

**Dean Rusk Oral History Interview – JFK#4, 3/13/1970**  
**Administrative Information**

**Creator:** Dean Rusk

**Interviewer:** Dennis J. O'Brien

**Date of Interview:** March 13, 1970

**Place of Interview:** Washington D.C.

**Length:** 60 pages

**Biographical Note**

Dean Rusk (1909-1994) was the Secretary of State from 1961 to 1969. This interview focuses on the internal operations of the State Department and the United States' relations with the Soviet Union and Europe, in particular over issues such as the Berlin Wall, the Common Market, and multilateral force, among other topics.

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Dean Rusk, recorded interview by Dennis J. O'Brien, March 13, 1970 (page number),  
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Dean Rusk– JFK #4  
Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
142	Duties of the Secretary of State
143	Importance of delegating authority
144	Relationship between the President and the Secretary of State
146	Creation of task forces
147	John F. Kennedy's [JFK] advisors
149	Friction between departments
150	1960 <i>Foreign Affairs</i> article on the presidency
151	Impact of George Marshall and Dean Acheson
152	JFK's criticisms of the Foreign Service and the State Department
154	Records of business with JFK
155	Role of Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries
157	Economic policies towards Europe
159	Relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union
162	Concept of flexible response
164	Meeting between JFK and Khrushchev in Vienna
167	JFK's meeting with General de Gaulle
169	Nuclear sharing
171	Link between Berlin and nuclear disarmament
172	Acheson's view on Berlin
173	Building of the Berlin Wall
174	JFK's response to the issues in Berlin
175	Germany's response to the Berlin Wall
176	Negotiations with the Germans
178	Difficulties with de Gaulle
180	Multilateral force
181	McGeorge Bundy's trip to Europe
182	Gerard Smith-John Lee mission
185	Cancellation of the Skybolt missile system
186	Backlash to the cancellation from Great Britain
187	The Nassau meeting
189	British entry into the Common Market
190	Letting the Trade Expansion Act expire
192	Trying to incorporate industries into the Trade Expansion Act
193	Rejection of Great Britain from the Common Market
195	Shift of foreign policy focus from Europe
196	Staffing the State Department
198	Relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom
200	ANZUS Treaty

Oral History Interview

with

DEAN RUSK

March 13, 1970  
Washington, D.C.

By Dennis J. O'Brien

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'BRIEN: I wonder if we could start this morning with a question on, first of all, your reflections on your role as Secretary of State in relation to the President, the Department, and the Cabinet. I know that one of the things that brought you, in a sense, in contact with President Kennedy was the writing of the article in 1960 in *Foreign Affairs* on the President and foreign relations.

RUSK: Right. Well, the historian might want to look up a letter which I wrote while I was President of the Rockefeller Foundation to Mr. John Foster Dulles at the conclusion of his first hundred days in office. In that letter, which runs for several pages, I tried to analyze the job of the Secretary of State, and I used the metaphor of a four engine plane. I pointed out that the Secretary of States files on flies on four motors: one, his relations with the President; second, his relations with the Department; third, his relations with Congress; and fourth, his relations with the press and the public. Now, the most important one of these, of course, is his relations with the President. Under our constitutional system, a Cabinet officer is the creature of the President. He must be at all times under the direction and supervision of the President. A Cabinet

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[-142-]

officer has no independent political status. Even though he has many statutory duties laid upon him by acts of Congress, it is assumed in our system of government that a President is entitled to have Cabinet officers who conform to his policy.

Now, that means that a Secretary must at all times be aware of the policy which the President expects him to follow. It does not mean that a President can be his own Secretary of State. The mass of business is such that not even a Secretary of State can be his own Secretary of State. On every working day throughout the year a thousand cables go out of the Department of State. Of those, the Secretary might see six or eight before they go out; the President may see one or two. But the other hundreds of telegrams have to go out on the basis of delegated authority. And a Secretary of State must delegate to, oh, fifty or a hundred officers in the Department of State the responsibility for signing his own name to cables that go out of the Department of State if business is to be conducted. That means that there are certain broad guidelines of policy which are more or less taken for granted. For example, *pacta sunt servanda* (agreements must be observed) is a settled policy of the United States. A junior officer in the Department of State doesn't have to ask the Secretary to know that we expect to comply with our treaties (and we have some forty-five hundred treaties and agreements with other governments.)

There are standing operating procedures by which we support the principle of the rights of legation in maintaining diplomatic missions abroad. We extend those rights to diplomatic missions in the United States; we expect those same rights to be extended to us abroad. That explains a good many of those telegrams. We have a general live and let live policy; we don't go around looking for opportunities to intrude ourselves into other people's disputes. We're very cautious about getting involved in quarrels in other parts of the world. But those basic guidelines of policy are national in character. They do not depend upon whether you have a Democratic or Republican President; they are bipartisan in character, or nonpartisan in character, so that there is much more delegation than most people realize.

[-143-]

Today, junior officers of the Department of State have to make decisions which before World War II would have gone to the Secretary of State himself. This is necessary because otherwise the business simply could not be transacted. There are some hundred and thirty governments in the world, about a hundred and twenty-five of which we recognize and have relations with. This involves an enormous amount of the ordinary give and take of day-to-day diplomatic intercourse.

