is thinking about a change in China policy." So I went on back to the State Department and played the role of the village idiot when people like Adlai Stevenson and Chester Bowles and others might come in and talk about China policy. I didn't tell than of my talk with Kennedy because I would have read that in the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*, you see. So, no I just let the matter lie and did not institute advanced planning, because advanced planning would have leaked to the press. Now I'm sure that there were those who were thinking about it of course. I'd have to check back on the record to see exactly who. [James] Graham Parsons was the first Assistant Secretary of State, I think, for Far Eastern Affairs. Then Walter [Patrick] McConaughy and one or two others.

GANSCHOW: I met McConaughy many years ago in Taiwan.

DEAN RUSK: He lives in Atlanta now. He retired in Atlanta.

RICHARD RUSK: It's twenty-four years later and maybe, if we could discuss these things. But what was your reaction to Kennedy's statement that he did not want to consider the question of reopening the China question?

DEAN RUSK: My reaction was that that was our policy and I was going to carry it out. I wasn't going to enter into conspiracy within the bureaucracy to try to frustrate our very clear--

RICHARD RUSK: Did you discuss it at all or he just kind of lay it down?

DEAN RUSK: No, no. We discussed the alternatives; we discussed the possibilities.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you make any recommendation that was a little bit different than what he--

DEAN RUSK: Well when I tried to sketch out for him some of the alternatives then he picked it up. He came to his own conclusion. He didn't wait for a recommendation from me.

SCHOENBAUM: So, was one of the alternatives you put forward bilateral recognition?

DEAN RUSK: One was an attempted recognition of each, so-called two-Chinas policy. But one would have been to try to work somehow indirectly behind the scenes to see if any kind of reconciliation between the People's Republic and the Republic of China on Taiwan might be feasible. Another was simply to sit tight where we were and wait for the future. But there were several alternatives.

SCHOENBAUM: Who initiated the meeting?

DEAN RUSK: I did.

SCHOENBAUM: So you thought that there might be something--

DEAN RUSK: And I did not tell my colleagues in the State Department that I was asking for such a meeting on China policy. I knew the ideas that were being booted around in the State Department.

SCHOENBAUM: What was your attitude? Did you seriously think that he might change or did you just want to lay the matter for rest once and for all?

DEAN RUSK: No. What I wanted to find out was whether he would be willing for us to explore possible changes in China policy.

RICHARD RUSK: How long did this meeting go on for?

DEAN RUSK: About an hour.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you surprised that he was not more flexible?

DEAN RUSK: Not particularly, given the politics of the situation here in this country, because I have no doubt that had he changed dramatically in the China policy after that hairbreadth victory in 1960 he would have been cut to pieces.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you really think so?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Domestic reaction to that would have been substantial?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Yeah. I think the combination of the China Lobby and the Republican Party and all sorts of others would have really caused him very serious political problems.

RICHARD RUSK: These questions can be quite controversial in American history. Tom, let's let you respond to that. What would you think the reaction might have been, based on what you know of China Lobby and domestic politics?

GANSCHOW: Well certainly the China Lobby was very strong at that time and I think the

China Lobby--In fact I was going to ask you whether the China Lobby was on your back at all in terms of that possibility. You know, they knew that Kennedy was liberal; they knew that you were part of that liberal establishment. Were they at all on your back?

DEAN RUSK: There [were] several members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, led by Walter [H.] Judd, who were very very strong on this matter. And I have no doubt there would have been very great difficulty in any significant change in China policy with that group. But to illustrate the strength of the China lobby, even though it was not all that large in numbers, it had influence in key places. When the time came for President [James Earl] Carter [Jr.] to derecognize the Republic of China on Taiwan and recognize the People's Republic, he did that without informing the government on Taiwan in advance in any significant way. And I suspect there were those who advised him on that that had they had any advanced warning they would immediately start up a China lobby in this country and raise all sorts of hell to try to prevent President Carter from doing this. And one way to avoid that problem was simply to go ahead and do it: present them with a fait accompli.

RICHARD RUSK: Tom, is it your opinion as a China scholar that the domestic consequences of the change in China policy were such to have really made it impossible back in 1960?

