

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection  
Rusk UUUUU: Part 1 of 2  
Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and John J. Haag  
1986 January

The complete interview also includes Rusk VVVVV: Part 2.

RICHARD RUSK: We're talking about my Dad's experiences in Germany and Oxford in the 1930s. Professor John Haag and Rich are doing the interviewing. This is January 1986. Go ahead.

DEAN RUSK: My interest in Germany came from two principle sources. One, I had studied German for two years at Davidson College with Professor Guy Vowles, who himself had been a Rhodes Scholar and who was my sponsor for the Rhodes Scholarship competition. So I had had at least a beginning of interest in the German language at Davidson. Well, when I went to Oxford, I thought I'd like to go to Germany and polish up my German. Meanwhile I was very much aware that my mother was fifty percent German; her father was David Clotfelter. His family had come out of the Black Forest region of Germany. And that gave me a little sentimental interest in Germany. So I took advantage of a number of the Oxford vacations to go to Germany. I first went to Hanover to work on the German language. I was told that in Hanover they spoke with the purest German of any of the German areas. And I lived with a family there and spent a lot of time on German. And then I went to Hamburg to study economics, the University of Hamburg being then the strongest university in the country as far as economic matters were concerned. It was the center of trade and things of that sort. But then a little later I combined a Christmas vacation with a one-term's leave of absence from Oxford, plus the Easter vacation. We spent a rather extended period in Berlin. I first went to Berlin to study international law with Professor Viktor Bruns at the Hochschule fur Politik. But that didn't work out too well. I remember on the first session of the seminar that Professor Bruns had called together, he opened up the question with the students as to what we ought to study during that seminar. Well, there were three or four Nazi students there in their uniforms. And they insisted that there was only one thing to study, and that was the illegality of the Treaty of Versailles. Well, we started out more or less on that basis, but very shortly the Nazi party took over the Hochschule fur Politik to turn it into a leadership training school for Nazi party leaders, whereupon I moved across the street to the University of Berlin. But I was there before, during and after the [Adolf] Hitler takeover. Hanover was relatively quiet. It was a little bit out of the way from a political point of view. But Hamburg was a seething pot of controversy and violence. The socialists were very strong there with all their labor organizations. And there were street battles. It was a city in great turmoil. Back in Berlin, Hitler had by that time seized power. What month or what year did he seize power?

HAAG: Well, he was appointed Chancellor on the thirtieth of January, '33. And then they had the Reichstag fire. You were there when that happened. That was in late February.

DEAN RUSK: Right.

HAAG: And then he got emergency powers. And then they had a free election--a semi-free election--in early March. And by the end of March he was, you know, virtually a complete dictator.

DEAN RUSK: Right, right.

HAAG: So basically the month of March was the crucial month. And you were there then?

DEAN RUSK: March '33.

HAAG: March of '33, yes.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I was there in March of '33.

RICHARD RUSK: And you were there for the Reichstag fire then.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I don't somehow recall that. But apparently I was. But it didn't make all that much of a splash in Germany itself, although Hitler turned it into a splash by some of the actions he took. But even in those early stages of the Nazi regime we could see what was coming. The Nazi party, long before Hitler seized power, had, in effect, taken the streets and the public platform away from other parties in Germany. And yet the Weimar Republic continued to extend to the Nazi Party the normal privileges of a political party. There was no real attempt to crack down on these people who were obviously bent upon destroying the constitutional system. In a sense, I think the Weimar Republic might have committed suicide by the freedoms that it gave the Nazi Party in full knowledge that the Nazis were out to establish a dictatorship.

RICHARD RUSK: Was it really clear to you and others at the time that Hitler and the Nazis were indeed set upon destroying constitutional democracy and subverting the Weimar Republic?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I had read *Mein Kampf* carefully. And it's intriguing to me to realize at the time that a good many of the German students of my own age supported Adolf Hitler for what even today we might call idealistic reasons. They were trying to restore the morale of the German nation, trying to overcome some of the weaknesses of the Weimar Republic, and so forth. They simply did not believe *Mein Kampf*. I remember talking to German students about *Mein Kampf*, and they just brushed it aside. They didn't really realize that Adolf Hitler was completely serious when he wrote *Mein Kampf*. But there were others also who played games with Adolf Hitler. Professor Haag will know more about this than I. But I suspected that a good many of the businessmen, people of that sort, supported Hitler in order to achieve some discipline in the society, thinking that they themselves could control Hitler when he took office. And this was a great miscalculation on their part. But I think there were those who supported Hitler for less than ideological reasons, but were trapped when they found that Hitler really meant what he said when he wrote *Mein Kampf*.

HAAG: The family you stayed with, their name was Kammerer. Did you notice how these changes were affecting their lives?