No, the President can only in the most general sense supervise that mass of traffic. He cannot be the action officer except in moments of high crisis. He simply doesn't have the time for it, and in terms of his own personal staff, he's not equipped for it. And so he must delegate that responsibility to the Secretary of State who in turn must delegate it to other officers in the Department of State.

One thing which is especially burdensome in the American political system is the awkward constitutional arrangements we have for the conduct of our foreign relations. A

Secretary of State will spend at least half of his time on domestic arrangements coming to policy conclusions before he deals with the foreigner at all. He has to be sure that other departments of the government that are involved in the issue are on board; he has to be sure that through congressional consultation that the Congress is going to align with the action that is proposed to be taken; he has to give attention to the state of public opinion with respect to the issues involved. And so just to make our constitutional system work, it requires an enormous amount of time on the part of a Secretary of State.

One of the important features of our system is the method by which the Secretary of State keeps the President informed about what is going on. Presidents don't like to read in the newspapers for the first time something which they feel they ought to have been informed about ahead of time. During my period we used to send over to the White House every day a sheet of paper summarizing the actions taken or contemplated to be taken by the Department of State in the course of the day, and that became a part of the President's evening reading. The historian might want to look through some of those daily reports because they give a very good overview as to what is going on in the conduct of our foreign relations.

[-144-]

When an issue arises which does or may involve the use of U.S. forces, the President almost inevitably becomes the action officer on that particular issue because only the President can dispose of U.S. forces, so that when you get a question like the shipment of C-130 aircraft to the Congo or the landing of Marines in the Dominican Republic or, of course, Vietnam or an issue like the Middle East, the President inevitably becomes personally drawn into those issues in great detail. And it's up to the Secretary to provide the President with full information and recommendations, hopefully recommendations that are based upon the interdepartmental consideration of those who have an interest in the issue at stake.

It requires an awful lot of give and take between the President and the Secretary of State to keep this situation running smoothly. The President will get information from many quarters, not just the Secretary of State. He'll get it from congressional leaders; he'll get it from personal friends; he'll get it in social conversations. He has an enormous range of sources of information about issues that might be worth his attention. And it's up to the Secretary of State to see that the President is fully informed on foreign policy in considerable detail. This is done by memorandum; this is done by daily briefings of the President through written memoranda; it's done by the intelligence briefings that the President gets from the CIA and other agencies of government; it is done by telephone call; it is done in a variety of ways. But the ideal situation is that the thousand telegrams that go out of the Department of State always represent what the President himself would have done had the President been doing it personally.

Now, when I was Secretary of State, during the eight years, two million one hundred thousand cables went out of the Department of State signed "Rusk." I had seen only a fraction of those before they went out, and the President had seen even fewer. But I can remember only four or five of those cables which had to be drawn back and turned around because they'd made some mistake in policy. So whatever the system is by which the



President is kept informed, it works pretty well because in general those telegrams do, in fact, represent United States policy.

[-145-]

Presidents will vary individually as to the way in which they conduct their office. President Truman delegated enormously to General Marshall and to Secretary Acheson. President Kennedy, with a great curiosity about everything that was going on, a voracious reader, used to get into a great many things in detail. Well, as soon as the President gets into a question, that makes it impossible for the Secretary of State to delegate that question to somebody down the line in the Department of State because the Secretary of State must be involved with every issue in which the President is personally interested. And so there were times when the process of delegation did not work too well under President Kennedy because he himself got into a great many details through his own energy and his own desire to be directly involved in what was going on.

In general, I think the system works pretty well. It is cumbersome; it is time-consuming; it involves a great deal of effort on the part of those who make up our constitutional system to make it work. But on the whole, we've been rather successful in making it work.

O'BRIEN: Where did the idea of the creation of task forces of people in the Department as well as other agencies of government originate in the Kennedy Administration?

RUSK: I think that that really was more of a name than an innovation. It's normal for those who are working on the same subject in the different departments to be drawn together in consultation with each other before recommendations are made to the President. Now, it was convenient to call those groups task forces. Sometimes you would set up a task force that would spend practically full time dealing with a particular subject: would have a task force on the Congo; you'd have a task force on Vietnam; you'd have a task force on trade matters; you'd have various task forces. But that was simply a reflection of the inevitable grouping of people in government who carry responsibility for particular subjects.

[-146-]

O'BRIEN: Were there ever any instances in which, let's say, the President or the advisors around the President (which has since become known, at least to some of the journalists, as the little State Department), are there any times in which there was friction between the Department, your office, and this group of advisors around the President -- and the President himself, as far as that goes?

RUSK: There has to be some staff around the President immediately in the White House to handle the enormous flow of business that comes in to the President

from all over government. Particularly in the field of foreign affairs, the Department of State and the Department of Defense have a great deal of business for the President to consider. Now, the Secretary of State can't spend all of his time running back and forth to the White House to take up all these matters with the President; he uses the form of memoranda. Somebody has to be there in the White House to handle those papers, and so the first function of the personal Assistant for National Security Affairs is to handle the flow of business.

Now, they had some extraordinarily competent men in that staff over there, and I always found that it was helpful to have those competent men involved in the interdepartmental discussions of issues that were being prepared for the President's consideration. Where trouble would arise would be where the Assistant for National Security Affairs would try to interpose himself between the President and the Cabinet officer. That happened in the rarest occasions. I was very fortunate in having McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow in that job over there because they fully respected the position of the Cabinet officer.

