

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection  
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Dean Rusk interview by Richard Rusk and Thomas Schoenbaum  
circa 1985

DEAN RUSK: Very often you will hear senators talk about the special role of the Senate with regard to Foreign Relations. Well at least there are two special roles for the Senate under the Constitution: 1) the approval of treaties, and 2) the approval of nominations for ambassadors, for example. But I have not been able to find in the Constitution anything else which would give the Senate any special claim to, if you like, seniority in dealing with foreign affairs over against the House of Representatives. But they regularly claim it and the House regularly resents it. But that's been going on since, as I say, the beginning of the republic.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, we haven't yet discussed the rights of U.S. citizens abroad and foreign nationals in this country, your involvement with these matters as Secretary of State, purposes for and problems associated with diplomatic immunity in the nation's capitol.

DEAN RUSK: All right. Let's take the first one. Do you want to repeat the question?

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. Well I just wanted to know to what extent, as Secretary of State, you were involved in such issues as the rights of U.S. citizens abroad and the rights of foreign nationals in this country. Did these kinds of things tend to find themselves on your agenda or were these exclusively handled by other people?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I was involved in a good many of these. Although I must say that a Secretary of State normally gets involved in the pathology of such problems rather than in the normality. (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: Isn't that true in general?

DEAN RUSK: But at any given time we have several million American citizens abroad, many of them living abroad, but large numbers of tourists going abroad. And simply statistically you can expect that a considerable number of them are going to get themselves in trouble. And so we have in the Bureau of Consular Affairs in the Department of State a section which specializes in giving appropriate assistance to Americans who are in difficulty abroad. Now one thing I have tried to emphasize to my students is that an American citizen going abroad does not carry the American Constitution piggyback with them in their knapsack. When you go abroad you voluntarily submit yourselves to the laws and jurisdiction of the country that you are visiting. So it is not the job of the State Department to get any American out of jail in a foreign country regardless of what he might have done, but to see that he or she is treated normally and with dignity within the laws and procedures of that other country. And sometimes those procedures are so at odds with our own as to cause some real problems. Now if there is any indication that an American citizen abroad is being discriminated against because he or she is an American, then that is a matter that we try to take up and try to straighten out. And if a citizen is arrested abroad,

our Consular officers usually visit him in jail or prison, see that he is being properly taken care of from a health point of view, that he is being fed, that he can communicate with his family, and very often will assist him in getting a lawyer, usually a local lawyer, to handle his case. There's a good deal of that. But then people get sick and need medical advice about doctors, or people die and you have to make arrangements for the return of their bodies to the United States. All sorts of things occur. And this is a very active part of our State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. I have emphasized, for example, to my students here at Georgia that any young person who goes abroad and fools around with dope is just out of his mind. I mean, in Turkey it's a life sentence; in the Soviet Union a first offense is six or seven years; in Iran it was a capital crime. You could be executed for it. So we spent a fair amount of time trying to help young people get out of situations that they have brought upon themselves. But the important thing is that we can only help someone within the framework of the jurisdiction in which he or she finds themselves.

SCHOENBAUM: What about our diplomatic personnel that are allegedly in the eastern European countries or in the Soviet Union are ousted because of spying; or the Soviets sometime, I would suspect, frame some of our diplomatic personnel in various ways? Did you run across any of that?

DEAN RUSK: There's somewhat less of that than there used to be. For example, I can recall a case where a professor was visiting in the Soviet Union. And somebody came up to him on the street and said, "You're an American aren't you?" "Yes." "Well, I've got a cousin living in Milwaukee. Would you be willing to mail this letter to him when you get home?" And this guy took the letter and then ten feet away was a policeman who came up and arrested him. And he was threatened with a tour in the pokey over there. You have to be careful about that. As far as espionage is concerned, there are kind of unwritten rules of that game behind the scenes. The government that is conducting the espionage is not supposed to accept responsibility for the spy. And the government that catches the spy usually is amenable to trading that spy for one of your own that they are holding, you see? That kind of thing. But, of course, there's kind of a difficult line to draw as far as embassy personnel is concerned, because one of the first duties of your ambassador in his embassy is to report back home on the country in which he is stationed. It's an information-gathering assignment, you see? Now what kind of information gathering is legitimate and what kind slips under the rug and stirs up difficulty is sometimes a little hard to work out.

