

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection  
Rusk VVV: Part 1 of 2  
Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk and Thomas J. Schoenbaum  
1985 April

This interview is concluded on Rusk ZZZZ, Side 1: Part 2.

RICHARD RUSK: This is an interview with Dean Rusk. We're talking about the Middle East, and this is April 1985. Rich Rusk and Tom Schoenbaum doing the interviewing.

DEAN RUSK: Let me begin with a little background on how I got into the, what was then called the Palestine Question, during the Truman administration. Palestine was a mandated territory under the mandate system of the old League of Nations with Great Britain as the mandatory power. At the end of World War II there was a sharp upsurge in demands for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and those insisting upon such a homeland reminded the British of the Balfour Declaration issued during World War I, which seemed to promise them a homeland in Palestine. But, in that immediate postwar period, the British were very reluctant to move in that direction, possibly because of the importance of their relations with Arab countries. President Truman became deeply involved in the issue of a Jewish state in Palestine, partly because of the enormous impact upon him personally which had been made by the full story of the holocaust as we came to know it at the end of the war when we were capturing these concentration camps and so forth. That made a deep impression upon Truman. And also, as a matter of domestic politics, he was under very strong pressure from then-called the Zionist groups in this country who were pressing very hard for a Jewish state in Palestine. Well, Truman, therefore, put a good deal of pressure upon the British, in effect, to make good on the Balfour Declaration. The British, however, became both resistant and irritated by this pressure from Truman, and themselves decided simply to toss this question into the United Nations. And when they did so, they announced that they themselves would terminate their mandatory responsibilities on May 15, 1948 and would withdraw. The British also said that they would accept any solution which would be agreeable both to the Jews and to the Arabs, which was a very comfortable position to be in, although not very realistic in terms of the real world. So, when the matter went to the United Nations, I became intimately involved on a daily basis with those problems because I was then the head of the office of United Nations Affairs under Secretary of State George [Catlett] Marshall. And so I was closely involved in the operations of the General Assembly on this matter and the work of the U.N. commission which was established to go out to Palestine and make recommendations: a commission which recommended, in fact, a partition plan which was later adopted by the General Assembly. There is one important point which some Arabs and some Jews would strongly object to. That is, that the United Nations had inherited the mandate responsibilities from the old League of Nations (the World Court has held that on one or two opinions). And so when the General Assembly took up the Palestine question, it was in a much stronger position than normal General Assembly action which usually takes the form of recommendations. It very likely had a legislative power with respect to mandated territories, and could, in fact, take decisive action because of that inherited responsibility for mandated territories. But anyhow, that was the--those were the steps which caused me to be directly and

personally heavily involved in the so-called Palestine question.

SCHOENBAUM: Okay, let me--let's focus first of all on the partition stage because that is a discreet event, and then we'll move into the termination of the mandate phase. Now the partition phase: there are some very interesting things that came up in the documents. For instance, there is the split in between President Truman's advisors on the one hand, not that--this is perhaps over simplistic, but the--under Loy [W.] Henderson, in the State Department office of Near East and African Affairs, were a group of people who believed, as Henderson did, and I quote Henderson's words in late 1945, that "Basically partition would be contrary to the traditional U.S. policy of favoring the, a large majority of the local inhabitants in their choice of government." And then on the other side were the people who apparently were centered in the White House and President Truman's political advisors, who were genuinely moved by the refugee problem and the holocaust and also by domestic politics.

DEAN RUSK: And domestic politics.

SCHOENBAUM: So there--where were you at the time when Loy--well, there was Loy Henderson; there was Bartley [Cavanaugh] Crumb. Do you remember that name? Bartley Crumb in the White House, who was apparently undermining Loy Henderson and Bartley Crumb was being aided in the White House by David [K.] Niles, who was close to Truman.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall these names, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: Apparently there was a, what people call, fluctuating policy at that--a zig-zag policy, fluctuating policy. Truman was listening to both sides at this time. Do you--where were you?

DEAN RUSK: I think this alleged feud between White House staff on the one side and Loy Henderson and his group on the other has been considerably exaggerated. It has to be said that on this subject Harry Truman was almost schizophrenic. On the one side, he was deeply committed to a Jewish homeland in Palestine. But on the other hand, he also wanted a solution with which both Jews and Arabs could live, a solution which would not lead to a succession of wars. Now, these two objectives caused him to give what appeared to be contradictory instructions from time to time. He looked at Secretary of State George Marshall to try to find a solution which could be a permanent solution, and not just an occasion for a series of wars. And yet, the then Zionist group, which had a powerful momentum among the Jewish community of this country, considered anybody who was not 1,000 percent Zionist was betraying President Truman. The Jews had their own pipeline into the White House, through David Niles and through Clark [M.] Clifford. And they kept that, those contacts open and active at all stages. But, the U.N. Commission's report, favoring partition,.