You see, it's the Cabinet officer who shares the public responsibility with the President for the conduct of policy. It's the Cabinet officer who testifies before the Congress -- these personal assistants don't do any of that -- it's the Cabinet officer that has to meet the press and make speeches around the country to help the President carry the public burden of policy. And I always took the view that when the President himself personally was not speaking, the Secretary of State was speaking for the President, that the Secretary of State was second only to the President in speaking for the

[-147-]

government in foreign policy matters. And McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow respected that, and we had a minimum of friction based upon jurisdiction lines. As a matter of fact, we had a great deal of help from them and their staff because they were extremely useful, for example, in coordinating points of view with other agencies and departments of government.

There was one other thing that might be mentioned. The President has to make a great many statements -- these are not only formal statements issued by the White House as policy statements, but such things as toasts for visiting dignitaries and all sorts of impromptu speeches of one sort or another. The State Department has never been very good in furnishing finished products for the President in terms of draft statements. The State Department itself is not very articulate, has not polished up its own role in that regard, so that there had to be drafters in the vicinity of the President who could take policy positions and transform them into policy statements. That theoretically, might best be done in the Department of State, but the Department of State just wasn't good enough in interpreting the President's own wishes and to frame statements in the President's own style. Of course, the Department of State was not available to the President when the President was working on a draft himself, as he always did, so that the drafting of speeches, the drafting of statements, is another function of that staff around the President in the White House that was a very important function.

O'BRIEN: Did you feel that in most -- well, we'll get into a few things on European policy today, but do you feel in most instances that the people who are doing

the final drafting for the President were fairly consistent with the policies that were, in a sense...

RUSK: Yes, we would always have a chance to review their drafts in the Department of State so that if there were any problems that arose from a policy point of view we had a chance to raise questions and get corrections made. In general, that process worked out rather smoothly.

[-148-]

O'BRIEN: Just one final question on this overall relationship: With the exception of the major departments involved in foreign relations -- first of all, State; secondly, Defense; and to a certain degree, Treasury -- did any of the other Cabinet members ever become too involved in any area of American foreign relations that you can recall? Were there any frictions that developed between the departments?

RUSK: Well, every Cabinet officer is involved in our foreign relations in one way or another just in the execution of his own duties in his own Department. At one time we had forty-four different agencies of the American government represented in our embassy in London. You have everything ranging from the Veterans' Administration to the Federal Aviation Administration to the FBI to -- in other words, practically every agency finds that its own responsibilities leads it across our frontiers. The Department of State must accept the responsibility that other departments of government have for their own jobs and try to facilitate the carrying out of the jobs of the other departments by the action taken by the Department of State, so that the Secretary of Commerce, Secretary of Labor, Secretary of Interior, and others have a very important role to play in the conduct of our foreign relations.

Sometimes we'd get into serious issues between departments based not upon just interdepartmental friction but based upon real issues. For example, the attitude of the Department of the Interior on oil imports was a very important matter in which the countervailing considerations were real -- they were not fictitious -- and so the Department of State had to debate the Department of the Interior on oil imports periodically every time that a new oil import quota was announced. Now that meant that the Secretary of the Interior had a responsibility for oil policy which directly affected the conduct of our foreign relations with such countries as Canada and Venezuela, for example, and the countries of the Middle East. Well, those are real issues that simply have to be hammered out and from which evolves a national policy.

[-150-]

It has been my experience that where the State Department clearly knows what it wants, what foreign policy requires, there is a tendency around government to give great deference to the Department of State on those issues. It's where the Department of State is not settled in its own mind, where it does not have a specific policy to come up with, where others will move in and fill up the vacuum, you see.

O'BRIEN: I see. Can you think of any major instances in which that was the case in the three years of the Kennedy Administration, in which other departments did move in in a vacuum situation?

RUSK: No. I think we didn't let many vacuums arise during that period. There were times when there were real issues, for example, on the matter of export controls to communist countries. We had some lively debates among Defense, Commerce, and the Department of State on policy toward issuing licenses for shipments of things like computers or nuclear reactors to communist countries. This was a matter of administering the law as written by the Congress and interpreting the law as written by Congress and translating it into specific actions in individual cases. So there's always a lively conversation going on among agencies and departments of government as to what ought to be done. But the essential point I'm making is that almost every agency of government is necessarily involved in the conduct of our foreign relations, and it's up to the Department of State to coordinate all that activity so that we have a consistent foreign policy over a period of time.

O'BRIEN: Well, in 1961, after writing your article on the President and foreign relations, you had a very definite view of the role of Secretary of State. Now as, in a sense, a student of history and a student of international relations, how did you arrive at that? By, in a sense, your study of history as well as your experience?

[-150-]

RUSK: Well, that article on the Presidency that appeared in *Foreign Affairs* in 1960 was supposed to be one of three articles; these were the Elihu Root lectures done at the Council on Foreign Relations. The first one was on the Presidency, and that was published. The second was to be on the Secretary of State, and the third was to be on the Congress. I delivered those lectures orally to the Council on Foreign Relations, but fortunately I didn't publish them before I became Secretary of State. I had no idea that I was going to be Secretary of State, but things got in the way and I just deferred the publications. But I had studied the problem as a private citizen. I'd had considerable experience with dealing with Secretaries of State and with Presidents while I was an Assistant Secretary of State during the Truman Administration, and was just giving some of my own reflections as to the constitutional situation and the operating problems that arose in the conduct of our foreign relations at the very top of the government.