RICHARD RUSK: I guess the Soviets are in a league all their own as far as making use of embassy personnel for espionage purposes?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I think probably they have far more in places like their embassies and their delegation to the United Nations and other places, their trading organizations and so forth, certainly than we do, and I suppose than others do. But, you know, sometimes spies will act as businessmen. And it's a kind of separate world with some of its own kind of rules. I remember during my tour of duty, one of the officers in our embassy in Warsaw had an affair with a lovely Polish girl. And she turned out to be a member of the Polish Secret Police and she blackmailed him for information. And instead of going to the Ambassador and telling him, "Hey, I'm in a pickle. You'd better get me out of the country," he yielded to the blackmail and passed information. And he was brought home and tried and given thirty years in prison. I remember on

that occasion when a congressman who wasn't very fond of the State Department said, "That's just like the State Department. When they catch one of their people with a woman they give him thirty years." (laughter) Usually when I was sending people abroad I would give them two pieces of advice: 1) to pay their U.S. income taxes, and 2) to keep their zippers zipped up. I've had to take resignations of Foreign Service officers who simply failed to file income tax returns. Sex still plays a role in diplomacy, but not in my case because I was always accompanied by a chaperone armed with a pistol called my security man. So from that point of view I led a very dull life. But goodness, the things that go on internationally in this matter are really quite something.

RICHARD RUSK: We probably need an interview on sex and foreign affairs. A related question, not too perverted, would be, can you think of a case where a sort of a sexy representative, or an ambassador or foreign minister of some country, or the wife of an executive could somehow work her wiles in a way that influenced policy?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I must say that some of the wives of foreign ambassadors that come to Washington are lovely, attractive, energetic, and really do a great deal for their country's representation in this country. Some of them are sort of leaders of the social circle in Washington and an invitation to their embassy is a real plum for anybody. The French ambassador's wife usually is a purveyor of Parisian high styles. I mean, she dresses fit to kill usually and everybody's very interested in seeing what she's going to be wearing.

RICHARD RUSK: Madam [Mei-ling Soong] Chiang [Kai-shek], for example, she was regarded as somewhat of a looker in your day.

DEAN RUSK: Oh yes.

RICHARD RUSK: Was she ever able to turn that to advantage?

DEAN RUSK: Oh sure. In her heyday she was a charmer, and she used her charm and wiles on Franklin [Delano] Roosevelt to very good effect. I think I have put on tape her suggestion about the coolie train across the Himalayas.

SCHOENBAUM: Yeah. We have that and the [George Catlett] Marshall story.

DEAN RUSK: And the Marshall story about having a list of junk in his bottom drawer. But she was a very effective ambassador for the nationalist government of China.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll bet just the beauty of Jackie Kennedy must have had a great deal to do with the closeness of our Latin American relations during the Kennedy years.

DEAN RUSK: Well, it was not just Latin America; it was all over. It was western Europe. When she and President Kennedy went to Paris, for example, she was a great hit. As a matter of fact, at a press conference, at a speech there too, I think, at the American press club in Paris, Kennedy described himself as the man who accompanied Jackie to Paris.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you there during that time?

DEAN RUSK: Yes I was there. But the two of them exuded a kind of glamor and public interest that is pretty hard to describe. The worldwide reaction to his death, I think, reflected that: a most astonishing worldwide reaction. Part of that is that they had seized upon the imagination of people all over the world. And when Kennedy visited Costa Rica, for example, it was just a tumult. Everybody in Costa Rica turned out to welcome him. And his visit to Naples is hard to describe. I was in a car about three cars behind the President, and the storm of people who turned out to welcome him! It was a little bit embarrassing in Vienna when Kennedy met with [Nikita Sergeevich] Khrushchev in June of '61, because Austria is supposed to be a neutral country. But everywhere Kennedy went: huge crowds; when Khrushchev came in: nobody. (laughter)

I remember I had to talk some business with President Kennedy once during the Vienna meeting, and we were driving through the streets of Vienna. Huge crowds were out cheering and shouting and Kennedy was waving while we were talking business. Suddenly he turned to me and said, "Rusk, you're a hell of a substitute for Jackie." (laughter) But he would smile and wave at people while he and I were talking about the most serious things between the two of us.

SCHOENBAUM: He was a special man.

RICHARD RUSK: That's a great theme. I hate to cut it short.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you believe these allegations about his affairs in the White House and that kind of thing?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I saw President Kennedy hundreds of times in the most diverse situations, and not once did I ever see or hear anything that caused me to speculate about his private life. Now I was only a Secretary of State; I wasn't his chaperon. But these stories without any hard facts leave me pretty cold. I might add also that not once did President Kennedy ever complain in my presence about his back, about his difficulty. And not once did I have the impression that I was in the presence of someone who was under any form of sedation. So whatever his health problems were, as far as I'm concerned, they did not interfere with his acting as President of the United States. Now he and President Johnson both would take a little nap after lunch every day. And often I would go over and talk about something with them in their bedroom while they were--

SCHOENBAUM: Upstairs?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. While they were dressing or while they were still lying in bed resting. But never, as some people apparently have alleged, never in LBJ's bathroom.

SCHOENBAUM: How is it that the President can take a nap after lunch but the Secretary of State can't?

DEAN RUSK: Well, the President has to delegate massively. Of course, everybody in town is trying to get to him all the time. I had access to Kennedy and to Johnson twenty-four hours a

day, but I tried to be very abstentious about that so as not to abuse that channel of communication.