DEAN RUSK: Well, Mr. and Mrs. Kammerer, the father and mother--

RICHARD RUSK: Is this Hamburg, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: That was in Neubabelsberg, near Potsdam in Berlin. He himself was a small bookbinder. And he was a lower-middle class person who made a reasonable living. They had a small boat that we puttered around in on Sundays, taking our lunch with us and stopping off in little cafes to eat our food, and buy some coffee from the little restaurants. And I never had the impression that the mother and father were ever caught in the sloganeering of Nazism. The seventeen-year old son, whose name was Herbert--sixteen or seventeen years old--was a nut about motorcycles, just like you were at one time, Richard.

RICHARD RUSK: I still am. I spent all day yesterday working on mine.

DEAN RUSK: And he joined the SS [Schutzstaffel] motorcycle brigade because he was crazy about motorcycles. At the beginning I don't think he had any ideological commitment of any sort to Adolf Hitler. But he soon acquired one, with his membership in the SS. The daughter, who was a year or two older than the son, I had the impression, also was not particularly caught up in the frenzy of the Nazi Party. But I suspect they were typical of the large number of Germans who tolerated Adolf Hitler with a degree of support--certainly not opposition--that made it possible for Adolf Hitler to go as far as he did.

HAAG: Did you think this family was well-informed? Could it be that they were "non-political"? A lot of Germans prided themselves on being nonpolitical. And maybe they just really didn't know what was going on, and that might explain their attitudes.

DEAN RUSK: Well, a good many things were going on that the general public was not told about, although word of mouth, I think, spread a lot of this information. But this family subscribed to a couple of newspapers. And they heard the radio news broadcast. I would say they were normally informed for people of that sort. But they did not hold themselves out to be experts on such matters as politics. But I suspect it was a typical Germany family caught up in all this business. I never had any impression of the views of this particular family I lived with toward the Jews. But you could see from the very beginning of the Nazi regime that discrimination against Jews was moving pretty fast. I think I put on another tape the fact that I was a member of the little tennis club there in Neubabelsberg. And somehow the properties changed and the tennis club lost its tennis court. Well, the town council simply met and confiscated the estate of a Jewish landowner there in the village, who had a tennis court on his property. And they confiscated this property and turned the tennis court over to the tennis club, whereupon I resigned from the tennis club at that point. But it was really not until what you historians call a "kristallenacht"--

HAAG: Kristallnacht in November '38. Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: That was when anti-Jewishness became pervasive and contagious. Excuse me.

HAAG: Mr. Rusk, long before you went to Germany you obviously had heard about the country. What were some of the first ideas and images you got in your mind, growing up in Georgia, about Germany, during and after the first World War?

DEAN RUSK: Well, my first impression of Germany was, as a very small boy, during World War I, walking several blocks along the railroad tracks down to the old Candler warehouse in Atlanta where they had German prisoners of war. And I looked through the fence at these fellows. I thought I was supposed to be looking at men from Mars, but they looked like pretty ordinary people. They were there working and so forth. They also had German prisoners of war at Camp McPherson in Atlanta, but I had not been particularly aware of Germany. When I was in high school I was aware of that almost total inflation which they had in Germany. And we read about people wheeling wheelbarrows full of currency down to the grocery store to buy a few little things. Things of that sort.

HAAG: It was true.

DEAN RUSK: But in college I became aware of the fact that the Allies had not done a very good job in allowing Germany to recover from the impact of World War I. The French were taking a rather punitive attitude toward the Germans, and made it difficult to renegotiate reparations and debts and things of that sort. And it was clear that French historical animosity toward the Germans was in full bloom between World War I and World War II. But quite frankly I really approached Germany from the point of view of studying the German language and some German literature and things of that sort, and was not really current and up-to-date about German political matters until I actually went to Germany during my Oxford vacations.

HAAG: Actually, you were open-minded and certainly not hostile, which in the twenties--By the late twenties, my impression was that the American attitude toward Germany was pretty positive. We had forgiven them for the War. We were no longer sort of hostile to them.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, and the United States played a role in various plans with which you are familiar to somehow help Germany handle its great burden of debt and reparations, matters of that sort. Wall Street had tried to be helpful to Germany in that period. John Foster Dulles had a good deal of business with Germany as a lawyer when he was with the firm of Sullivan and Cromwell in New York. But I was only moderately aware of German affairs, as was, I think, true of most of Americans during the period of the Weimar Republic.