O'BRIEN: In terms of examples, did General Marshall or Secretary Acheson leave much of an impact on you in the way they handled the office?

RUSK: Secretary Marshall made a great impact on me. His view of his job was one that fitted my own view most closely. Secretary Marshall was not only a great

soldier: He was a great civilian. He had enormous respect for the office of the President. He knew that it was the President who was responsible in the Executive branch of the government for the Executive branch's attitudes on foreign policy. He was a great teacher. He taught his own colleagues how to conduct their own work. He was always giving us little homilies about what he expected of us. He would, for example, say, "Gentlemen, I don't want you to sit around waiting for me to tell you what to do. I want you to take the responsibility for the initiative and always be in a position of telling me what I ought to be doing." He took the view that every policy officer at whatever level had the responsibility for maintaining the initiative on his own job.

[-151-]

Secretary Marshall delegated his responsibility to those in whom he had confidence. He was a great fellow for completed staff work. He trained us to finish a job in such a way that his signature on the piece of paper would be all that would be required of him to start things moving in the way which was recommended. He didn't like unfinished business put before him. He used to say, "Never bring me a question unless you put alongside of it your proposed answer." He was continually trying to upgrade his junior associates to take more and more responsibility in the conduct of our foreign relations.

Now, he had the opportunity to do that because President Truman delegated an enormous amount of responsibility to Secretary Marshall. President Truman looked upon Secretary Marshall. President Truman looked upon Secretary Marshall as the greatest American of our day and left him alone to handle foreign affairs in most instances, although in some particular cases such as Korea and the Israeli problem President Truman handled it personally.

O'BRIEN: There's a question that has been raised in some of the writing that's been done about the Kennedy Administration about the President's view of the Foreign Service and the President's view of the Department. Did he ever at any time express any of these criticisms that have been attributed to him to you?

RUSK: Every President starts out being somewhat at arm's length with the Foreign Service. The Foreign Service is not his own service in the sense that he appoints it; it's a professional service that serves one master after another. The Department of State is the department of bad news. The Department of State is dealing with that part of the public business over which the United States does not have complete control. The President, the Congress, and the Supreme Court among them can pretty well decide what we do with our own domestic affairs here at home. But when you're dealing with a hundred and thirty other governments abroad, no one of which is a satellite of the United States, you're not dealing with the power to command, you're working in the world of persuasion; so that things don't always happen in the foreign field as we would like to see it happen. There are always frustrations, there are always crisis in some part of the world, there are always crisis in some part of the world, there are always outbreaks of violence; so that, in general, the Department of State is dealing with the most frustrating aspect of our

[-152-]

public life. That's in the very nature of the business. And so Presidents become impatient with the Department of State because things don't happen the way the President would like to see them happen, and it's always difficult for the Foreign Service to earn the confidence of a new President. It takes a little time. But this happens with each new President as he comes into the office.

The Foreign Service itself has not had too much experience in changing party administrations. There was a long period when there was a Democratic President under the FDR period. When the Republicans were first elected to the White House after so many years, when President Eisenhower came in, the Foreign Service had not braced itself for a change in party administrations. And so I think it's fair to say that the Foreign Service itself was a little quizzical about the new leadership and a little standoffish, and that contributed to strained relations on both sides.

Now, President Kennedy was very impatient with the deliberate process of the Department of State. There tends to be continuity in the attitudes of the Department of State, and a new President coming in wanting to start things fresh sometimes gets annoyed with the sense of continuity that comes out of the Department of State. The impact of precedent is very important for the Department of State, and sometimes Presidents don't like to be bound by what seems to be irrelevant precedent. But before President Kennedy was assassinated, he got to know the Foreign Service very well; he knew many of the officers in the Foreign Service through direct experience with them. He would call them over to see him, and he would talk with them when they went out as ambassadors, and he would invite them into meetings to consider policy questions and came to have a great regard for the Foreign Service.

O'BRIEN: Well, we've talked a great deal in the interviews as well as once before at lunch about this relationship between the Secretary of State and the President and the privacy in it. In the way of just a question for a researcher or a historian: What in your view would be the best way, or is there a way, I guess would be the better question, of arriving at some understanding of what, in a sense, went on between you? Are there records? Are there notes?

[-153-]

RUSK: The record is only partial. Most Presidents will keep fairly complete records of all the papers that are brought in by the Secretary of State or sent over by the Secretary of State. But a great deal of business is transacted orally, by personal conversation or on the telephone. My own practice was not to make memos of conversation with the President for distribution around the Department. I would translate that conversation into instructions as far as policy questions are concerned and be sure that the cables reflected the conversation with the President, but I felt the President was entitled to have conversations with the Secretary of State which were private and which were not made

generally known throughout the Department of State with the possibility of leaks to the press, leaks to Congress. So I was very careful about not making a record against the President during my administration. So there will be very few notes in the Department of State's records of my own conversations with President Kennedy and President Johnson.

O'BRIEN: Did the President on his end keep any record of these conversations that you know of?

RUSK: Yes, he would.... Well, I don't know what President Kennedy did, as a matter of fact. President Johnson kept rather full notes of the conversations he had, but I'm not sure what President Kennedy's practice was. Whether President Kennedy would dictate little memos of conversation after the Secretary of State left, I just don't happen to know.

O'BRIEN: Yes. Of course, there is a rather full record of your conversations as well as the President's conversations with foreign leaders and...