GANSCHOW: No I don't think it would have been impossible. I mean, I think that Professor Rusk knows that the President has power and influence and, you know, can perhaps change the minds of the American people. But we have to remember the Korean War; the negotiations on that war lasted a long time. The McCarthy period was fresh in the memories of many people. The Eisenhower years had just come to an end. So that, I don't know if the, I'm sure that the mood of the country was not in favor of China, recognizing China. I think it would be quite--

DEAN RUSK: You'll remember it was during the Eisenhower years that we expanded our mutual security treaties in the Pacific. In the Truman years we stayed offshore: Japan, Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand. But during the Eisenhower years we included the security treaties with Korea, Republic of China on Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. Now those Eisenhower treaties were clearly aimed at China, whereas these Truman administration treaties were aimed as much at the remilitarization of Japan as they might have been at anybody else. So, no, that was representative of the concern of the Eisenhower-Dulles period over China.

GANSCHOW: I think you have to put it into the context of that view that people had of communism at that time. I remember asking you the last time about monolithic communism. It was a strong view and there wasn't much doubt that communism somehow was on the march over the world and China was just one of those communist countries. I mean, who wants to deal with those? I think it could have been done, Richard, but I think it would have been a darn difficult problem.

DEAN RUSK: It was not until late in the Eisenhower period that--

END OF SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

DEAN RUSK: It was not until late in the Eisenhower period that the differences between Peking and Moscow became public for all to see. Up until '58 or so there was a sort of reaction that these two communist giants were sort of working together. But then the split began to widen. I never looked upon the communist world as wholly monolithic. I used to make speeches about why we treat different communist countries differently, not just Yugoslavia which had defected from the Communist Block, but Poland, Czechoslovakia, we treated differently from some of the others. So it was never, I think, quite as monolithic as some people supposed.

GANSCHOW: Was there any thought about using, and we use that phrase today, using a China card against the Soviet Union? We did know by the early 1960s that there was a split developing though there were a lot of people who still didn't quite believe it and how deep really was it. It wasn't quite understood at that time. I remember I was in summer school. I think this was back in about 1961 and a Chinese professor was absolutely convinced that it was conspiracy between the Soviet Union and China; that they actually were pretending to be sore at each other and that in fact they were just using this as a ruse to get--

DEAN RUSK: Well I've always been opposed to the notion sometimes expressed as 'playing the China card'. I do not believe that we should be bemused by efforts to play off Moscow and Peking against each other primarily on the ground that they are much too intelligent in Moscow and Peking to let us get away with a game like that. And I hope we will be intelligent enough not to let either one of them play us in that triangular relationship. No I've always felt that we should work on our relations with each bilaterally and hope very much indeed that China and Russia do not get into a war with each other. We would not become involved in such a war, but such a war would have a heavy impact upon us, primarily from the fallout from nuclear weapons that we'd get lavishly upon our own territory. Because that would be a nuclear war.

SCHOENBAUM: Are you going to get into that--the whole aspect of the war possibility during the sixties between the Soviet Union?

GANSCHOW: Yeah, it's going to be a little later.

SCHOENBAUM: Okay. Well let's hold it.

GANSCHOW: It doesn't matter. Was there any effort by any Chinese communist officials to establish a communications with you and explore the possibility of formal or informal--

DEAN RUSK: Not really. Not during the Kennedy and Johnson years. I did go to the Geneva Conference on Laos when Chen Yi, the People's Republic Foreign Minister--