SCHOENBAUM: And you didn't have to go through anyone?

DEAN RUSK: I didn't have to go through anybody.

SCHOENBAUM: What, a direct dial that they'd pick up on?

DEAN RUSK: I'd ask the White House operator, who by the way are the best operators in the world. They are absolutely wonderful in terms of being able to get hold, to run things down. But I would simply--I had a phone on my desk connected directly with the White House operator. And I would say I wanted to speak to the President and most often they would ring his secretary--not the appointments secretary, but his own personal secretary: Mrs. [Evelyn N.] Lincoln under Kennedy, for example. And they would put me through. I'm sure they buzzed the President and said, "Will you speak to the Secretary of State?" But sometimes they would just ring him directly when he was over in the mansion or someplace like that.

RICHARD RUSK: Did I ever tell you about the time I answered the phone at the house one time and I answered it, "Joe's Bass Haven. Joe Fisherman speaking," and it was Kennedy on the phone. His secretary was placing the call, but I could hear him snickering.

DEAN RUSK: My secretary in the State Department almost fainted away one day. Apparently a call came through and the voice said, "This is Mr. [Harry S] Truman. May I speak to the Secretary?" And she said, "May I ask what you want to talk to him about?" And the voice laughed and said, "I think he'll speak to me. This is Harry Truman." And she almost died.

RICHARD RUSK: Gus Peleuses told me that you had a capability, Pop, and you would do it on occasion, of taking a brief nap during a schedule.

DEAN RUSK: Yes.

RICHARD RUSK: Sometimes you would call Gus in and you'd point out to him, "Well I've got fifteen minutes of free time on my schedule. Wake me up in thirteen minutes." And he would turn around and leave, and by the time he hit the door you were asleep in his chair. He'd come back in thirteen minutes, wake you up, and you'd walk into a little adjacent powder room there and sprinkle some water on your eyes and by the time your visitor came in, you were ready to receive him.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, that's true. And I also had a little back room in back of the secretary's office where I could stretch out if I wanted to for a half hour or so. I did that more during my second four years than I did in the first four years. Well, in my seventh and eighth year there I was getting pretty tired. In my eighth year, I really was bone tired and I lived on aspirin and scotch and guts. It's clear to me that eight years is too much under modern conditions for anyone on that job. Four years would be about enough. We ought to play it like college football: put in

one team and wear it out and then put in another team. But I was just very tired in that eighth year.

RICHARD RUSK: Gus traded comments with Secret Service people who watched both Presidents. And he said that in their view it was not enough for you fellows to be super intelligent and very capable in your jobs. To really function, you all had to have the capability of taking brief moments of rest when you had to do it.

DEAN RUSK: Yes.

RICHARD RUSK: Both Kennedy could do it, and Johnson; and Gus said you had that capability.

DEAN RUSK: In my own case, I inherited that from my mother. My mother, bless her heart, could any time of the day sit down in a rocking chair and take a five- or ten-minute nap. And it was refreshing to do so. And I found it refreshing to do so because you're completely relaxed; your heart slows up; your body simply relaxes for a while and you wake up refreshed. But you see, on that job--And I don't want to sound self-pitying--But on that job, you go from 7:30--I don't mean at the office at 7:30. I usually got there around 8:30 or a quarter of nine. But you'd actually go from 7:30 in the morning until eleven o'clock at night. There were so many official functions to attend. In my case more than usual, because I felt that I ought to go to these embassy dinners. And sometimes we'd go to four embassy dinners in one week. Well, that takes you until eleven o'clock. In those embassy dinners, usually I was the senior guest present and nobody could leave until I did. And so Virginia [Foisie Rusk] and I had to decide when it was appropriate to leave. You see, they usually call the dinner for eight o'clock; and there are drinks; and you sit down to dinner at 8:30. Well 10:30 is sort of the normal time to start going home. If you stay until eleven, that means everybody is having a wonderful time. It's a complement to stay until eleven, you see. But Virginia and I had to make a judgment as to when we ought to leave so the other people could leave. They couldn't leave until we did, you see? The same was true of these various receptions. Usually one of my security men would help me spot an exit at these receptions. You'd go down a receiving line. The ambassador would have a receiving line there. And you'd go and you'd mill through the crowd and then you'd look for a back door or a side door that you could slip out of without offending the ambassador by leaving too soon. [William] Averell Harriman used to tell me how he did it. He had a plan by which he would spend only eight minutes at one of these receptions. He'd go about two-thirds of the way through the reception so that everybody would gather. Then as he was going down the receiving line he would always pause and talk to the ambassador, you see? And everybody in the room would wonder, "Gee, what are they talking about?" And then Averell Harriman would work his way through the crowd, speaking to a few people and smiling, and go out the back door and go home. I remember the Dutch embassy didn't have a back door. You were sort of trapped at the Dutch embassy. But it's something of a game.