SCHOENBAUM: Wasn't that the Committee of Inquiry? Wasn't there a Committee of Inquiry Report that was rejected by [Ernest] Bevin, and also rejected by Truman except for Truman, who did say that 100,000 refugees should be permitted to settle on the--

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Quite frankly I forget the details of those exchanges between Truman and the British before the British moved the question into the U.N., because at that period I was not personally involved as I immediately became when the matter got to be a U.N. question. But, the partition plan was proposed by the U.N. Commission and was submitted to the U.N. General Assembly in a special session, and it was a very, very close thing to pass that partition plan by the necessary two-thirds votes. As a matter of fact, when we were approaching a final vote, we of the American delegation counted noses and estimated that if the Arab side made a simple motion to adjourn, they had the necessary bare majority to adjourn the Assembly without a decision. Well, at that point Mr. Camille Chamoun, later to become--

RICHARD RUSK: How do you spell that?

DEAN RUSK: Chamoun, later to become President of Lebanon, was the Arab floor leader in the General Assembly and he went to the podium and made a motion to adjourn. And in our delegation we sort of muttered to ourselves, "Oh boy, now we've had it." But then to our amazement, he added a second paragraph to his motion to establish a committee to do this or that or the other, and that translated that motion for adjournment into a substantive question requiring a two-thirds vote. What he couldn't mobilize--He could not get the two-thirds vote to pass his resolution, and so we defeated him on that.

SCHOENBAUM: That was during the partition debate?

DEAN RUSK: During the partition debate.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: --and then went ahead and passed the partition resolution. But that took the most strenuous effort on the part of the United States and Jews all over the world to get together the necessary votes of--the pressures applied in capitol after capitol on that vote are hard to describe.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, he goes into this--what--now, the decision to--for the American decision, Truman's decision, to support partition, was made in the face of the contrary British idea and the idea of some of the people in the State Department including Loy Henderson, that there should be a bi-national state formed instead of partition.

DEAN RUSK: Well, Loy Henderson, I'm sure, thought that a bi-national state had a better chance for peaceful survival than an Arab and Jewish state within that small area of Palestine confronting each other there. But nevertheless, when Loy Henderson had his directions from Secretary Marshall, he followed them. And he was not a constructionist in a devious kind of way. His views were put on the table as they should have been. They were taken into account. But the partition plan seemed to offer a Jewish state as a homeland for the Jews in Palestine, as well as an Arab state within that mandated territory.

SCHOENBAUM: Truman, President Truman, during the campaign of 1946, I think it was in October, made a campaign speech in which he first, as I understand It, in Yom Kippur Speech

(so-called) advocated, or made a speech saying that he favored a homeland for the Jews, and people immediately took this to mean partition. Do you have a sense that he made the decision to support partition in the heat of the campaign or was he, was that just campaign rhetoric that was-

DEAN RUSK: Well, his own campaign did not come until 1948.

SCHOENBAUM: Right, this was the congressional campaign, congressional elections.

DEAN RUSK: Congressional elections in 1946.

SCHOENBAUM: Congressional elections in 1946, yeah.

DEAN RUSK: He did not spell out the details of what later came to be the partition plan. He was simply powerfully in support of a homeland for the Jews in Palestine and--

SCHOENBAUM: What went into the decision to support partition? Was there any meeting or series of meetings where that decision was taken?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we ourselves did not want to fall heir to this problem as a unilateral problem for the United States. We preferred to see it dealt with in the U.N. And the U.N. had established this committee to work on the matter, and the committee had come back with a report, and it seemed to us to be a reasonable disposition of the various interests that were there. And it also provided a homeland for the Jews in Palestine, so that it was more or less natural for us to support that partition plan. Now, the British had retreated into this position that they would support any solution that was acceptable both to the Jews and to the Arabs. They--

SCHOENBAUM: I get the point. But prior--

DEAN RUSK: They clearly were very reluctant about the partition plan. They rightly believed that this would not be acceptable to both sides. But they did not actively oppose it because of this neutral position they had publicly taken.

SCHOENBAUM: Well, there was the King David Hotel explosion and a lot of atrocities that were committed, some by Jewish terrorists--

DEAN RUSK: That's correct and--

SCHOENBAUM: Menachem Begin against the British--

DEAN RUSK: --the British were very resentful of that sort of thing. But nevertheless, they had announced that they were terminating the mandate and getting out.

SCHOENBAUM: That occurred--As I understand it, that announcement that they were terminating the mandate occurred after partitioning was voted. Partitioning was voted in November 29, 1947, and their reaction to that was to say that, "On May 15, 1948, we are

terminating our mandate and getting out."

DEAN RUSK: And getting out. That's correct.

SCHOENBAUM: Now, can you describe the strategy to get partition through the United Nations? Apparently Sumner Welles was a key figure in the--in formulating the strategy to move the partition resolution through the UN?

DEAN RUSK: I don't think so, Sumner Wells had already retired.

SCHOENBAUM: Okay.

DEAN RUSK: He was not active at this particular period.

SCHOENBAUM: Was Ambassador--well he was not ambassador--was--

DEAN RUSK: Warren [Robinson] Austin was the American delegate up there. And then you had General [John H.] Hilldring, who was a member of our delegation and strongly in support of the Jewish point of view. [Anna] Eleanor Roosevelt was on our delegation. She was strongly in support of the Jewish point of view. And there were others; but, our delegation supported the partition plan on direct orders from President Truman, on which General Marshall concurred. But there were other complications. One critical point arrived just a very few weeks before the expiration of the British mandate. I was--I don't think this is part of the official record anywhere. I was standing in the delegates' lounge, talking with [Arthur] Creech-Jones, the British colonial minister.