HAAG: Once you got to Germany, what was your strongest impression? For example, do you believe or did you believe in, or would occasionally use the idea of the people of national character? Was there such a thing, as you saw it in Germany, as a German national character asserting itself, or showing itself at least in some people?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I had two impressions in my mind immediately. One was that in some respects the Germans were very much like Americans. For example, Christmastime in Germany was very much like Christmastime in the United States: the same kind of atmosphere, the same kind of decorations. Of course, they exchanged gifts on Weihnachskind Day in early December rather than on Christmas itself. Nevertheless, I felt very much at home in Germany at

Christmastime. But there's another element that I find it difficult to express; perhaps you can do it better: And that is a kind of out-of-this-world romantic mysticism in German thought, in German philosophy, that somehow led them to live in a world that was not necessarily rooted in the real world. And that, I think, was a source of some concern to a good many people. [Alfred] Rosenberg's, *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, books like *The Decline of the West*, and things of that sort. German philosophy created and continued this notion that has its roots all the way back to Plato, that somehow the State is the thing: The State is a being that is separate from the people that make it up; governed by different rules. I have always rejected that approach myself, because when I joined President Kennedy I did not find in my desk drawer or in my clothes closet something called the State that I was supposed to be Secretary of. All I found were some living, breathing human beings who had been spelled off by our constitutional political system to act for all of us in some regards. I've always rejected the "raison d'etat" basis for public policy. I've felt that these individuals who were acting for us all did have some compelling moral obligations upon them, that they could not brush all that aside in the name of the State. To me the State is not much more than a legal fiction, to draw the distinction between acts taken by individuals and acts taken by individuals on behalf of all of us. So I think some of this--Well, [Jean Jacques] Rousseau had a touch of this in him. But this notion of the State as a separate, independent, organic being of its own with its own laws has always turned me off.

HAAG: Basically, you were thinking along the line of what the Germans would say an "Anglo-Saxon." And you weren't "deep." The Germans, particularly during this period of their history, had this thing about "We're deep, we're 'tief,' we're profound, because we have this metaphysical view of State and society." Did you get into arguments with some of the professors over this?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I was aware of it, but I didn't get into real arguments on it, partly because I knew I had a lot more reading to do, and partly because my command of German wasn't quite good enough to engage in such arguments at that time. But there's that kind of mysticism in Germany that, I think, explains a good deal of their more recent historical past. That's why a good many people, including myself, would not like to see Germany as a loose cannon rolling around the deck. I think the world is safer with Germany as an intimate member of NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] with its armed forces, in effect, under NATO command.

RICHARD RUSK: Would you extend that same argument to the concept of, in actuality, of a divided Germany?

DEAN RUSK: At the end of the war we did not look toward a divided Germany. The theory was that after a period of four-power occupation that Germany would emerge again as a unified country. But we soon learned that the Russians were not about to turn back to Germany the area we now know as East Germany without some very strong assurances as to what that Germany would be like from their point of view. It's hard for us in the United States to sense fully the deep fear and hatred of the Germans that one finds in Russia. After all, their memories go back to Napoleon [Bonaparte], to the deep invasion of Russia by [Paul von] Hindenburg's forces in World War I, and to the terrible catastrophe that the Russians had suffered at the hands of Adolf Hitler. And that is very deep in the Russian attitude. I once visited Leningrad at the time I went to Russia to sign the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. And this attitude towards the Germans created a thick atmosphere in Leningrad. You couldn't turn anywhere without running into it, because

Leningrad had suffered so terribly at the hands of the Nazi armies during World War II. But I personally do not believe that Germany will be reunited for as long as I can see into the future. The Russians are not going to help create what I call "this loose cannon rolling around the deck" of an unattached Germany, with this potential revival of an appetite for expansion and conquest. When I was Secretary of State I remember being disturbed by the maps that were circulating in the Federal Republic of Germany, showing East Germany as that area east of the Oder-Neisse line. And I protested to German authorities about the circulation of such maps. I once in a very private conversation with [Andrei Andreevich] Gromyko told him for his private consumption that we, the United States, would not support any revanchist claims by Germany of territories east of the Oder-Neisse, that as far as we were concerned, that line had been drawn by Adolf Hitler. And that was the end of it.

RICHARD RUSK: What was Gromyko's reaction to that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, he accepted and, by the way, adhered to my request that he keep this as a private piece of information, because had it been made public at that time, I would have had some problems with Germans. But I don't see any formal reunification of Germany for a very long time to come. I do hope that the two Germanies can somehow take steps with each other to reduce the importance of the boundary line between the Federal Republic and East Germany, such things as reunification of families, free travel and tourism back and forth, trade, things of that sort, so that the actual political boundary is of less importance and not to the same extent an affront to the German people. But there isn't going to be any reunification of Germany as far as I can see. It would take the kind of war that would mean there would be no Germany to reunify Germany.

RICHARD RUSK: Sorry to lead you sort of astray.

HAAG: No problem. I'm enjoying this.

DEAN RUSK: Old Chancellor Konrad Adenauer not only talked about reunification of Germany, but insisted that we talk about the reunification of Germany. But I'm convinced that Konrad Adenauer himself did not want a reunified Germany. He did not want all those potentially socialist votes in East Germany becoming a part of the political system of the Federal Republic, which would knock the liberal democrats right out of power. But again these myths are a part of that sort of romantic mysticism that I am talking about. The difference between myth and reality in Germany can be pretty far-reaching at times.