SCHOENBAUM: The food, I imagine they really laid it on. And sitting down to eat this lavish spread every day at 8:30--

DEAN RUSK: Well, it's a special difficulty for the guest of honor because the hostess and the hostesses usually--you are usually sitting on the right of the hostess and she has gone to great care in putting up some wonderful food, you see? And she's very observant about what your response to that food would be. Well, if you ate as much as your hostesses wanted you to eat in the course of a week, you'd be stuffed. And so you had to work at it. My dear Virginia made a major contribution in Washington by cutting State dinners down from seven courses to four. And everybody appreciated that because seven courses take up a lot of time and a lot of food and you feel like hell when you get through. And she just cut it down to four. And I think it's slipping back up again now. But everybody appreciated what she did in that direction. One thing that you might be interested in is that in any capital, it is the foreign embassies who do the entertaining rather than the members of the local foreign office, or in our case the State Department. And that's just an international practice. Otherwise you'd have an Assistant Secretary of State spending most of his time entertaining at home, and he can't do that. What I did do, more or less in return for all these embassy dinners, was to give one big dinner each year--white tie and tails with decorations--for the diplomatic corps. And that was a very large, formal and festive affair. And the decorations that these people wore were extraordinary. They all came all decked out in the most flamboyant decorations you could imagine, and the Americans were all bare-chested as far as decorations were concerned. You see, under our Constitution, you can't receive such honors from foreign governments typically. But I remember [Guillermo] Sevilla-Sacasa of Nicaragua, who was ambassador in Washington many years and dean of the Corps for many years during my entire time there. He had decorations that would fill the entire left side of his coat. Because I think these Latin Americans sort of trade decorations with each other. (laughter) I remember once, at one of these white tie and decorations dinners, LBJ turned up in ordinary business clothes and wearing his Texas hat. And he just came in right in the middle of this formal dinner and spoke to the Diplomatic Corps for a few minutes. They were very impressed. But normally it's all severely formal.

RICHARD RUSK: Does anything of substance ever really take place at these social gatherings, these embassy parties? Does policy ever get made?

DEAN RUSK: I think that is somewhat exaggerated. Although typically, at a diplomatic dinner in the sixties, at the end of the dinner the ladies would go off in one direction and the men would go off in another direction and have brandy and cigars and go to the bathroom. Well, the men would usually talk politics when they were off by themselves. And many of them would have something to report back to their governments the next day. Whatever the ladies talked about, they apparently didn't talk politics. Well there was a problem when Madame [Vijaya Lakshmi [Mrs. Ranjit]] Pandit came to Washington as the Indian ambassador. She was the sister of Prime Minister [Jawaharlal] Nehru. And she expressed dissatisfaction with this business of her going out with the ladies while we men folk would go off somewhere and talk politics. So we passed a note around the Diplomatic Corps that Madame Pandit was to be considered an honorary stag so that she went out with the men. These days with women's lib you couldn't get away with calling anybody an honorary stag. I made one other ruling which helped out a little bit. Normally, the wife of an ambassador takes the same rank as the ambassador from a protocol point of view, so that at dinner the wife of the ambassador would be treated on the same level and seated accordingly. But there was no rule about the husbands of female ambassadors. And it was I who put through the rule that a husband of an ambassador takes the rank of the ambassador. Because

when poor old Henry [Robinson] Luce went to Rome when Clare Boothe [Brokaw] Luce was ambassador there, they didn't know what to do with him; didn't know where to seat him. And he was sort of a loose cannon. So that straightened that out. Protocol, however, is the function of the chief of state of the host government. They establish the rules of protocol for that particular capital. In the United States it's the President's protocol that applies. And in other capitals it's the protocol of the other capital. Now that helps to resolve, automatically, issues which could become highly controversial. For example, in the old days you had two ambassadors dueling in the streets of London over a question of precedent. Or, on one occasion they tore down one of the gates of London so that two ambassadors could come in abreast of each other rather than one behind the other. Well, that was all settled largely at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, but it's been clarified a lot over the years. The rank of ambassador turns upon the date on which he presented his credentials: It's just automatic. So you might have the entire diplomatic corps in the East Room of the White House at a Presidential reception and then when the President and the first lady come in and they have to line up to greet the President, they do this within sixty seconds because everybody knows where his place is, you see? They know which ambassador he's behind, which ambassador he's in front of. They form a line--

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DEAN RUSK: There would be special protocol problems at things like this big white tie dinner that I gave each year for the Diplomatic Corps because you had a good many people in the Diplomatic Corps whose countries did not recognize each other and wouldn't sit together. Or if you tried to do it alphabetically, you wouldn't expect Israel and Iraq to sit down together, you see? That kind of thing. And so that would have been a real problem if we'd used one big horseshoe kind of table. So what we did was to break it up into a good many round tables of, say, twelve each, something like that, with a State Department host at each table. And then you could sort out your protocol problems without having tensions with people who didn't want to sit together.