RICHARD RUSK: How do you spell that, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: Chen Yi, who was the Foreign Minister in Peking at that time. I had remembered the incident when John Foster Dulles had refused to shake hands with Chou En-lai at some

international meeting. So when all the delegations on this Laos conference were at a reception one day, I went up to Mr. Chen Yi and offered my hand for a handshake and he looked at me startled and stepped back a pace or so, looked around at his colleagues and talked very rapidly in Chinese. Finally he took my hand and shook it. We exchanged a few words. But no, at such a conference, you see, if he had anything in his mind he could easily have found a way to talk to me about it, but he didn't. He didn't. One interesting thing during all the sixties: The Russians would never talk to us about China. I offered Mr. [Andrei Andreevich] Gromyko several opportunities to do so, but he just wouldn't go down that trail. They just would not discuss China with us. I did--did I tell the story about exposing myself to the rebuke from Gromyko? Well, I let myself in for a rather witty retort. When Kennedy took office we had two or three Americans being held prisoner in the People's Republic. We tried various devices to get them out without success. So at one of my meetings with Gromyko I referred to these three Americans and I asked if his government would be willing to have a word in Peking on behalf of releasing these people. He said, "Oh, no. You'll have to do that yourself." And I said, "But as you know, we don't recognize Peking and have no relations there," whereupon he said, "Then take it up with Chiang Kai-shek."

RICHARD RUSK: Had you heard that story Tom?

DEAN RUSK: Which from his point of view was--He had a little smile and I must say I laughed. Well, you see, that kind of anomaly would creep up in other ways. For example, we continue to recognize Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. So when American citizens have some problem in these three parts of what is now the Soviet Union, the question is whether we can make any representation to the Soviet Union about such cases because we don't recognize their sovereignty over those three Baltic countries. So when your theory gets away from the real world you do get into some very practical problems at times.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall anything else along those same lines? This is a new nest or line or pursuit.

DEAN RUSK: No. I think just to keep the record clear that at the Laos conference I made it clear that although we were signing this agreement along with the People's Republic of China that our signing this multilateral agreement did not carry with it any implications with respect to recognition.

RICHARD RUSK: To follow up Tom's question, can I ask you if you are saying in fact that there were no efforts on the part of the Red Chinese to take another look at our relations or try to establish new relations with [the U.S.]?

DEAN RUSK: I know of no such efforts during the fifties and sixties.

GANSCHOW: Some people have felt that by that time Taiwan was built so strongly into our defense system that it was almost impossible to change our China policy. That is to say that we wanted Taiwan there as a counter to any aggressive actions of China. Just as we had our defense postures in Europe, Taiwan served us there. Why then should we go or even take the initiative to change that policy?

DEAN RUSK: Well those of us who had had experience with China and with Chinese forces did not attach much importance to that. I did not believe, for example, that the forces on Taiwan had any serious capability with respect to the People's Republic of China. So I didn't play that game. And also a very important point: Those of us who had had experience with China did not look upon the prospect of war with China as being very feasible. We could have mobilized millions of men and maybe occupied a few sea ports along the coast of China. But you can't conquer a country with 700 million people, which they were at that time--a billion people now. General war with China was a very uninviting prospect. So that was never a very high point of consideration in my mind. The most we could have expected out of Taiwan would have been to have sufficient strength to make the effort to take it by the People's Republic more costly than they would wish to pay. But even so, if the Chinese on the mainland had loaded up five or six thousand of those wooden junks and launched them at dusk some afternoon and they turned up the next morning on the coast of Taiwan, it would have been a very difficult thing to stop them. Among other things, you couldn't knock out these wooden junks from the air because these wooden things just wouldn't sink. If they'd gotten ashore, gotten a beachhead ashore, their forces would have prevailed very quickly over the local forces in Taiwan. I remember--Tom help me remember the name of that old gentleman who was Vice President under Chiang Kai-shek for a number of years and then died.

SCHOENBAUM: Chen Cheng?

DEAN RUSK: That's right.

RICHARD RUSK: How do you spell that Tom?

SCHOENBAUM: Chen Cheng.

DEAN RUSK: I remember asking him once very privately, just the two of us, whether the forces on Taiwan had any interest in going back to the mainland. He paused for a moment and said, "Yes. Yes they do. But as soon as they get ashore, they'll all disappear into their native villages." (Laughter)

GANSCHOW: Could I ask you, did any of the old State Department officials who lost their positions during the late forties and early fifties--Were they in contact with you during that time, urging you to do something about China? I thought maybe they may have gotten an interest again.

DEAN RUSK: Edmund Club was the Director of Chinese Affairs for me when I was Secretary of State. We had others of that group.