HAAG: I'm thoroughly enjoying this because actually I wrote my dissertation on one of these aspects of the German romantic--political romanticism--and certainly up to 1945 it was a very powerful part of their culture.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I'm almost embarrassed to try to talk about this in your presence, because--

HAAG: No, no, no--

DEAN RUSK: But it's something that I am sure has been there.

HAAG: And most Americans aren't aware of it. I think you made a very fine point, Mr. Rusk, about feeling at home in Germany. Because to this day, I think the country after Britain that Americans feel most at home in in Europe is Germany, even if they have problems with the language. It's clean, it's neat, it's well organized. Physically it appears very, in many ways, very American. And in some ways they miss the point that culturally--and maybe it has changed in the last forty years--but culturally it is not America. Not just linguistically, but culturally there is a different thought process going on there. And most Americans tend to miss that. Their cities look a lot like ours. And it's a veil-run place, and the people are friendlier than the French perhaps.

DEAN RUSK: Oh, yes. The French are very difficult to get along with, partly because they don't get along with each other. (laughter)

HAAG: And the French still believe, as do the Chinese, that somehow or another they are the center of the world.

DEAN RUSK: I don't know whether I put this on an earlier tape, Rich, but I once was talking with President [Charles Andre Joseph Mario] de Gaulle in his office in Paris. And I had commented to him that it's very difficult for the United States to deal with Europe when there is no Europe, that from our point of view it would simplify our problems considerably if there was a much greater degree of unity in Europe. And he took a little time off to say, "Europe? What is Europe? Here is France at the very center, the heart and soul of Europe. Then there are the Benelux countries." And with a gesture of contempt, he brushed that aside. "There is Italy." Another gesture of contempt. "There is Germany, but Germany must be kept in its place. There is Great Britain. They're not Europeans, they're Anglo-Saxons." (laughter)

DEAN RUSK: To him, France was Europe: the heart of Europe. And he didn't have much respect for the other pieces of Europe as he saw it.

HAAG: The French have never gotten over this idea that they are at the center of things. We were staying with a French family once with a friend of my wife's, and I said, in my horrible French, some very complimentary things about Paris. And I really meant it of course. And their little daughter, who was about five years old at the time, she kind of perked up and said, "Tout le monde connait Paris." [Everybody in the world knows Paris.] Like, "What are you talking about? Obviously we are at the center of things." I was floored!

DEAN RUSK: At one of the NATO foreign minister meetings, my colleague Maurice Couve de Murville, de Gaulle's foreign minister, once came up to me in the corridor and said to me, "We are very much concerned about your cultural imperialism in Tunisia." I said, "Maurice, what in the hell are you talking about?" He said, "You just sent eight teachers of English to Tunisia." I said, "How many teachers of French do you have in Tunisia?" And without blushing he said, "Eighteen hundred." And here our sending of eight teachers of English to Tunisia was cultural imperialism. No, there's a very special French attitude involved in such things.

HAAG: Can we go back fifty years to Germany, if we may? One of the questions I think that many Americans, or many people generally, wonder about is how one can live in a dictatorship, and in this case, a very brutal dictatorship, or even visit it. You were just a visitor, a foreigner, and in a sense missed a lot of what's going on. Hitler had set up the dictatorship. Concentration camps were being set up. He was rearming. All these things were going on. We know what happened later. And, yet, most visitors--The impressions I have from most of the accounts written at the time, and just people going there, they missed this. And in a few years, perhaps, they would notice it, but at the time they often didn't catch it. How is that possible?

DEAN RUSK: Well, in the first place, when you are an individual in a country, you only see what you see. You don't see the entire picture. But there were clues even at the beginning of the Hitler regime as to about what was going on. For example, I went on a Hitler youth weekend camp-out kind of thing once. And the whole thing was purely military. Everything about it was military. It wasn't like an exploring scout weekend. It was military. We knew that Hitler was rearming, contrary to the Treaty of Versailles. As a matter of fact, American officers every year were studying at the war college in Potsdam. And they knew what was going on. But nevertheless, there was a kind of "wait and see" attitude. I'll wait till Richard gets back for this part of it.

END OF SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

DEAN RUSK: --This stage, but when I came back to join the faculty at Mills College in the fall of 1934--I was just back from Germany, in effect, at that time--I was invited to the World Affairs Council down at Riverside, California during the Christmas vacation. And I made a little talk about Nazi Germany on that occasion. And I am glad that most people have not discovered that talk, because, in effect, in my remarks I said, "Well, let's wait and see. Let's wait and see. We don't really know yet just in what directions Adolf Hitler is going to move." And at that time a good many of us thought that there was a possibility that the extremism of Mein Kampf would be moderated by the responsibilities of power, and that indeed, business leadership of the country and other elements would put a restraining hand on Adolf Hitler. And I can still remember those German students who were supporting Adolf Hitler for idealistic reasons. It was not until later that they discovered the extent to which they had been betrayed by this man. So Adolf Hitler had a chance to move forward in a reasonable and constructive direction if he had taken it. But he wasn't that kind of person. So he moved in the other direction.