RICHARD RUSK: What you're saying in effect is that protocol is a useful standard.

DEAN RUSK: It's very important. It's very important, even though Presidents sometimes get to be rather impatient with protocol. And usually the Chief of Protocol, who works both for the President and for the Secretary of State and is located in the State Department--the Chief of Protocol and the Secretary of State have to be rather severe on Presidents occasionally on grounds of protocol. For example, when a state or official visitor comes to Washington, the President will meet with him one afternoon, the next morning, that kind of thing: give a dinner for him, go to a return dinner given by the guest. Well now, every embassy watches those things very closely. They watch them like hawks. Because if you try to do for one country's head man what [you] don't want to do for another country's head man, you're in trouble. And so you have to establish these rather rigid rules about how you do it. Otherwise you run the risk of offending

a good many people. But protocol is very useful, as I said earlier, in finding automatic answers to questions which otherwise could have been very controversial. Now I must say that I report with some gratitude that at the time of President Kennedy's funeral we had these distinguished foreigners from all over the world coming in. And to handle all those arrangements at that funeral on the basis of protocol would have been impossible. So we simply passed the word to our guests that protocol would not apply, and they all accepted it in good grace and good spirit and there were no problems of that sort.

RICHARD RUSK: That was something, that assembly of the world leaders walking down the street.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Well, this was during a period when there were people who were trying to assassinate President [Charles Andre Joseph Mario] de Gaulle. And we tried to move him from the White House to the church in an armored car. But he said, "No. I shall walk with Mrs. Kennedy." And here in that procession is this tall man walking along--Incidentally, right alongside of the tiny little emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. But here was this tall figure walking through the streets of Washington, an easy target for any kind of sharpshooter that might be trying to get him. We were very nervous about that and very happy when he safely returned home.

RICHARD RUSK: Where was either Angler Biddle Duke or you, the day that LBJ flew to the Vatican and landed in his helicopter in the Pope's garden and scattered the flowers all over the place, and proceeded to give the Pope a personal bust of himself [LBJ]?

DEAN RUSK: I wasn't with him on that trip. I wasn't with him on that trip. Well, LBJ was a little incorrigible on things like that. He visited the Taj Mahal in India and let loose with a Texas cowboy yell just to hear the echoes.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you on that trip?

DEAN RUSK: No, I wasn't with him on that trip. That was a trip in which we had a little bit of a problem because the Indians got their communications screwed up and Indian fighter planes came up to intercept LBJ's plane. And that was a little--

RICHARD RUSK: Was that publicly reported, Pop?

DEAN RUSK: I'm not sure that it was. We didn't make much of a point of it because it would have been embarrassing to the Indians.

RICHARD RUSK: Was it a close call?

DEAN RUSK: No, not really. Not really.

RICHARD RUSK: Passing the Presidential plane?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, it just moved past. But had it been at night when they couldn't have identified it, who knows?

SCHOENBAUM: He knew? He saw the planes?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, yeah. Sure.

SCHOENBAUM: Were you with him on that trip?

DEAN RUSK: No. By the way, the President and the Vice President do not travel on the same plane for obvious reasons. I remember the political joke that went around in 1956 when [Dwight David] Eisenhower ran for office the second term. People said, I'm going to support Eisenhower provided he guarantees to take Richard Nixon everywhere he goes on the same plane, (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: Who said that?

DEAN RUSK: That was one of the quips going around at that time.

SCHOENBAUM: It was wise advice too.

RICHARD RUSK: Well, it's a shame to go back to international law after what we just covered. Can you think of anything else along the lines of diplomacy, diplomatic functions?

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think it's important in diplomacy that you treat everybody with impeccable courtesy. Now Mr. [Andrei Andreevich] Gromyko and I had many very difficult and dangerous problems to talk over, But we always treated each other with personal courtesy. Because if we got into a slinging match with each other, that not only would have been irrelevant to the issues that we were dealing with, but also would make it that much more difficult to deal with those issues. Now, there are people who think that diplomats ought to tell the other fellow what's for: just give him hell, you know, that kind of thing. Well, you can, provided you do it with appropriate tact and with personal courtesy. For example, if I sent a note to Mr. Gromyko, it would begin, "The Secretary of State of the United States of America begs to acknowledge the receipt of communication from His Excellency, the Foreign Minister of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic under such and such a date." Then in very measured tones you tell him to go to hell. And then you end the note with, "Accept Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration." Now that formality is designed to eliminate the accidents of personality from interstate relations. It shouldn't make any difference that a diplomat has a quarrel with his wife that morning or wakes up with a toothache, because that's got nothing to do with the issues at hand. And so you are trained to use personal courtesy. It was for this reason that I was rather sad to see that at the time of the shooting down of the Korean Airline plane that we refused to let Mr. Gromyko come to the United Nations General Assembly in his regular Aeroflot flight. We told him he would have to land at an American military base. Well he wasn't going to do that. Now Gromyko has been to every meeting of the U.N. General Assembly since it was organized. And he has served in one capacity or another alongside of eight American Presidents and fourteen Secretaries of State. I thought that it was not right for us to throw at him that kind of personal discourtesy.