RUSK: Oh, yes. Those are all made part of the official record, and memos of conversation with distinguished visitors are in the file.

[-154-]

O'BRIEN: In terms of your own relations in your own office and within the State Department, during the Kennedy years who were your closest confidants, as well as office personnel, immediate people around you who....

RUSK: I tried to follow General Marshall's practice in making the Under Secretary a genuine alter ego of the Secretary. Secretary Marshall and Bob Lovett run the Department for him, so that most of the morning meetings were chaired by the Under Secretary, Robert Lovett, and most of the business of the Department went out with the Under Secretary's approval without going to the Secretary. Secretary Marshall took the view that the Secretary of State should do only those things which only the Secretary himself can do, that if anybody else can do it that that somebody else ought to go ahead and do it and not bother the Secretary of State, so that the first answer to your question is that I always tried to keep in intimate terms with the Under Secretary. We would meet several times a day, and frequently we would have a daily roundup at the end of the day on what was going on. And we had intercommunication facilities between us so that we could be on the telephone with each other very easily. I had a special line in my office to the Under Secretary, and he always had an open door when he wanted to come in to see me.

Beyond that, I would say that the Assistant Secretaries were the key people that I tried to keep in touch with. I spent an enormous amount of time with Assistant Secretaries because they are the Presidential appointees who are at the heart of this system of managing the business of the Department. The Assistant Secretary has to practice the art of government in that he must anticipate when issues ought to be raised before the Secretary or the President.

He is the one who is at the center of the full flow of information about his own particular area. He has access to the desk officers and the office directors involved in his area. He is the one who ought to be able to anticipate problems that need early intervention. To a certain extent, the Secretary is a prisoner of the Assistant Secretaries in determining when issues ought to be taken up and handled. Now, sometimes doing nothing is the right answer. But I always tried to work toward the goal that when we do nothing it would be on purpose; it would be as the result of a deliberate

[-155-]

decision and not come about through inattention or inadvertence or accident or neglect. I think we, on the whole, did pretty well in that respect.

O'BRIEN: Does the office of Executive Secretary in the Department become a more important office in these years because of the communications route from that office to the White House staff?

RUSK: Yes. The Executive Secretary of the Department of State is the linchpin of the movement of business. He is the one who has to see to it that position papers are properly coordinated; he has to check on the more important outgoing telegrams to be sure that everybody who's supposed to have a say has had a say. He keeps the Secretary informed as to the flow of business. He too has constant access to the Secretary; the door is always open to him. The executive secretariat in the Department of State is the hub in the transaction of business with other governments.

O'BRIEN: Well, during the Kennedy years then, the Under Secretary, the Assistant Secretaries, and the Executive Secretary had almost immediate access to you. Were there any other people in the way of personal advisers in the Department that were particularly influential and...

RUSK: I tried to concentrate responsibility in the Assistant Secretaries and to delegate as much responsibility as possible to them, so I did not bring in a staff of independent advisers to cut across or to go around the Assistant Secretaries. I tried to keep the upper echelons of the Department as simple as possible in order that business can be transacted. I was concerned about the layering in the Department of State, the imposition of one layer upon another. I tried to work out a system by which the chain of command ran from the country director to the Assistant Secretary to the Secretary -- three echelons -- and I tried to eliminate a lot of the intervening office directors and the deputy assistant secretaries and the deputy office directors and all those, because they were, among other things, they involved a waste of time. And I tried to simplify the structure of the Department so

[-156-]



that three levels were, in effect, in control of policy.

O'BRIEN: Well, passing on to the period before the actual assumption of office and talking a little bit about the task forces which performed in both domestic and foreign policy, I've listed a number of things here that may or may not have been things which you, at that point, had some thought on. Do you recall whether you made any suggestions to these task forces?

RUSK: I was not a part of the Kennedy campaign committee, campaign operation, nor did I get involved in the work that was done after the election and before he took office. You see, I had not expected to be Secretary of State so that I did not work on any of those task forces that were organized before President Kennedy took office. Now when I was named as Secretary of State, I immediately looked at those task force reports and reviewed them and analyzed them and tried to bring myself up to date with them, and I found many of those reports extremely helpful. But I was not a part of that process simply because there was no anticipation that I was going to be Secretary of State.

O'BRIEN: Well, in the recommendations that were made on economic policy towards Europe, for example, or there was one, as I understand, on the Foreign Service et al, did these have any particular effect on the directions of American foreign policy or internal policy of the Department?

RUSK: Well, on economic policy, yes, they did, because George Ball had worked on those task forces and he became the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs at the very beginning of the Kennedy Administration, so that the work that he did was translated into his own official activity as Under Secretary for Economic Affairs. I tended to delegate to George Ball very heavily in the economic field. I'm not myself an economist and did not feel at home in many questions that arose in the economic field, and so I relied very heavily on George Ball. He was a very competent officer and was very, very familiar with economic problems and handled the job superbly.

[-157-]

O'BRIEN: Well, in passing on now to problems concerning European policy, I wonder if we could talk a little about some of your previous background in European affairs. You once described yourself as basically a Europeanist in your earlier experiences and training. I would guess this was before you became Assistant Secretary for Far East.