HAAG: Where did you get your information when you were in Germany? Did you ever attempt to get American newspapers? Were they permitted in Germany? Did you buy the *New York Times*, for example?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. I got the *Paris Herald Tribune* regularly.

HAAG: And it wasn't censored?

DEAN RUSK: No, not during the time I was there.

HAAG: That's interesting.

DEAN RUSK: Now, only a few newsstands in Berlin carried them. They were not in general distribution around there. And they were fairly expensive. And then I read a good many of the German newspapers. Of course, Hitler's own newspaper soon took over.

HAAG: Volkischer Beobachter?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

HAAG: Actually [Joseph Paul] Goebbels permitted a range of newspapers from the Volkischer Beobachter, which was the Nazi paper and full of propaganda, to much more subtle propaganda organs. For example, The Frankfurter Aetung was permitted too, you know, to remain in business. And they did not have Nazi propaganda. And theirs were sins of omission--

DEAN RUSK: You see, on the other hand, they were very careful about what they would publish.

HAAG: That's right. They didn't want to lose their licenses.

DEAN RUSK: And, well, I remember when the Nazis seized the Hochschule fur Politik and I moved across the street to the University of Berlin. I went to a lecture given by a Professor Hoesch, who was a pretty well known German historian at that time. And his lecture was on the subject of "How Best to Incorporate the Germans of the United States into the Third Reich." And he talked about whether it should be done through party organization, or whether the Third Reich should demand territorial enclaves in places like Milwaukee and St. Louis, places like that. This was a serious lecture. It had no connection with the real world. But this was under the pressure of Nazism, even at that early stage.

HAAG: Professor Hoesch: I looked him up here. He was an expert on eastern Europe. And obviously when he made this lecture, the one you heard, he was out of his element. And when professors talk about things they know nothing about they don't usually come off too well. Actually, he was a pro-Russian conservative, according to my sources.

DEAN RUSK: Well, it may be that he was trying to keep his job as far as the new regime was concerned.

HAAG: It didn't work. He was retired early in 1935 at age 59.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, that doesn't surprise me.

HAAG: So he was considered dangerous by the Nazis. He was too independent. He had no chance basically. And whatever he tried to do to save his position didn't work.

DEAN RUSK: Right.

HAAG: He was very well thought of, and you got a good one there. You got Germany's leading expert on eastern Europe as a professor. Do you remember anything else about him? What he said? Something more reasonable. Not Milwaukee.

DEAN RUSK: No, he spent his entire lecture embroidering on this question.

HAAG: On that one thing?

DEAN RUSK: And speculating, rather wildly, about what the alternatives were for the Third Reich, you see, and the Germans of the United States.

HAAG: Fortunately, for his reputation, he did not publish that lecture, because I think he would be kind of laughed at even now. You didn't work with Professor Bruns, Viktor Bruns?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I started off in a seminar with him, but in the middle of that seminar the Nazis took over the Hochschule fur Politik.

HAAG: And you got out of it.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Professor Bruns was a well-respected international lawyer at the time.

HAAG: Very well.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he move as well? Or did he stay and work with these Nazis?

DEAN RUSK: No, no. He was out. He was out.

HAAG: These were still fairly young men. Bruns was, in 1933, 49-years old, according to my information.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

HAAG: So these people were at the peak of their careers. Did you see a lot of students in Nazi uniforms at the University of Berlin?

DEAN RUSK: Well, in this seminar of about twenty students, about five of them were in uniform. And, of course, uniforms were very apparent around the University of Berlin even at that early stage. Well, the young people pretty much rallied to Hitler's colors there during that period. I think a good many of the older people were not at all supportive of Hitler. And a good many of them left the country.

HAAG: Hitler's attitude was people over thirty or forty, even if they are not in opposition to the Nazis, really cannot be counted on. And this focus.

DEAN RUSK: I think also one has to take into account that Hitler was a genius with the public relations aspect of his movement. He put on the most impressive demonstrations, not just the annual meetings of Nuremberg. I remember going to and being in the stands of Tempelhof Airfield once, when a million people marched onto the field in about twenty minutes. A spectacular logistic job of getting that many people there! And Hitler came and spoke. And the hypnotism of that crowd by Adolf Hitler and all the display and the martial music and the uniforms and the rest of it, was really something. I went to a Hitler rally in the Sportpalast Palace there in Berlin one evening. Again, it was show business. It was really quite impressive to see how at that early stage Adolf Hitler had discovered some of the secrets of mass mesmerism. And he employed it to his great advantage.

HAAG: Did you go to any movies in Germany during that time. Goebbels was very interested in using film as a medium of propaganda. Did you catch any of that?