SCHOENBAUM: Did you express that view to the State Department?

DEAN RUSK: Yes I did. You just don't--

RICHARD RUSK: Did you get any acknowledgement or response on that?

DEAN RUSK: Umm. Well, I didn't talk to [George Pratt] Shultz about it. But the person that I did talk to about it agreed with me. But there was nothing he could do about it. No, there's a style about diplomacy which is important, although philistines can make fun of it from time to time.

SCHOENBAUM: Did it make any difference stylistically, the fact that you and Gromyko had dealt with one another when you were both lower-level diplomats and here you are fifteen years later, Secretary of State and Foreign Minister?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we first became acquainted when he was the permanent delegate to the United Nations from the Soviet Union during the Truman administration.

SCHOENBAUM: You were at U.N. Affairs?

DEAN RUSK: And I was Chief of the U.N. Affairs in the Department of State. And I had a number of sessions with him at that time on one or another matters. But we met fairly frequently when I was Secretary of State. He would always come to the U.N. General Assembly and I was always up there. And we would exchange--We'd have a least two meetings, usually at dinner, one in each place. Or if there was something special to talk about, we might meet specially. And I tried each year to invite him down to Washington to meet our President--President Kennedy, President Johnson. And when he came down to Washington he would meet with the President, and then I'd give him a dinner in Washington. Then I met him at different conferences: the Laos Conference and the Geneva Disarmament Conference and things like that. At the Tenth Anniversary of the Austrian State Treaty, he was there representing the Soviet Union. So we saw a good deal of each other. And we had to oppose each other on a good many things. But in my last meeting with him, when he knew that I would be leaving office, he drew me aside and spoke rather warmly about the long association that we had had and wished me luck and that kind of thing.

SCHOENBAUM: Do you remember his words?

DEAN RUSK: No, I wouldn't want to try that.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, before we move to something else, any anecdotal types of comments on, perhaps, statesmen noticeably deficient in the arts of statesmanship and diplomacy? Surely there are a few that stood out.

DEAN RUSK: Oh, Konrad Adenauer made a great contribution, not only to Germany but to the West. And he was getting along way up in years when I was Secretary of State. And I remember when I would call on him he would spend the first ten minutes reminiscing about the good old

days of John Foster Dulles, which is not the most tactful thing to do under the circumstances. I found that rather amusing, because when Foster Dulles was Secretary he used to talk to me about some of the difficulties he was having with Konrad Adenauer. Charles de Gaulle was rather a frigid--When I was in Paris I would always pay a courtesy call on him, and I would open with bringing him greetings from our President. He would reciprocate. Then he would say, "Mr. Secretary j'ecoute [I'm listening]." He almost never raised any subject for conversation. If I wanted to comment on something that called for any comment from him, he would make it very briefly and then shut up. Talking with him was very difficult. I think part of it was that Charles de Gaulle looked upon the rest of us as just new boys on the block. The other of the big four of World War II--[Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili "Joseph"] Stalin, [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt, and [Winston Leonard Spencer] Churchill--had all gone. And I think he just looked upon us as boys. But anyhow I never felt that I had any real rapport with him. I don't think you ought to use this because it's a little out of taste, but I did fluster him on one occasion, on the personal instruction of President Johnson. This was after de Gaulle had ordered all American troops out of France: ordered NATO out of France. The next time I called on him after that I referred to this and on the personal instruction of President Johnson I said, "Mr. President, does that include American cemeteries?" And he was really flustered with that: really flustered. And he said, "Oh, no. No, of course not." But had we moved the American cemeteries out of France the French people would have come up with a roar. But that was, I think, the dirtiest question I ever had to ask anybody.

SCHOENBAUM: And Johnson put you up to that?

DEAN RUSK: Johnson told me to do it. (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: That's LBJ! Well it was an effective point. It was an effective point.

DEAN RUSK: But, you see, Charles de Gaulle had proposed to President Eisenhower a triumvirate of United States, Britain, and France as a kind of directoire of the free world: that we would be the spokesmen for the free world. Well Eisenhower turned that down, not on the grounds as Charles de Gaulle thought that we weren't prepared to put France in that position, but we weren't prepared to put the United States in that position. After all, we had relations with Germany, and Italy, and Canada, and Japan, and Mexico, and Brazil, and things like that. And we weren't going to pretend to be part of the directoire of the free world. Well, de Gaulle put the same proposal to Kennedy, and for the same reasons Kennedy turned it down. De Gaulle never forgave us for that.

SCHOENBAUM: He put that specifically to Kennedy?

DEAN RUSK: Yes.

SCHOENBAUM: In so many words? Did he use the word directoire?