RICHARD RUSK: John Paton Davies [Jr.]?

DEAN RUSK: No he was out of the Department at that time in civil service. There was--Oh, I'll have to try to think back on some names. My memory for names is a little slippery because I've dealt with so many people in my life. But he was one of those who was criticized as a part of the

old China hands. He was my head of Chinese Affairs.

GANSCHOW: I was wondering if any of those were making a special effort to try to get maybe-

-

DEAN RUSK: No. No.

GANSCHOW: When Johnson becomes President was there any appreciable immediate difference that you detected? That was expressed to you with respect to China?

DEAN RUSK: No. During the Johnson Presidency the thing that caused this issue to be postponed still further was the very hostile attitude of Peking toward any kind of peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem. Prior to that we got no help from China in trying to get Hanoi to live up to the Laos Accords of 1962. Both Peking and Hanoi publicly insisted that, for example, the Vietnam affair was not a matter for the United Nations; they should keep their fingers out of it. And that led a good many members of the U.N., including the Secretary General U Thant, to take the view that the U.N. should not get into this matter. There were one or two occasions when we wanted to bring Vietnam to the U.N. Security Council and by counting noses we found that we did not even have the votes to put it on the agenda. So then when Peking rebuffed United Nations we turned to the use of the Geneva Conference machinery where the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom were both cochairmen. But they also adamantly refused to use that machinery for any kind of peaceful settlement of the Vietnam affair. So that adamant attitude of theirs toward any kind of solution to Vietnam again just postponed any serious consideration of a change in China policy on our part.

GANSCHOW: Is it unfair to say that our war in Vietnam, was as much directed against China as an aggressive state to teach China that she couldn't get by with any sort of aggression in Asia as it was against North Vietnam?

DEAN RUSK: Not nearly so much. China was in the background, but it was really the North Vietnamese aggression which was the center of our concern. We knew that both the Soviet Union and China were giving aid to Hanoi. We also knew, however, that the two of them were in competition for influence in Hanoi and that meant that neither one of them would put any pressure on Hanoi and run the risk of pushing Hanoi all the way into the arms of the other, as between Moscow and Peking. And in that process Hanoi was able to wriggle out for itself a considerable degree of independence because they were suspended between these two communist giants. No, I think that the primary consideration was our obligation under the Southeast Asia Treaty with respect to Vietnam as a protocol state under that treaty and the implications that might be drawn in other capitols about other treaties if we did not try to make good on our commitment under that treaty.

GANSCHOW: I have read from a Chinese source that the Chinese during, especially once the war began, were anxious to see a peaceful negotiation to that war, that they were in fact afraid of it expanding and developing into something that they could not control. It might hit, in other words, South China.

DEAN RUSK: Well, they knew where we lived. They knew how to get in touch with us. I can't recall that we ever got any kind of hint of communication from Peking on that subject.

RICHARD RUSK: What would be your own sources for that information?

GANSCHOW: There were, from the Chinese side, there are Chinese--You know, this is later on in interviews and documents of the time. The Chinese claiming that we have no interest in seeing this war expand; we have no interest in seeing this war develop--you know, continue. That we, in fact, were anxious to see a peaceful settlement of this situation.

DEAN RUSK: Well, they never--They didn't ever make any suggestion to us that way. And they had many ways in which to do it; many channels in which they could have done that.

GANSCHOW: There were no indirect channels?

DEAN RUSK: That's right.

GANSCHOW: Okay. How much of our experience or former experience in Korea entered into the way in which we approached Vietnam, Mr. Rusk?

DEAN RUSK: To some extent. We had underrated the prospect that the Chinese would actually intervene in Korea on the scale that they did, partly because the Indian diplomat, [K.M.] Panikkar, who transmitted that message to us, himself expressed some doubt about its reality. But--

RICHARD RUSK: Do we have that on tape?

GANSCHOW: Yes we do. Yes we do.

RICHARD RUSK: Okay. Fine.