RICHARD RUSK: How do you spell his first name, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: It's a hyphenated name.

SCHOENBAUM: Creech: C-R-E-E-C-H.

DEAN RUSK: That's right, Creech-Jones, the colonial minister under whom Palestine fell at that time in the British government, and Mr. Sharett, Moshe Sharett, who later became Prime Minister, well, Foreign Minister and then Prime Minister of Israel. But he was--Sharett was very active in the so-called Zionist delegation at the U.N. in those days. And the three of us were talking, and Creech-Jones looked at Sharett and said, "We know you're going to have your Jewish state in Palestine." He said, of course the Arab legion would move, but it would move only into those areas designated as the Arab state of Palestine. Well, this was an extraordinarily important piece of information for Sharett because the Arab legion at that time, which was still under British command, was the only effective organized military force in the Arab world. And for Sharett to be told that the legion would move only into those areas allotted to the Arab state was very important. Sharett almost immediately took off for Palestine, and I have no doubt that that piece of information played a considerable part in Israel's declaring a provisional government on the day before the expiration of the British mandate. But, Truman was still wrestling behind the scenes to find some solution that would mean peace in the area. Shortly

before, after the partition resolution had been passed and it was clear that the Arabs were going to oppose it very strongly; President Truman and Secretary Marshall asked me to try to negotiate a military and political standstill to take effect at the expiration of the British mandate. And so I undertook these very quiet negotiations in New York at the old Savoy Plaza Hotel. The Arab delegations were at one end of the hall, and Zionists were at the other end of the hall, and I had a suite halfway between. And I would shuttle back and forth between these two groups. We were trying to work out all the points that needed to be dealt with during a so-called standstill, and we got many of them resolved except for the rate of Jewish immigration into Palestine during the standstill. The Arabs were very opposed to any significant Jewish immigration. Well, finally the Zionist side came down to the figure of 2,500 a month, which was almost nothing given the circumstances of that period. So, I went down to the other end of the hall and presented this figure to then Prince Faisal, later King Faisal who was sort of the head of the Arab delegations there. And he heard me out and then he said, "Impossible, impossible. If we agree to 2,500 they will simply bring in 2,500 pregnant women and that will mean 5,000." Well, at about that moment Secretary Marshall, through a slip of the tongue down in Washington, referred to these discussions to some reporters. The moment he did that those talks were dead because the constituents on both sides could not even accept the fact that such talks could be taking place. And so, even some of the reporters expressed their regret that Secretary Marshall had had this slip of the tongue. But, anyhow, the--Now there's another episode which is perhaps worth putting on the tape. This comes a little before these negotiations I just discussed. Again, in trying to get some time to try to work out something that both sides could live with, at one point the United States changed its position in New York and moved toward a temporary trusteeship for Palestine.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: I'm sorry, the U.S. or the U.N.?

SCHOENBAUM: U.N. trusteeship.

RICHARD RUSK: All right, gotcha.

DEAN RUSK: Well, when this idea was made public, it just exploded like a bomb around the U.N., and consternation on the Zionist side, and surprise on almost everybody else's side. Well, it happened that when the U.S. delegation aired this trusteeship proposal, that President Truman, Secretary Marshall, and Under Secretary Robert [Abercrombie] Lovett were all three out of town.

SCHOENBAUM: Who first aired the trusteeship proposal?

DEAN RUSK: Our delegation in New York.

RICHARD RUSK: Our delegation.

DEAN RUSK: I happened to be in New York at that moment and I met the press immediately after that. And the atmosphere was so thick you could cut it with a knife. I've never seen such a charged atmosphere as there was at that particular press conference. Anyhow--

SCHOENBAUM: What did you say to the press? What did they ask you?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I forget the details, but, in effect, I repeated what Warren Austin had said.

SCHOENBAUM: But that was important, because that represented--correct me if I'm wrong-- Or it was interpreted as representing a retreat by, a possible retreat by the administration in repudiation away from partition.

DEAN RUSK: That's right. And also it--

SCHOENBAUM: So, how did you handle that?

DEAN RUSK: It lead to a break between us and the Soviet Union on this subject, because the Soviet Union had been strongly in support of the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. Now that was a--how did you--did that idea then come from Warren Austin?

DEAN RUSK: No. No, no, it came out of Washington. Let me finish the story and you will see.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: Well, while Truman, Marshall, and Lovett were out of town that weekend, Clark [McAdams] Clifford, in high dudgeon, called over to the State Department and he asked Chip Bohlen, Charles [E.] Bohlen, who was then counselor to the department and then, at that moment, the senior officer in the Department, to come over to the White House and bring me with him. And it was clear that Clark Clifford was looking for somebody to hang, because the reaction of the Jewish community was one of complete outrage at this move. So we went over to see Clark Clifford, and shortly into the conversation, Bohlen pulled out of his folder the original green telegram which went to our delegation in New York setting the framework in which this trusteeship plan would be aired. And on that original green of that telegram there was a notation at the top of it "Approved by the President, George C. Marshall." Well, that immediately cooled off Clark Clifford.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: But, it was--those were very tense moments.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. But who had the idea? Who came up with that idea, do you remember? For trusteeship, was that Loy Henderson at that point, or--

DEAN RUSK: It probably came out of my office, quite frankly, because we were, after all, we were the U.N. office, and we were looking for ways to gain time to try to find a solution that would be somehow agreeable to both sides, just as I was trying to do in these negotiations between the two sides up in New York.