DEAN RUSK: Well, yeah. I forget now what the word was, but directoire will do.

RICHARD RUSK: How do you spell that in French?

DEAN RUSK: D-i-r-e-c-t-o-i-r-e. Some years after that we asked de Gaulle for cooperation on some matter, something relatively unimportant. He said, "Oh, no I told you how you could have the cooperation of France and you rejected it." He never forgave us for that. Because, you see, any patriotic Frenchman who had lived through the chapters of French history that de Gaulle had lived through--the shame of the beginnings of World War II, and so forth--could not help but have a passion for the restoration of the position of France. Now I always felt that this passion on de Gaulle's part was not personal vanity, but it was his mystical view of France: the France of Napoleon, of Joan of Arc, of Louis XIV, and so forth. Ironically, the methods he used to achieve his purpose frustrated that very purpose. Had he thrown himself into the leadership of the European movement and trans-Atlantic cooperation, he would have become the spokesman for Europe. No doubt about it. But because of the tactics he used, we reached a point where we did not really care what de Gaulle thought unless we were in a situation where he had a veto.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you ever tell him that?

DEAN RUSK: No. Oh no. No.

SCHOENBAUM: Then there's that incident where at Kennedy's funeral LBJ went to see him in your office.

DEAN RUSK: Well LBJ--I didn't have a chance to brief him on this because I wasn't with him at the critical moment. But LBJ met with Charles de Gaulle in my office there at the State Department during a reception for all these visiting dignitaries at the Kennedy funeral. And in that meeting LBJ invited de Gaulle to make a visit to the United States. Because after all, Kennedy had recently visited Paris. And de Gaulle said we should take that up through normal diplomatic channels. Well then, later that same day LBJ met with the governors of the states and unwisely he told the governors that de Gaulle had agreed to visit Washington. Well this infuriated de Gaulle because he had not agreed and he didn't like the use of his name with the governors by LBJ. And so, after that de Gaulle took the view that his visit to Kennedy's funeral was his return visit of Kennedy's visit to France. And so he did not visit the United States. But you know, those little things do make a difference. One has to be very careful. When I went to the Soviet Union to sign the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963, having a rather large U.S. delegation including some senators and so forth, the first two days we were there, the reaction of the people around the streets and so forth was that we didn't even exist. Well then apparently the signal went out and everywhere we went crowds would gather and they would cheer and applaud and so forth just overnight: snap of a finger, the whole atmosphere changed. And they have a remarkable capability of turning it on and turning it off. On one occasion there was a demonstration in Moscow outside of our embassy there, and one of the officers of our embassy went out and spoke to a security man and said, "How long is this demonstration going to last?" And the Soviet guy looked at his wristwatch and said, "Sixteen more minutes." (laughter) But you do have to be very much aware of local customs. If you go to a place like Indonesia, or Burma, or Ceylon, or one of those countries, and you try to conduct business on an unpropitious day, you might as well stay at home. It just won't work.

RICHARD RUSK: What do you mean by that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, under their omenology there are a good many days that are unpropitious and there are days that are propitious. And you have to have your own experts in the field to tell you which days are which so you know when to try to do business. And things like that do make a difference.

RICHARD RUSK: We've got some pictures around the house of you in the most exotic circumstances, Pop: Being toasted by African chieftains. That's a most diplomatic function.

DEAN RUSK: I remember going to one Arab dinner one evening and the entertainment at dinner was a belly dancer. And she came over and sat on my lap while they took pictures. Your mom doesn't remember that.

RICHARD RUSK: Was she there?

DEAN RUSK: I don't know whether she was there or not. Maybe the men had withdrawn in one direction and the belly dancer was there, and the ladies were off in another part of the embassy.

RICHARD RUSK: That sounds more probable. I'm sure she would have remembered the belly dancer.

SCHOENBAUM: That was before the Ayatollah, when he covered up all the women with veils.

DEAN RUSK: But there were two other gatherings of world dignitaries that I attended, the funeral of two Indian prime ministers: Mr. Nehru's funeral and Mr. [Lai Bahadur] Shastri's funeral. And dignitaries gathered from all over. Those were really quite something.

SCHOENBAUM: In a biography about Lord Louis [Francis Albert Victor Nicholas] Mountbatten he mentions that he went to India, I think, to Nehru's funeral. And the Indians were apparently snubbing the United States and snubbing you, not personally, but as a snub to the United States. Of course, Lord Louis was standing tall. And he says that he deferred very ostentatiously to you in front of the Indians because he wanted to--

DEAN RUSK: Well I was seated next to Mountbatten at that funeral. And then they had a public gathering at which, during the rush, I made few remarks. And I remember speaking there. But I didn't have the--well, it was such a large affair--It was very much like the Kennedy funeral in many respects--that I didn't take note of any sensitivity about whether or not I was being treated properly because it was really an Indian affair and we foreigners were just there.