DEAN RUSK: I went to an occasional movie. I didn't go to many because I couldn't afford it, even though the cost was very low. But they were still showing some of the older German movies: Emil Jannings and people like that. And they would show occasional American movies. But I didn't see--I don't recall having seen Nazi movies during that period. Of course, that was pretty early and they had not swung into their stride yet.

HAAG: There were relatively few of them. Goebbels' attitude, particularly during the war, was that people had had it up to here with propaganda. And "We'll have one area where they can have entertainment." So actually during the war they were making these fluffy, romantic movies to the very end of the war so these people could have a point, a place, where they could see--

DEAN RUSK: I had grown up in a very strict home here in this country and went to a college where dances were not permitted on campus. So I never learned to dance. So I got to Germany and I remember I took some dancing lessons in Germany. But everything was done to march music as far as the dancing was concerned. And I learned the one-step, and that was about the only dance I ever learned. (laughter)

DEAN RUSK: But Viennese waltzes were permitted.

RICHARD RUSK: Now what young, German fraulein taught you the one-step, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, this was in dancing school. And I must say it was a pretty dull step.

RICHARD RUSK: You actually signed up for dancing school to learn the one-step?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I signed up for dancing school, and it turned out to be the one-step, (laughter) That was the thing then in those days, to march music.

HAAG: You were there, actually I think you were there during the book burning. Did you ever hear about the book burnings? This was in May.

DEAN RUSK: I didn't see any of it. I heard about it.

HAAG: Was that ever talked about at the University by students or professors? Not openly, but did they allude to that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I remember talking to a couple of German students about it. And I had the impression that they were themselves getting and hiding away some of the books that were being burned. And they had their own personal and private collections, but they were a little nervous about it. We had a little bit of the same thing here in this country. I remember once being visited by a security man during the [Harry S] Truman administration. And he looked around my library and found Mein Kampf and Karl Marx's Das Kapital and books like that. And this caused his eyebrows to be lifted. (laughter)

HAAG: "If even people on this level have it, my gosh," that probably was his attitude. Were there any situations where you least suspected that people were fearful? That they wanted to say more but obviously they were afraid of what people might overhear, or it might be reported?

DEAN RUSK: Oddly enough, I moved around in university circles. But I don't recall any German talking to me strongly and in an articulate fashion in opposition of Adolf Hitler. Whatever thoughts they had they didn't express them, particularly to foreigners. I suppose they felt it was just too dangerous or they themselves were again in a kind of wait-and-see situation during that early period.

HAAG: Very interesting. Was there a lot of talk about communism when you were there? That Hitler had crushed communism? That there was a need to fight communism through Nazism or in some other way? Certainly one of Hitler's planks was that he was going to get rid of Marxism. He was going to eliminate not just communism but social democracy and so forth.

DEAN RUSK: Well, there was a sense that the communists could take over in Germany, particularly following that desperate inflation in the mid-twenties under the Weimar Republic. And I suspect that there was a good deal of the kind of interest in communism that we found here in this country during and immediately after the Great Depression: that somehow capitalism doesn't work, can't work, and that we ought to be looking at alternatives. And I'm quite sure that quite a number of young people in this country during that period looked very hard at communism as a possibility.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, in your letters home to your dad and your mother, particularly your father, there's a good deal of talk about socialism in your letters. In your letters you came up with some of these socialistic ideas and discussed them with your dad.

DEAN RUSK: Oh, sure. I mean, well, my predecessor at the Rockefeller Foundation as President was Chester [Irving] Barnard, who had been President of Bell Laboratories over in New Jersey before he became President of the Rockefeller Foundation. And he once told me that

in 1932 a group of about fifteen to twenty of the top businessmen in the country held a meeting in New York. And they came to the conclusion that capitalism was dead; it just couldn't work anymore. And this group made proposals to Franklin [Delano] Roosevelt that were far more radical and far-reaching than anything that Franklin Roosevelt ever put forward while he was President. Their proposals, according to Chester Barnard, would have turned us into more or less [Benito] Mussolini's "corporate state," where everybody had his niche. So there was a lot of that sense. Well, after all, the wheels of the American economy had ground almost to a stop, and people were looking at alternatives then, and one of those alternatives in a good many minds was communism. The same thing was happening in Germany. And that itself created a fear of communism, which, again, was rooted in another German tradition, and that was the historic rivalry between the Teutons on the one side and the Slavs on the other. Even during the sixties Chancellor Konrad Adenauer gave me several books on the subject of the Slavic hordes and the Slavic threat. This was rooted in this historical competition between the Teutons and the Slavs, and communism was linked in the German minds to the Slavs. So there was a fair amount of that fear of communists.

HAAG: Very interesting. Did you ever get a hint or even an outright comment along the lines of Poland being inferior: Slavic inferiority. I know that the German attitude during this period toward Poland was one of utter, total contempt. And was Poland ever discussed under these circumstances?