DEAN RUSK: But as far as Vietnam was concerned we were anxious not to let the Vietnamese struggle move into a general war against China, or China and the Soviet Union combined, as far as that's concerned. I remember there was one military paper that dealt with the question of invading North Vietnam by land armies, land forces; just go ahead and occupy the place. And this military paper had said that we do not believe that this would bring in the People's Republic of China. But, of course, if they did come in that would mean nuclear war. Well in a military paper, this looked like a little piece of fine print. But that's the kind of sentence that just pops out of the page at a President. So those of us who had been bitten by the mistake in Korea, perhaps were a little sensitive about the prospect that China might indeed come into the war if we advanced with land forces up into the delta area, up into the river basin area of North Vietnam. But anyhow, we have tried in all of these crises since World War II not to let it go down the chute to shoot into a general war. And thus far we have succeeded.

GANSCHOW: I heard an interesting theory about this and I'd like to express it and get your reaction. And this was on a recent review of Vietnam and I believe you were actually quoted in

which you said that you were somewhat surprised by the tenacity, I think you used that--

DEAN RUSK: Of the North Vietnamese.

GANSCHOW: Of the North Vietnamese. Well in the process of that program there was the theory expressed that we got ourselves so involved in counterinsurgency war that we forgot that where the source of the counterinsurgency was coming from, that is North Vietnam; that if we could have directed the war more towards that we would not only have destroyed them, but would have destroyed the source of the support for the counterinsurgency and that perhaps it was our worry about getting China involved that prevented us from doing that and therefore changed the nature and the course of the war. Now, of course, these are nice theories for scholars to talk about, but how do you--

DEAN RUSK: Well, that element of China might have been involved there, but also there was an element--and I may have to rethink--and that is that we were not trying to destroy civilian populations. On my conscience is the fact that we accepted additional casualties among our own forces in an effort to protect civilian populations. I remember after the first full year of American bombing the North Vietnamese themselves put out a report that they had lost five hundred civilians to our bombing in that first year, which from a general point of view is almost nothing, you see. But we could have destroyed Hanoi and Haiphong by conventional weapons. We wouldn't have had to use nuclear weapons. Now that's a question that people have to think about if we get into such a situation again. It may be that you'll have to put more force on the source of the problem than we did in Vietnam. But when Lyndon Johnson approved targets for those air raids into the far north there in North Vietnam, we deliberately required that these targets be military targets and we did not start the general bombing of Hanoi or Haiphong.

GANSCHOW: I would like to pursue that China part a little bit. I've always had the fear, and I can't tell you that I've seen it in a--you know, that I've been able to discover this from a scholarly research approach, but rather just from my--just a general reading of the record, that China loomed very large in our initial reluctance to do much about North Vietnam, to stick to South Vietnam, to deal with the south and watch out so we don't get China, so China doesn't get into it. Yet at the same time, on the other hand, and I hope you'll forgive me if I am pretty strong on this--

DEAN RUSK: Go ahead.

GANSCHOW: But I also had the feeling, Professor Rusk, that you believed that Vietnam was, in a sense, a surrogate for China; that Vietnam was fighting China's war in a sense.

DEAN RUSK: No. I did not base my thinking on the second point. You see, Ho Chi Minh had announced very early that he was going to take over not only South Vietnam, but Cambodia and Laos, that is, all of what had been French Indochina. My guess is that in the Geneva Conferences in the mid-fifties that some people said to him--I mean he was very reluctant to sign those agreements himself--that some people--maybe the Russians, maybe the French, maybe the British--had in effect said to him, "Oh, go ahead and sign. You're going to get what you want anyhow." And that when the way was not open for him easily to obtain his objectives of taking

over all of Indochina, that he felt somehow that he had been betrayed. But I think the principal involvement of China in our thinking was that our reluctance to invade North Vietnam by ground forces, because we thought that very likely would bring China into the war. But we knew also that the North Vietnamese were nervous about China. For a long time they had some of their best divisions up on the Vietnamese-Chinese border, even during the Vietnam affair. And it was not until fairly late in the game they moved those divisions down to South Vietnam.