RICHARD RUSK: I think Gus told me he was pretty concerned about that funeral. There was such a mass of humanity that he worried that you fellows might get fed into the flames.

DEAN RUSK: Well, and we could have been trampled. I mean there was just an enormous mass of people there.

RICHARD RUSK: Where do we go from here? We started out on the issues of diplomacy, human rights. I did raise the question of diplomatic immunity, the problems this creates in Washington. As a resident of Washington, I can remember how infuriated D.C. residents would get when these ambassadors' cars would be parked out in the second or third lane, and huge lanes of traffic backed up behind them.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, under diplomatic immunity you cannot arrest a diplomat and bring him before your own courts. You cannot require him to appear in court. But there have been problems around Washington, particularly with regard to traffic regulations--parking, things of that sort. The Russian embassy there on Sixteenth Street, for example, had an impossible problem of parking because Sixteenth Street was just below the Statler Hotel there and it was crowded, and the Russians had very little on-site parking, maybe for four or five cars. But they and many other embassies parked improperly, and they'd maybe pick up some speeding tickets. Well, we require our own diplomats abroad to comply with the traffic laws of the local country. And during my period there we finally passed a note around the Diplomatic Corps that if someone in the Diplomatic Corps habitually abused local laws with regard to parking and speeding and so forth, we would have no choice but to send that person home as *persona non grata*. And that helped a good deal. But they would park in front of fire plugs and block alleyways. And it's a real problem on both sides, because parking in Washington is very difficult and the diplomats do have to get around.

RICHARD RUSK: Of course, the whole concept of diplomatic immunity covers a great deal more than traffic violations and parking. Would you get ensnarled in any of these tangles as Secretary?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. Quite often. Because you see, typically it would be for the courts. It would be for the State Department to advise a court as to whether diplomatic immunity attached. And so we had to advise the courts quite frequently about diplomatic immunity. And we tried to live up to these international laws and expectations in order that we could protect our own people who were abroad in other countries. We asked the diplomatic corps in Washington to do something in this regard, to be more cooperative. And I remember the mayor of Manila, of the Philippines, somehow got angry about this when he heard about it. And so he started harassing members of the American Embassy out there for all sorts of things. You extend that kind of immunity to diplomats in this country in order to get that kind of immunity for your own diplomats abroad. You see, embassies are supposed to be, in effect, sacrosanct. And this is a generally recognized international law and practice. Even when countries declare war on each other they respect each other's embassies and they intern the diplomats and exchange them through some neutral at the earliest convenience.

RICHARD RUSK: Although a good many American embassies were put to the torch during your time as Secretary.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think there were maybe a couple of instances where that happened. The Egyptians, for example, invaded our embassy in Yemen or someplace--I don't know where it was--and acted very improperly on that. Well, one example that I have used in my class: During my tour in Washington a considerable fire broke out on the third story of the Russian Embassy

there on Sixteenth Street. Now this embassy was right next door to the Washington Post building. And there was a problem about keeping this fire in the Russian Embassy from burning other people down. But the Russians finally managed to get it under control themselves. But at the end of the day, had it blazed further, we would have had the right to go in there with fire trucks solely for the purpose of putting out that fire as a threat to the public safety. But, incidentally, on that, when that fire occurred Ambassador [Anatoly F.] Dobrynin came in with a protest note from his government about hooligans breaking into the Soviet Embassy and setting it on fire. Well I looked at this and looked at him and said, "Now Mr. Ambassador, you and I both know that we would know if any hooligans broke into your embassy." You see, we kept it under very close surveillance and we knew everybody that went in and out of the Soviet Embassy. And he looked at me a moment and gave me a tight little smile, and that was the end of that. But the third floor was the floor in which their code room was located. So this was an internal fire, no doubt.

SCHOENBAUM: How did you know it was the floor in which their code room was located?  
(laughter)

DEAN RUSK: That, my dear Tom, is none of your business! (laughter) I used to, when I was driving around Washington, there were times when I would chuckle about all the little people in all the embassies around town just splitting a gut to try to find out what our intention was on a particular matter, when we didn't have any intentions. We had not made up our minds, (laughter) And so they were trying to find out something that did not exist in the real world. Other countries tend to send us their ablest diplomats as ambassadors. Washington, of course, is a very important post for a fellow. Now, a number of ambassadors in Washington double in brass: as Ambassador to the United States and as their permanent delegate to the United Nations. You see, if you're way off in Africa or Asia somewhere and you look at a small-scale map of the world, New York and Washington look like they are very close together. In fact, it's quite a burden on these ambassadors to shuttle back and forth. After all, it's two hundred miles. And so in general I rather encouraged the ambassadors of these smallest countries to spend more of their time at the United Nations than in Washington if they had an assistant of some sort in Washington who could take care of any business that might come up. This is one of the important roles played by the United Nations that most people are not aware of. A lot of these small countries only have anywhere from--

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