RICHARD RUSK: Was coming out of your office synonymous with coming out of you?

DEAN RUSK: Came out--I was responsible.

RICHARD RUSK: All right.

DEAN RUSK: However I would say this, when something like that--

SCHOENBAUM: That's never been revealed before, you know.

DEAN RUSK: When something like that occurs, it's almost impossible to identify the specific person that might have brought up such an idea. It might have come--it evolved out of group discussion.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, I understand, but there's still got to be a key spark that someone has. Then--So obviously it was approved by Marshall and then Marshall went to the President.

DEAN RUSK: It was approved by Marshall and Truman.

SCHOENBAUM: And Truman, yeah, but--and Truman, though.. . I'll give a quote from [Mary] Margaret Truman's memoirs--did Truman really understand what he was approving? Because this is what Margaret Truman says that President Truman said on, well, this was the 19th of March--apparently after this--it happened around the time--it says--this is Truman: "This morning I find that the State Department has reversed my Palestine policy. The first I know about it is what I see in the papers. Isn't that hell? I am now in the position of a liar and a double-crosser. I've never felt so in my life."

RICHARD RUSK: That's what happens when family members write biographies.

DEAN RUSK: That's Harry Truman. He, in effect, tried to disclaim this move politically.

RICHARD RUSK: And he himself could not see a way through to a solution to that dilemma.

DEAN RUSK: No, but he was constantly grasping for one. But I said earlier, that effort to find a peaceful solution caused him to do things that seemed to be quite contradictory to what he was telling the Zionists he was going to do, and that caused--that contributed to this sense of feuding between the White House staff and the--

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. And he called Clifford in to investigate the State Department. That's the story of Clifford, calling you up on the carpet. Those must have been quite some times.

RICHARD RUSK: Did Clifford's interrogatories and his investigation go any further than that conversation and this green telegram that you found?

DEAN RUSK: No, when the green telegram--

SCHOENBAUM: That cooled it off.

DEAN RUSK: It was put before him with the notation at the top: "Approved by the President, signed George Marshall." That--

RICHARD RUSK: Took the wind out of his sails. Just a minute here.

DEAN RUSK: Now there's another dramatic moment in which I was personally involved, and that had to do with the actual termination of the British mandate and the declaration of the provisional government, and the immediate recognition of that government by the United States. I think the British mandate was to expire at 6:00.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, on May--it was May 14.

DEAN RUSK: May 14, six o'clock. Well, about, quarter to six, I was in my office in the State Department, and I got a telephone call from Clark Clifford. He said, "The President wants you to know that a Jewish state will be declared at six o'clock"--that was fifteen minutes from then--"and that the United States would recognize it immediately." And I said, "Clark, but this would cut right across what our delegation has been working for up there in New York for several weeks, and for which we have about forty votes already." He said, "Nevertheless, that is the President's instruction, and he wants you to get in immediate touch with our delegation in New York and inform them." So I called Senator Warren Austin, our chief delegate to the U.N., got him off the floor of the Assembly and told him what was about to happen. Well, he just then went home. He didn't go back to the Assembly and tell the rest of our delegation. He just went home.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you remember what he told you on the phone in response to your statement?

DEAN RUSK: No, I was--he was--

SCHOENBAUM: Printable?

DEAN RUSK: He was too loyal a man to be indiscreet in that way, but--well, then about five minutes past six, one of the delegates to the U.N., came rushing down the aisle screaming, waving an Associated Press ticker.

SCHOENBAUM: The Cuban delegate.

DEAN RUSK: And he went to the podium and read this Associated Press ticker that the provisional government of Israel had just been declared and that the United States had given it immediate recognition. And he called on the United States delegation for an explanation. Well, sitting in the U.S. delegation at that point was Francis [B.] Sayre, a lovely older man, but not all that smart, and Phillip [C.] Jessup, a very intelligent fellow. Well, Philip Jessup immediately left the assembly to find out what in the hell was going on. But Francis Sayre went to the platform

and in effect scratched his head and said, "Damned if I know." Well, as soon as Philip Jessup got the--

RICHARD RUSK: Well, did he call you back in Washington?

DEAN RUSK: He called me or my deputy, I forget now which one it was. But he--I thought he called me, but he remembers that he called somebody else. But anyhow, as soon as he learned that this press ticker was, in fact, true, he went back to the podium, read the press ticker and confirmed--

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RICHARD RUSK: Pandemonium broke loose in the General Assembly.

DEAN RUSK: In the General Assembly. It's hard to imagine the turmoil that occurred over that announcement.