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall any specific discussion of Poland. I'm sure that the Poles were thought of in the German minds as Slavs.

HAAG: Sure.

DEAN RUSK: And part of this earlier tradition. I've sometimes speculated, with a slight amusement if you like, that one of the reasons why we and the British did not like Hitler's doctrine of the master race was that we had some sneaky ideas about who was the master race. (laughter)

DEAN RUSK: I mean, after all it was fairly common in the first part of this century to think that somehow the Anglo-Saxons had a special knack for ruling the world. This was dominant in Cecil Rhodes' thinking when he established the Rhodes scholarships. But we reacted against this doctrine of the master race pretty hard for a variety of reasons: some good, some bad.

HAAG: You've done my job for me. You've given me a marvelous transition to, with your permission, go to Oxford. I'm ready for Oxford. I had tea this morning for breakfast. First of all, I hope I don't hurt your feelings, but did you know that Who's Who in America starts listing you in 1950. But the British, I think basically because they are kind of slow, don't have you in their Who's Who until 1958. You were then President of The Rockefeller Foundation for six years, and apparently the word took six years to cross the Atlantic. When you were in Britain at Oxford, did you notice what might be called the kind of aging process in British culture that is so evident now? In other words, did you see a lot of problems in the British mentality? In their resourcefulness? In their capacity to adapt industrially and so on?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I was at Oxford from '31 to '34. That was during a period when the sun never set on the British Empire. They had not begun that massive decolonization program which occurred at the end of World War II. It was a part of the British mentality and expectation to take a role all over the world. Young Oxford students were looking toward such things as the diplomatic and civil service, the Indian civil service, the Egyptian civil service, things of that sort. And they just took it for granted that many of them would go off into these overseas functions. They had not begun, their mentality had not begun to shrink as it did rather rapidly at the end of World War II. And I remember one of my Oxford friends: He was finishing the year I first went over there. A very fine man. He went to the Sudanese civil service, and lost his life when he plunged into a river to save an Egyptian from a crocodile; the crocodile got him. Well, that was just part of the tradition in the British scene. That kind of thing didn't surprise anybody. And Oxford at that time had people from all the world there as students. There were about two hundred students from India alone at Oxford in my day, scattered among the different colleges in Oxford. There was an organization called the Lotus Club. And there was blacks from Africa, the West Indies. It was genuinely a cosmopolitan university, but it reflected the world role of Great Britain in the early thirties. Now there was some sense that Britain was getting a little tired, if you like. The early thirties were not a brilliant period of British history. They were in trouble financially, as all of us were, during the Great Depression; they suffered too. Unemployment was high. And so they had their aches and pains and that was reflected in a very lively socialist movement at Oxford. The Labor Club was there in great strength. And the debates in the Oxford Union reflected this kind of malaise in public thinking. Pacifism was a rather strong element there, in the country at that time. The British armed forces were, just as ours were, in a sad state of disrepair. Pacifist demonstrations were frequent in Oxford. I personally am convinced that the pacifism, isolationism, and indifference of the 1930s made a major contribution to the events that led to World War II.

HAAG: Hitler was very much aware of these moods in victor states: in Britain, France and so on. And he, of course, played it like a virtuoso.

DEAN RUSK: Oh, yes.

HAAG: In his interviews from that period he played on these feelings.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, and I'm sure he invested money in supporting pacifist movements in Britain, the United States, France and other places. It was all to his advantage to do so.

HAAG: He didn't undermine them, that's for sure. I have a question which may or may not get a response here.

RICHARD RUSK: Let me ask a related question here, Pop.

HAAG: Sure, please.

RICHARD RUSK: Europe had just been through this terrific World War, which an entire generation of British youth had been more or less decimated. What were the effects of that on Oxford? What were the lingering attitudes? I'm sure they must have contributed to this pacifism

and the feeling that we must avoid a future war. Just in the human day-to-day experiences there, and as you made your way about England and Oxford, did you run into this legacy of tragedy?

DEAN RUSK: A bit of it, although it was not a daily preoccupation that people gave voice to. But almost every family in Britain had been touched by the casualties of World War I. And in that great war many of the best young people of Britain were lost. That is, those who were educated and those who provided the officer corps which took a terrible loss in World War I. The sheer slaughter of trench warfare in western Europe was just appalling to think about. But I didn't find that students of my age were brooding about it. They didn't talk about it very much. But it was clear that that had made a deep impression, an impression which was very much in [Winston Leonard Spencer] Churchill's mind as he contemplated the tactics of fighting World War II. He just was not prepared to sacrifice another complete generation of Britain in anything like static warfare or trench warfare.

RICHARD RUSK: What about your tutors? Your professors? Do you remember them talking about it?

DEAN RUSK: Not really. There was a good deal of interest in--

RICHARD RUSK: It was just a kind of thing where people just preferred not to talk about it?