RICHARD RUSK: Clark [McAdams] Clifford has said in my interview with him, Pop, that every China expert that they had back in Washington in those days would have said, had the Americans gone against North Vietnam in a manner that could have been decisive, that this would have triggered whatever treaty or relationship that the Chinese and the North Vietnamese had with each other, and brought the Chinese into the war. Was that the kind of counsel that you were getting?

DEAN RUSK: There were a good many people who thought that. At least you had to take that very much into account. We had in Vietnam a much larger war than we wanted anyhow. We certainly weren't looking for an even bigger war, a war with China.

GANSCHOW: A certain scholar has remarked that there was a critical difference between Secretary of State Rusk and George [Wildman] Ball in those early 1960s, and that critical difference was their view of how important Southeast Asia was--that you felt that the protection and survival of Southeast Asia was terribly important. Ball, on the other hand, thought it was a kind of a wasted effort, perhaps.

DEAN RUSK: Well George Ball was a very strong North Atlantic man. He had worked on those relations very hard, both in public and private life. He was a personal friend of many of the leaders in Europe. And there's no question, I think, that he felt that Southeast Asia was peripheral to the Central American interests. I had a much more worldwide view of the scene. I felt that what happened to three-fourths of the world's population in the so-called Third World was very important to the long-range interests of the United States. And I also had very strong feeling about the fidelity of the United States to its security treaties. You see, we had become accustomed to the expressions of doubt in Europe, for example, that we would really make good on our commitments to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]. And I didn't like that at all, because I thought we were at least as devoted to NATO as the European members of NATO would have been or were. But George Ball, I think, did look upon Southeast Asia as a secondary consideration and was not as impressed as I was with the chain reaction of the failure of the United States to make good on a security treaty: what judgments might be made in places like Moscow as to how we might react under NATO. You see, when Kennedy made his first decision to increase substantially American military forces in South Vietnam, he was fresh from two experiences. Two extraordinarily important questions were on his mind: What would have happened if Khrushchev had not believed Kennedy during the Berlin crisis of '61-'62? More importantly, what would have happened if [Nikita Sergeevich] Khrushchev had not believed Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis? So this notion of the fidelity of the United States to its security treaties is not just a question of empty face and prestige. It's the pillar of peace in the world. And I felt that very strongly.

GANSCHOW: I was in Taiwan in those very early years of the Vietnam War. And I'm quite sure I remember reading in the newspapers in Taiwan that they were interested in helping the United States in Southeast Asia. They wanted to materially and perhaps with troops help the United States. Was there any consideration of letting Taiwan--?

DEAN RUSK: Well they did help us in a variety of ways, including the use of facilities in Taiwan.

GANSCHOW: That's right. There was a big air base in Taichung.

DEAN RUSK: And as a base in which we could put certain forces that would cause Peking to be a little careful. But there was never any serious thought about Chinese forces from Taiwan actually entering the fighting in South Vietnam. We had gone through that experience with Korea and they didn't have the capability or even the will to actually put troops on the battlefield in that situation. So any offer that--I don't recall that they ever offered troops for South Vietnam. But I'm quite sure we would not have accepted.

GANSCHOW: Going back to that difference between George Ball and yourself. Was there any difference between you and Ball, or anyone else, with respect to the possibility of China's involvement in North Vietnam? That is to say, as you discussed the possibility of United States troops going north, discussed how we would handle North Vietnam, did Ball or did anybody else say, "Oh, I don't think we have to worry about China. They're not--"

DEAN RUSK: No I don't think so. I don't remember specifically talking with George Ball about the prospects that China might get into the Vietnam struggle. But he was not totally opposed to the assistance we were giving South Vietnam. For example, when President Johnson made his decision to make some retaliatory raids on North Vietnam as punishment for their attack on Pleiku involving American soldiers, I was away having flew down at George Ball's place in Florida and George Ball was the acting Secretary at that time. And he apparently went along with that. It was not until a month or so later that we began systematically bombing the Ho Chi Minh Trail. But I think George felt that the cost of Vietnam was out of proportion to our obligation or to the benefits we would derive from the whole exercise. He expressed that point of view eloquently and with real ability, and both Kennedy and Johnson, as well as I, very much appreciated his courage in putting the other point of view. We didn't--

END OF SIDE 2