RICHARD RUSK: Describe it. Describe the scene.

DEAN RUSK: Well, delegates shouting at each other, an American staff officer physically sat in the lap of the Cuban delegate to keep him from going to the platform and withdrawing Cuba from the United Nations.

SCHOENBAUM: Cuban delegate went crazy apparently.

DEAN RUSK: Oh yeah. But about fifteen minutes past six, the intercommunications box, that we called the squawk box, that was on my desk buzzed, and it was George Marshall. And he said, "Rusk, get up there to New York immediately and keep the United States delegation from resigning en masse." So I hopped on the first plane I could get and went up there. But by the time I got there, they had more or less cooled off and there was no problem of their all resigning. But it was a very tumultuous scene.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall the reactions of any of the individuals on that staff when you went up there?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I can't put names to reactions, but there was--you see--let me put it this way, when Warren Austin simply went home instead of going back to the General Assembly, he clearly made the judgment that it was better for the United States and its delegation in New York, for the delegations to know that this was a Presidential decision, a Presidential action, and that the U.S. delegation had not been up there hoodwinking everybody for several weeks.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. And that's a good decision on his part.

DEAN RUSK: And I think, probably he made the right decision on that because it was clear at the U.N. that this action caught our own delegation completely by surprise.

RICHARD RUSK: To what extent did Truman's decision catch George Marshall by surprise, and to what extent did Truman make up his mind on this thing at the very last minute himself?

DEAN RUSK: Well, George Mar--This issue caused George Marshall to make a rather classic statement. Because on a couple of occasions--and I won't try to specify which ones because I've sort of forgotten, but this was one of them--Truman seemed to pull the rug out from under George Marshall. And some of Marshall's friends told him that they thought he ought to resign. And he said, "No gentlemen, you do not take a post of this sort and then resign when the man who has the constitutional responsibility for making a decision, makes one. You can resign at any other time for any other reason, or for no reason at all, but not for that one." Well, that's a rather extreme view of the constitutional situation, because there have been occasions in which the Secretaries of State have resigned, in fact. But--

SCHOENBAUM: Well, Marshall was quoted as saying before, in a confrontation, or in a talk, I should say conversation--But in a talk with Clifford, he was quoted as saying that, "If President Truman does decide in favor of immediate recognition, I will be forced not to vote for President Truman in the next election." (laughter)

DEAN RUSK: He did tell Truman that he would not vote for him in the next election under such circumstances.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he tell him directly?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you there for that?

DEAN RUSK: Nope.

SCHOENBAUM: He would not resign, but he would not vote for him--

DEAN RUSK: That's right. (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: So George Marshall himself was a little worked up about that?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, of course, of course. Well, among other things, this was a hell of a way to run a railroad.

RICHARD RUSK: And I--do you--are you clear in your own mind as to, at what point Truman made this decision to recognize the state of Israel? Obviously this was kept from your--

DEAN RUSK: My guess is that he was informed through his White House staff channels that the Jews were going to proclaim their provisional government in the State of Israel.

RICHARD RUSK: Would the Jews have taken that action without some guarantee in advance that the Americans would recognize the state?

DEAN RUSK: That's a speculative question. My guess is that both Truman and the leaders of the provisional government of Israel knew at least a few hours in advance as to what would happen. But--

SCHOENBAUM: Did you feel resentment, a little bit of resentment at least, or did anyone feel a little bit of resentment against what David Niles, these people in the White House that were obviously--

DEAN RUSK: Well, there were times when you had to bite your tongue on the back end through those, because of those private contacts, because they were contradictory. They did produce results contradictory to the instructions that Truman was giving Marshall. But, to show you how these contacts operated, when the U.N. met in Paris in 1948, while they were building the new headquarters in New York, Marshall was heading our delegation. And I got a call from our code room about three o'clock in the morning saying that there was an urgent, eyes-only message to Marshall from President Truman, and that I probably better get it to him. So I went on over to the Embassy that was across the street from the hotel where we were living, and sure enough, it was urgent and it did call for an immediate reply. So I took a few moments to draft a proposed reply for Secretary Marshall and waked him up in his own apartment. That was about three thirty in the morning. And he looked at the incoming, and made one or two little changes in the outgoing, and sent me off to get it back to the code room and get it back to Truman. Well, by the time I got all that done, it was about five thirty or six. So I went on over to where the U.N. General Assembly meeting hall was to have breakfast at a little cafe over there nearby--

SCHOENBAUM: Do you remember where that was?

DEAN RUSK: No. It was near the Eiffel Tower. I forget now the name of it; we could check it. But, at that early hour of the morning I ran across a Jewish reporter, and he started asking me about that telegram Marshall had received from Truman.

RICHARD RUSK: Good grief.

DEAN RUSK: Now, clearly what happened was that somebody in the White House, Niles or Clifford or somebody, had told their Jewish contacts about this telegram. And they, in turn, had telephoned their people in Paris, and this reporter picked it up.

RICHARD RUSK: Jesus Christ!

DEAN RUSK: And here he was, talking about this eyes-only exchange between Truman and Marshall.

SCHOENBAUM: Amazing.