DEAN RUSK: Although we did spend some time looking at the origins of World War I. And generally the attitude was very much that reflected in Barbara [Wertheim] Tuchman's great book, *The Guns of August*, that somehow everybody had somehow bumbled into World War I, and that it could have been avoided.

HAAG: I have a question here. I don't know if this is going to get a response. British historian A.J.P. [Alan John Percivale] Taylor says of this period, the 1920s and 1930s, "There was no greater praise of those years than to be considered a good European." Was there a lot of discussion about European unity at Oxford in those days?

DEAN RUSK: Very little in the sense in which we know it in the post-World War II period. Britain was still in a balance-of-power mood. The French were allies, but difficult allies. The Germans had to be kept in their place. Italy was of little consequence. And the British at that time had a certain colonialist attitude toward the United States. People talked about going out to America as though going out to the colonies: that kind of thing. I remember a very amusing debate at the Oxford Union one evening on the subject "Resolve that this House Deplores Christopher Columbus." But I don't think that the United States was looked upon as a country that was really with it, that had a real understanding of what was happening in the world. We had not yet assumed the position of influence and power that we achieved, without wanting to, in World War II.

HAAG: Were they really curious about you, for example, in terms of your background and what part of the U.S. you came from? Or were they sort of, "Oh, yes. Another colonial, another foreigner here." Was there a genuine curiosity there?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, they were interested and curious. Well, I had to modify my own accent when I was at Oxford just to be understood. I went over there with a ripe, southern accent. And I was something of a biological specimen when I first got there. I did not acquire an Oxford accent, but I buffed off the worst features of a deep southern accent, just to be understood.

RICHARD RUSK: On the ship going over, Pop, one of the female passengers found out that you were from Georgia, and she said, "Oh, isn't that the place where you butcher your negroes?"

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, well, I remember once in a seminar at Oxford there was a black American woman present. And we were conversing there before the seminar came to order. And she asked where I was from. I said, "I'm from Georgia," whereupon she said, "Then you can call me Annie." But she herself was somehow not prepared to accept full status along with everybody else in the presence of a Georgian.

HAAG: Were any schemes for European unity discussed? At the time of Aristide Briand, for example, the French foreign minister, they were talking about the United States of Europe. Was that ever brought up? Again, was the British attitude "That's across the channel" and "We don't really care?"

DEAN RUSK: I found very little discussion of that in Oxford. And that is a little bit curious.

HAAG: Amazing. Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: Because at Oxford we had a succession of distinguished visitors from the continent coming to Oxford to give a lecture, and then to have tea with a group of students. And I attended a number of those. But I really didn't hear much discussion about the unification of Europe.

HAAG: Was there much talk about Germany? After all, Hitler was becoming a major political force in Germany.

DEAN RUSK: Yes, when Hitler came to power there was a lot of interest in England in Germany. But again at the beginning there was a kind of "wait and see attitude," more or less, the attitude that I took in that speech at the World Affairs Council at Christmastime in 1934. We just didn't know fully what this could mean.

HAAG: How did the British class system strike you when you got there? The whole stratification of British society? How did you deal with that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I found it somewhat odd, and rather interesting. But it was very much in place when I was there as a student. There was something tainted about commercial life, about people being in trade, as they called it at that time. As far as the upper classes were concerned, they looked upon government service, the church, the armed services, as those careers which were typically for the upper classes. And it was for somebody else to do the manufacturing, and the trade, and things of that sort. That all changed dramatically during and after World War II. But it was still very much there. See, the difference between a gentleman and people who were

not gentlemen was still pronounced. As a matter of fact, when they listed sports teams--cricket, soccer, things of that sort--in the paper in the lineup, if there was a "Mr." before a man's name, that was somebody who was not a gentleman. If you were a member of the team who was a gentleman, they would simply put his name "A.J. Taylor" or whatever it was. But if it had a "Mr." in front of it, that was a sign that he was not a gentleman; he was in trade or in the lower classes.

HAAG: His money was really sort of new or tainted; a different status.

DEAN RUSK: Right.

HAAG: The American story: Martin Weener wrote a book on this and he sees this attitude, this basically non-practical, anti-commercial attitude, as crucial for the decline of Britain in this century.

DEAN RUSK: Well, it's possible. Although they adjusted pretty fast during and after World War II. But many of the Lords of England now are engaged in commerce in one way or another. Of course, they brought that about partly through the appointment of new Lords.

HAAG: Exactly.

DEAN RUSK: A good many of whom had been in commerce.

HAAG: Sort of expanded the elite, maybe redefined the elite.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, any personal anecdotes about this British class system? How did you fit into all of that as a young Oxford student from Georgia?

DEAN RUSK: Well--

RICHARD RUSK: Any anecdotes?

DEAN RUSK: When I first got to Oxford I found that you did not really talk to the--

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