RUSK: Well, I'd concentrated pretty heavily on European matters and Far Eastern problems in my own educational experience. Of course, when I went to Oxford as a Rhodes scholar and studied politics, philosophy, and economics, much of the work that was done at Oxford was on European issues. And I studied in Germany in between my terms at Oxford and became thoroughly enmeshed in European

issues. Then during the thirties when Europe was the focus of attention, I followed matters in Europe very closely. One could see the war was coming and that nothing was being done to prevent that war from breaking out. I was in Germany at the time that Hitler [Adolf Hitler] came to power and had a full dose of national socialism, so that I had a general familiarity with European issues. I'd been an advocate of a league of nations and America's joining the League of Nations. I was among those who were disappointed that America did not eventually join the League of Nations. I would say that, in general, my familiarity with European and Far Eastern questions were the dominant parts of my own background and training.

When I was president of the Rockefeller Foundation, I used to visit Europe frequently. We had a good deal of business in Europe as a foundation, so that I kept in touch with European matters. I also, during the 1950's, attended what is called the Bilderberg Group. That's a group organized by the Prince of the Netherlands, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. Some hundred Europeans and Americans, some officials, many of them in private life, would meet about every nine months to talk about transatlantic problems. And I attended that Bilderberg Group regularly during the 1950's before I became Secretary of State and got to know a great many of those who took on high positions in the European governments during the period when I was Secretary.

[-158-]

O'BRIEN: May I ask who some of those people were that you made contacts with, well, either before or while you were in the Department and during the Rockefeller Foundation that might have come into your career as Secretary of State?

RUSK: Well, Paul-Henri Spaak, for example, was a very familiar figure to me when I became Secretary of State. Denis Healey of Great Britain, [Edward R.G. Heath] of Great Britain -- there were a number of them. Usually most of the NATO countries were represented in that Bilderberg Group, so I got to know quite a few of the personalities. Most of the leaders of Germany, for example, attended the Bilderberg group at one time or another.

O'BRIEN: Well, when you were designated as incoming Secretary of State and began taking up the job of preparing yourself in the Department, who briefed you on European matters?

RUSK: My principal briefings came from the intelligence officer, Hugh Cumming, and also Secretary Herter. Secretary Herter spent a good deal of time with me on European questions, so that in the period before I became Secretary of State it was chiefly Herter and the flow of cable and telegrams and the intelligence information that was my principal source of briefing.

O'BRIEN: Well, passing into the relationship of the United States and the Soviet Union at the time you assume office, what are, in a sense, the dynamics of Russian-U.S.

relations at this point? The United States is going through reappraisal of defense policy as well as policy towards Europe. Is the Soviet Union doing this at the same time, from your insights?

[-159-]

RUSK: We've never had very good information on just what goes on inside the Soviet government; they kept a very closed mouth on such activities. We've had in more recent years a little more information as to what kinds of things they do inside their own government. [REDACTED] for example, Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson have given us some greater insight into what happens inside the Soviet government.

But the principal thing that we developed during the Kennedy period was a fresh look at our relations with the Soviet Union. We had the general point of view that it's just too late in history to pursue a policy of total hostility toward anybody and that all these megatons lying around in the hands of frail human beings require you to try to find points of agreement, on small points as well as large points, and so from the very beginning under President Kennedy we kept looking for points where we might reach agreement with the Soviet Union. The principal subject of agreement when President Kennedy was alive was the partial test ban treaty. But he started the civil air negotiations, and he started the consular negotiations and other types of agreements.

I never pretended to know how to deal with the Soviet Union. The cemeteries are filled with people who come to government thinking that they know how to deal with the Soviet Union. I don't believe there are many genuine experts on that subject. The Soviets are an enigma and probably will remain so. They have different purposes than we have; they have an inborn sense of secrecy, and they are very suspicious of the outside world; they have stubbornness and pride and other attributes that make them very difficult to live with. But we tried to assess our relations with the Soviet Union in terms of what might be done to reduce the points of friction with them.

Now, the most important point of friction we had with them was the German question, and that did not yield to quick solution. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But we tried to inform ourselves in as much detail as possible about Soviet policy and their interests and how things looked from their point of view. We relied heavily upon people like Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson and Charles Bohlen and others to advise us on these matters.

[-160-]

President Kennedy took a keen personal interest in our relations with the Soviet Union. He wanted somehow to find a basis for coexistence with Chairman Khrushchev and was always concerned about reducing the tension between the two because the two nuclear powers were in a position to destroy each other. President Kennedy never brooded about whether he would be assassinated or not, but he did brood about the question as to whether it

would be his fate to push the nuclear button and engage in nuclear war. That was on his mind all the time. And he was doing everything that he could to reduce the possibility of a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union.

O'BRIEN: Is there a general agreement between the leading figures in the United States government on the Soviet Union? You mentioned Ambassador Thompson as well as Ambassador Bohlen. How about people like Kohler [Foy D. Kohler] and Kennan [George F. Kennan]? Is there essential agreement as to what policy should be?

RUSK: Agreement involved.... There were some shades of difference at times about general attitudes. You see, the cold war had made a deep imprint upon American thinking. This was true in the Congress as well as in the Executive branch of the government. The Eisenhower Administration had closed its period with high tension with the Soviet Union -- the U-2 affair and the collapse of the summit in Paris and issues of that sort. There was still a good deal of the cold war atmosphere in Washington when Kennedy became President. He tried to cut through that and tried to sort it out in terms of issues which might be resolved, and in doing so we ran across variations of opinions in the Department on how particular issues ought to be handled. But Kennedy's own leadership was such that those were resolved on particular issues and we were able to move forward on a consistent policy.