DEAN RUSK: Incidentally, when I left Marshall's apartment with that telegram to send back to Truman, as I was about to leave, Marshall looked at me and said, "Rusk, there are times when I think you earn your pay." Well, that was the closest he ever came to complimenting me while I was working for him. He never complimented people who, with whom he had an official relationship. When that relationship no longer obtained, no one could be more generous, warm, or kind than George Marshall. But, see, his view was that it might be his duty to fire me the next day.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: He had had to fire some of his closest friends during World War II who simply couldn't cut the mustard under the conditions of combat.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, let me ask a sort of a general question here, and one of the "what if" questions of history. Looking back at everything that has happened and looking, remembering back to the possibilities for a solution that may have existed in the late forties in respect to Palestine and the need for a Jewish homeland, was there a solution, did we lose an opportunity, what might have happened had we proceeded with the--

DEAN RUSK: Well, we certainly searched the underbrush for every possibility that we could think of. But I think the actual creation of a Jewish state in Palestine at the expense of Arabs who had been living there for centuries, was something that the Arabs simply could not take. I remember on the day that the partition resolution passed the General Assembly, then Prince Faisal of Saudi Arabia took the podium, and he stood there--tall, erect, wounded pride, insulted honor and he spoke with great passion, with great clarity about this great injury that had been done to the Arab people. And I've never forgotten that, because it isn't easy for us at a distance to understand what the creation of a state of--Jewish state in Palestine meant to those Arabs who had been there for centuries.

SCHOENBAUM: No.

DEAN RUSK: Who felt that they were, in effect, as some of them put it, were being forced to pay for the crimes of Adolf Hitler. But those deep feelings have persisted in many quarters ever since.

RICHARD RUSK: And we've had four decades of war since then. And you fellows did foresee--

DEAN RUSK: Well, we tried to box the compass of every possibility we could think of.

RICHARD RUSK: Was the--I know you boxed--

DEAN RUSK: But inherently, inherently, I suppose that there was no solution with which both sides could live. It was one of those--I've never--indeed, this problem of the relations between

Israel and Its Arab neighbors has been the most stubborn, intractable, unyielding set of issues that we have had throughout this postwar period. I personally bear a good many scars from it.

SCHOENBAUM: But your efforts toward a U.N. trusteeship, as I understand them, should be viewed as continual efforts to get these two sides together, and the--

DEAN RUSK: Well, the purpose of that move was to try to gain some time in which perhaps one could work out a solution that both sides could accept. We were trying to because the British were adamant about getting out on May 14.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you try to persuade the British into extending their stay there?

DEAN RUSK: They wouldn't touch it.

RICHARD RUSK: Wouldn't consider --

DEAN RUSK: No. We tried to, but we scolded them pretty hard about lack of responsibility on their part.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you involved with those negotiations?

DEAN RUSK: I had some discussion with British members of their delegation at the U.N. about it.

SCHOENBAUM: Creech-Jones especially.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, but also some of his staff people.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall any of the specifics or anecdotes that may have derived from that?

DEAN RUSK: No. You see, we had already experienced the sudden British decision to get out of Greece and turn that problem over to us on the grounds that they could no longer carry that responsibility. And we had to improvise for the Greek-Turkish aid program and things of that sort, and we just didn't like the idea that the British would just leave the field. But, see, they were being subjected to enormous political harassment, and also vicious acts of terrorism against them in Palestine by the most extreme Jews. And so they had had it, they--and our problem was to try to find a solution which would not simply dump their problems onto us.

SCHOENBAUM: And weren't the British also concerned about the rise of anti-Semitic feeling in Britain itself, because the Jewish terrorists murdering British soldiers and that's what's happened--that was motivation for the British, too, wasn't it?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I think so. I think so.

SCHOENBAUM: And this trusteeship idea--you -- well, it would have involved U.N. troops,

would it not?

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

DEAN RUSK: Well,--

SCHOENBAUM: Would it have involved American troops?

DEAN RUSK: The trusteeship, a U.N. trusteeship of Palestine under those circumstances was no simple thing. To begin with it would have required a very substantial budget from the U.N., and the United States would have had to be in the position of picking up most of that budget. It would have been a several- hundred-million-dollar-a-year trusteeship. It also would have required the necessary police forces and the--We pretty well knew that the Russians would oppose any significant participation by U.S. forces in a trusteeship force. [As a] matter of fact, they were opposed to trusteeship.

SCHOENBAUM: In this book it quotes you as trying to sell this plan to the Joint Chiefs and saying that the Joint Chiefs would get, I think they call it, strategic bomber fields in the Mideast. Do you remember that in a meeting with the Joint Chiefs?

DEAN RUSK: I don't remember that, but that was a phony argument if I made it because you could not have U.S. bomber bases under a U.N. trusteeship.

SCHOENBAUM: Well, that should be elaborated, because I think this book may be misleading on that point. Would you explain the role you envisioned for U.S. military forces at that time under the trusteeship? What role did you have in mind?

DEAN RUSK: When we looked around the world to see who might contribute to a trusteeship force, the possibilities were rather meager. As a matter of fact, the possibilities of getting a trusteeship adopted by the U.N. were almost zero. But again, this was simply a, almost a desperate effort to buy some more time. But, it didn't pan out.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, I got a--I want to back up just a minute further here, and let's talk for a minute about the holocaust and the meaning of the holocaust. It obviously had a big impression upon Harry Truman. To what extent were his concerns for the Jewish people and the refugees shared by the American public at large? To what extent were you personally--

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I think that when the real--

RICHARD RUSK: --affected by the holocaust?

DEAN RUSK: When the real facts of the holocaust became evident, a wave of horror swept through American people. I mean it's just almost indescribable to see what emerged from those death camps that the Nazis had built in which they had exterminated so many people: not just Jews, most of them were Jews, but other, what the Nazis called, inferior races, like Poles and other peoples. And that had a profound effect upon the American people. It went far beyond the

Jewish community. Everybody was horrified by what they learned.

RICHARD RUSK: Did any of your official duties back in those years involve you with the holocaust question other than this thing with the Palestine question?

DEAN RUSK: No. You see, I went off to China, Burma, India.

RICHARD RUSK: That's right.

DEAN RUSK: And didn't go back.

RICHARD RUSK: What were your first inklings? You were in government and you were back in Washington that spring of '45, what--were the facts of the holocaust pretty well evident at that time?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we--the true facts didn't really come to light until we and the Russians actually occupied these death camps, and then the full facts became available and they were so inhuman as to make a deep impression upon everybody. Now, the holocaust, however, was against the background of a resistant Jewish persecution in many countries in many different times. It was not until the nineteenth century that the Jews were permitted to vote in Britain, for example. And we've had a good deal of Jewish discrimination in our own country here, as late as the time we lived in Scarsdale, my boy.

RICHARD RUSK: Sure.

DEAN RUSK: And there had been Jewish persecution in Poland, in Russia, Hungary, and other countries. And so there was a strong feeling that at long last the Jews ought to have some place where they, where those who wanted to, could live together as Jews and not be subject to that kind of persecution. And that sense was very strong.

RICHARD RUSK: Was there any serious question of sending them or trying to create a homeland in any place other than Palestine?

DEAN RUSK: Well, there had been a little discussion about United States, Brazil, Australia, some place like that. But that got nowhere because the Jews were utterly committed to the idea of a homeland in Palestine, their historic homeland. And nothing, no other place, I think, would have worked.

SCHOENBAUM: Coming back to the recognition--

RICHARD RUSK: One more question, Tom.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, excuse me.

RICHARD RUSK: While you were in CBI [China-Burma-India theatre], [was there] any inkling at all of the holocaust or what was happening?

DEAN RUSK: Not really.

RICHARD RUSK: Nothing.

DEAN RUSK: Well, before I left the CBI, we began to get reports, of course, on what our forces in Europe and the Russians had found when they occupied these camps. At that point we began to get it, but that was, as far as I was concerned, it was May and early June of 1945.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: I wanted to come back to one more question about the recognition decision. Were you conscious then--Of course, there were many, we've described some, the astounding effect it had, but were you conscious then that this would definitely mean war? Basically, the provisional government of Israel being recognized by the United States in effect made war inevitable, did it not?

DEAN RUSK: Well, war was made inevitable when the Arab side decided that they would not accept any part of the partition plan and would take up arms to try to prevent the state of Israel from coming into being. You see, this is rather ironic, because not too many years later the Arabs began to insist upon an Arab state in Palestine. Well, they could have had their Arab state in Palestine if they had accepted the partition resolution in 1947, but they went to war to try to oppose it. But the Jewish side fought with great effect, great valor, and they were opposed by rather disorganized Arab forces, and so the Israeli forces were then able to drive any hostile Arabs out of what came to be Israel. And that created an enormous Arab refugee, Palestine refugee problem for which the United States accepted a heavy responsibility in the ensuing years because we came up with most of the money that the U.N. put into the Palestine refugee organization.

SCHOENBAUM: Maybe we can move on to Suez unless you had some questions about..

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, your involvement did not stop with the creation of the State of Israel and American recognition. I presume you remained involved with it. Briefly sum up your activities, the thrust of your involvement in that point.

DEAN RUSK: Well, we went to work to encourage other governments to recognize Israel, and many of them did fairly promptly. None of the Arabs did. [The] Soviet Union did, and the countries of Eastern Europe. It was not until later that the Soviets had a basic change of attitude on this when they discovered that since the Arabs were holding us responsible for the creation of the State of Israel that if the Soviets swung to the Arab side, they would pick up a lot of brownie points and increase their ability to have influence in the Arab world. And they've made pretty good use of it over the years. But there were [sic] a lot of things that had to be done to help Israel get established as an independent nation in terms of aid and training people, technical assistance, all sorts of things.

RICHARD RUSK: Were the Arabs right when they say that we were responsible for the

creation of the State of Israel? Would that state have come into being without American involvement?

DEAN RUSK: There is some question as to whether there would have been a state of Israel had it not been for the United States. I think, probably, our support was crucial.