[-161-]

O'BRIEN: Does the increase in, well, in rhetoric during the campaign on the so-called missile gap and then some of the changes that take place in defense strategy in those first days of the Administration -- I'm thinking mainly of the so-called flexible response concept as well as the emphasis on the increase in missiles -- can you see this in any way affecting the general context of U.S.-Soviet relations?

RUSK: Yes. I have no doubt that these issues had a great effect on them. We must bear in mind that President Eisenhower in his second term, President Kennedy, and President Johnson had to think about things that no American President had ever had to think about before; namely, that the United States itself could be virtually destroyed in a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union. When President Truman made the decision to go into Korea he didn't have to concern himself with the possibility that the United States itself might be basically damaged. But President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, and President Johnson had to live with the fact that the Soviets had built up a missile force which could virtually destroy the United States even if the United States struck first.

Now, that has transformed the basis of our foreign relations, because from the point of view of the security of the American people, the safety of the American people, a major change has come about in world affairs. We now are in the situation where enormous damage can be done to this country in a war, and we haven't been in that position for a century and a half. So that that injected an element of prudence and caution into policy, and it led to such

attempts as bridge building with Eastern Europe, with an attempt to find points of agreement with the Soviet Union, with attempts in disarmament that led to the partial test ban treaty and the nonproliferation treaty, the space treaty, the Antarctic Treaty, and other measures of that sort.

Flexible response came about because with the development of Soviet missiles, the so-called trip wire theory simply ceased to be credible. If anyone were to suggest that if two or three regiments became involved with each other on the eastern frontier of West Germany that we would move immediately to nuclear war, this was so irrational an act because of the consequences of moving into a nuclear war that it was unbelievable, and therefore the credibility of

[-162-]

the deterrent had to be reassessed in terms of what would appear to be a rational attitude because the Russians would themselves realize that moving immediately to nuclear war was an irrational act and would not believe that we would do so. So we felt that it was important to develop conventional forces to a point where there could be several days of probing before the full purposes of the other side were disclosed during which things like the hotline might operate to find out whether we were in fact in for a major war or whether we were dealing with a limited incident. I don't believe myself that heads of government at moments of crisis are going to make a quick decision to move to nuclear war. Western Europe would be a cinder pile; half of the United States would be destroyed; half the Soviet Union would be destroyed. So that any strategy that is based upon an immediate resort to nuclear weapons just lost its credibility in the relations between the two sides in the deterrent.

O'BRIEN: Did you make that recommendation in your own private conversations with the President?

RUSK: Secretary McNamara and I both worked on that, and we both moved together on the flexible response point of view.

O'BRIEN: In regard to the proposed summit meetings which came up early in the Administration, what were you recommending to the President and what was he responding at that point?

RUSK: I was always, as my article in *Foreign Affairs* would illustrate, I was always skeptical about negotiations at the summit. I felt that whereas courtesy visits and state visits for the exchange of amenities was all right, a good thing to do, that for the summit to engage in negotiations of a prolonged sort of over difficult questions was not the right way to handle it: It was invoking the court of last resort too soon in the process. The summit ought to be reserved for the matters of the gravest importance or to put the cap on negotiations that have already gone a long way forward through other channels. But

[-163-]

Presidents are inclined to think that if they can just make personal contact with heads of other governments that somehow they personally can bring their influence to bear and bring about an improvement in relations, so that Presidents are inclined to view summit meetings with some greater interest than would a Secretary of State.

I was nervous about the June 1961 meeting between President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev. I didn't recommend flatly against it because President Kennedy wanted to go to Europe and while he was there he wanted to see Chairman Khrushchev if possible. But I was very skeptical about it, and my skepticism was largely justified by what happened at the summit. We managed to get an agreement on Laos, but Chairman Khrushchev threw a first-class Berlin crisis at President Kennedy at that summit. It looked as though Khrushchev was setting out to intimidate this young, new President of the United States, and he opened up all of his firepower on President Kennedy over Berlin. And it got to be a very grim discussion between the two of them.

O'BRIEN: In my understanding of it, it was a rather free-wheeling kind of discussion in which ideology was mixed in with substantive political decisions. In terms of negotiating with the Russians, is this characteristic?

RUSK: It was during the Khrushchev period. There was a good deal of ideology discussed at that meeting between the two, but the two more or less agreed that they were not going to convince each other on ideological grounds, so they passed on to other subjects. But there was a fair amount of ideology that was actually expressed.

As a matter of fact -- this is for later -- but Soviet negotiating technique has changed considerably since the departure of Khrushchev. Ideology plays a much lesser role; the conversations now are much more pragmatic and businesslike and you don't have the impressions you're simply talking to ideological mimeograph machines. But during Khrushchev's period, ideology was still a part of the polemics between the two sides.

[-164-]

O'BRIEN: How about your own discussions with someone, let's say, like Gromyko? Were they more pragmatic, or did they take an ideological sort of bent?

RUSK: I tried to avoid polemics and I tried to avoid ideologies on the grounds that you just don't get anywhere on arguing such basic points of view. But, nevertheless, ideological considerations did enter into our discussions. Again,

our talks on Berlin with Gromyko became very repetitious. We got to a point where we referred to each other's arguments by the numbers, and we would decide that we would pass on to another subject because one's answer was already known to the other side.