SCHOENBAUM: Did your office, U.N. Affairs, have--were you preoccupied with efforts to try to stop the fighting in 1948, or was that at that point--the U.N. was not really that much involved, was it?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we had U.N. efforts to obtain a cease-fire. As a matter of fact, Ralph Bunche won his Nobel Peace Prize by the work he did in getting a ceasefire, stabilizing the lines between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

SCHOENBAUM: He succeeded [Folke] Bernadotte after Bernadotte was killed.

DEAN RUSK: No, he was working--that's right.

SCHOENBAUM: Did he--

DEAN RUSK: He succeeded Count Bernadotte in that negotiation, and handled it beautifully--extraordinary negotiating job which he did to work out that cease-fire.

SCHOENBAUM: But your office had no formal connections with the U.N. mediation team, did it? What were your responsibilities?

DEAN RUSK: No, we kept in close touch, but at no time did we try and give any instructions to Ralph Bunche. He was an international civil servant working directly under the Secretary General of the U.N. To begin with, he would not have accepted instructions from us. It would have been, in his view and ours at that time, contrary to the Charter for us to try to give him instructions. He would listen to what we had to say, but he would do his duty as he saw it as an official of the U.N. Secretariat.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you worried about the danger of a wider war involving the superpowers in 1948?

DEAN RUSK: Not particularly, because the Soviet Union supported the creation of the State of Israel, and so there was a time when we and they were on the same side of the thing.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, you say the Jewish pressure on this issue was phenomenal, and obviously a lot of it was focused on Harry Truman and the White House people, (unintelligible) What about yourself, were you a visible enough critter back in those days to be personally subjected to Jewish pressure? Can you describe that?

DEAN RUSK: I did not feel that kind of political pressure personally myself, partly because I was not a political figure and I was not the person calling the shots. They played hardball politics

in support of Israel in those days. There are many stories reflecting that. In his book, James Forrestal says that a group of Jewish leaders went to Harry Truman in an early stage of the election in 1948, handed him a list of points, and said, "Mr. President, here is what we want with respect to Israel. If we get these points, you'll get your campaign money." And Forrestal says Truman said yes. I have no proof of that myself, but Forrestal at least mentions that in his diary, which is an instance of hardball politics. I was told that the publisher of The New York Herald Tribune was waited upon by a dozen of his principal advertisers. They said to him, "Unless you change your attitude toward Israel, we'll stop advertising." The publisher rejected their pressure, but, of course, it wasn't too long after that that The Herald Tribune went broke.

RICHARD RUSK: Is that right! (laughter)

SCHOENBAUM: Well, that's one alternative. In connection with the partition

RICHARD RUSK: Got any more of those?

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah, I'm sorry.

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I probably could think of some others, but this is one of those unpleasant things that I try not to--

RICHARD RUSK: Unpleasant, but illuminating. It does help explain why things turned out the way they did.

DEAN RUSK: Well, the pressures on senators and congressmen also were strong, and senators and congressmen took a very active part in this whole business, in turn putting pressure on the administration. And we could feel that everywhere we turned.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you involved in congressional testimony on this issue?

DEAN RUSK: I don't recall, I might have testified on this matter before the Congress. But there was one little incident that might be noted: At one point when the U.N. was meeting in Paris, George Marshall had already returned to Washington because of health, leaving John Foster Dulles in charge of the delegation, and we had a late-night telecommunications conference between Marshall and the delegation. And the official members of the delegation were people like John Foster Dulles, [Anna] Eleanor Roosevelt, General [John H.] Hilldring, the pretty much red-hot pro-Zionist group. And they discussed certain questions back and forth and then on the teletype from the other end came a word from Secretary Marshall: "I would like to know Dean Rusk's view of this matter." I was then simply the chief of staff to the delegation, I wasn't even a member of the delegation, you see. And I remember these other people, including Eleanor Roosevelt, got very sour that Marshall would have asked for my view, because my views moderated theirs to some extent. I didn't go all the way with the views they were expressing. They didn't like that very much.

SCHOENBAUM: The partition apparently--the writing of the--the accounts at that time say it was just like the World Series in New York, or even more tense, more so than the World Series,

and the Jewish side was the home team. Is that true? You must have been even--what was your exact--you were the chief of the staff of the delegation then?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

SCHOENBAUM: During partition?

DEAN RUSK: I was director of the office of United Nations Affairs under George Marshall. I later became Assistant Secretary, but at that time I was director of the Office of U.N. Affairs.

SCHOENBAUM: What did that translate into in New York as a practical matter in connection with partition? Were you floor manager for the partition resolution?

DEAN RUSK: Sure. Our delegation was.

SCHOENBAUM: Gathering the votes? I mean, you personally?

DEAN RUSK: Sure, we--see, we were under instructions from the President. We were trying to carry out the President's instructions. That was our duty. And so we worked--it was a prodigious effort, took an awful lot.

SCHOENBAUM: You counting noses and trying to convince people--

DEAN RUSK: Sure, every hour. Every hour we had a--we kept the nose count up to date. I remember, I think it was the Foreign Minister of Norway, we were coming up on a critical vote and he got up to leave the room, and Dorothy Fosdick, who was on our staff then, who was also our liaison to the European delegations--

END OF SIDE 2