O'BRIEN: Well, in terms of the meetings in Vienna, what do you recall of the President and his impressions of this as a first experience in meeting Chairman Khrushchev?

RUSK: I think President Kennedy was sobered and shaken by that experience. He wasn't shaken to a point that he lost his balance or that he came away in a panic or anything of that sort, but he, for the first time, saw the full weight of Soviet pressure and the full weight of the ideological commitments of the Soviet Union. Chairman Khrushchev was very blunt with him about turning over the access routes to Berlin to the East Germans and said that if there was any interference by the United States with the East Germans in the control of these access routes that that would mean war and that the Soviet Union would back the East Germans to the point of war. President Kennedy had to say to him, "Well then, if that's the case, there will be war, Mr. Chairman. It's going to be a very cold winter." So that the conversation got to be very serious indeed, and this was a very sobering experience for President Kennedy.

[-165-]

O'BRIEN: Well, considering what happens later in U.S.-Soviet relations, the development of the missile crisis, the remainder of the Berlin developments as well as the test ban treaty, how do you see the Vienna meetings in the way they fit together with these? Did they, in a sense, encourage any of these things to happen, or did they discourage other things from not happening?

RUSK: Chairman Khrushchev took the occasion of the Vienna meetings to put in what amounted to an ultimatum on Berlin. Now had there not been a Vienna meeting, we still might have had the ultimatum through regular notes passed between the two governments. But he reserved that occasion to do personally what otherwise might have been done through other means. I can't myself say that the Vienna meeting caused the Berlin crisis. I think the Russians were preparing to move on Berlin with or without such a meeting. But it did mean a very harsh confrontation at the very top of the two governments on a critical issue between the two sides, and it took several months of palaver to talk the Russians out of that crisis. We had interminable talks with them under conditions of some difficulty because the French were not taking any part at all in such talks and the Germans were very nervous about what was going on and what might go on in such talks. But we and the British maintained the talks with the Russians and finally talked them out of the Berlin crisis.

O'BRIEN: Well, in the Cuban Missile Crisis, as well as Vienna, one might draw the conclusion that Khrushchev tended to be a little bit impulsive on matters of foreign affairs. Could you discuss that? Do you feel that that is the case?

RUSK: Khrushchev was fully in charge until he lost his office, and he was subject to initiatives both for the good and the bad. Yes, I suppose that one could say that

he was impulsive. I suspect that some of his own colleagues found him to be impulsive. We still don't know why he put the missiles in Cuba. I doubt that that was just a matter of impulse; I think he had thought a great deal about that because of the seriousness of it. But he was capable of doing such things as releasing the RB-47 fliers, of breaking through the partial test ban

[-166-]

negotiations and agreeing to an atmospheric test ban. He was able to take an initiative on his own and carry his colleagues with him, so that there was an element of impulsiveness in U.S.-Soviet relationships while Khrushchev was in power.

O'BRIEN: Well, passing on to General de Gaulle and French relations at that point, President Kennedy, of course, met de Gaulle and, if I'm not mistaken, you were there as well.

RUSK: I was with him for one meeting with de Gaulle. I joined him late.

O'BRIEN: What were your reactions to that meeting?

RUSK: President de Gaulle fundamentally was seeking a special position for France within Europe. He had made a proposal to President Eisenhower that there be established a three-power directorate of the free world -- France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. President Eisenhower turned that down offering full consultation with France otherwise. We felt that we were not able to nominate ourselves to be a part of such a directorate because the interests of a great many other countries were very much involved -- Germany, Italy, for example, in Europe, and Japan in the Far East and our Latin American colleagues in this hemisphere -- and it would be too much of a presumption on our part to say that we were going to join with two other countries to direct the affairs of the free world. President de Gaulle repeated this proposals to President Kennedy, and for the same reasons that Eisenhower turned it down President Kennedy turned it down, again offering the fullest consultation with President de Gaulle on all issues that President de Gaulle wanted to talk about.

President de Gaulle never forgave the United States for that refusal. I remember there was one occasion some years later when we were asking French cooperation on something, and President de Gaulle said, "No, we can't cooperate. We told you how we could work out a relationship of cooperation with you, and you turned it down." So President de Gaulle's fanatical commitment to the idea of a special position for France made things very difficult. He wanted to be the

[-167-]

spokesman for Europe. Unfortunately his tactics frustrated his own desire. Had President de Gaulle thrown himself into the leadership of the authentic European movement and in



transatlantic partnership, he would have become the spokesman for Western Europe. But by playing it as a lone hand, by going the nationalist route, he frustrated his own purpose, which is one of the tragedies of President de Gaulle.

O'BRIEN: Well, de Gaulle has the reservation, or at least views United States nuclear policy as one in which would not come to Europe's aid in a real situation. From your reflections on that period of time, do you feel that the United States would have responded with a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union in the case of a serious provocation on the part of the Soviet Union towards either Germany or...

RUSK: I think the United States would have gone to nuclear war over the security of Western Europe had the Soviet Union challenged that security in any serious way. I have no doubt about that because the security of the United States hinges critically upon the security of Western Europe. Now, that would have been a terrible thing to have happen, but I have no doubt at all about the sense of commitment that President Kennedy had on that point. President de Gaulle, being an extreme nationalist himself, just doesn't conceive that one country will accept major injury in defense of another country. He probably was talking about how France would act if France were in the same situation. There were times when he referred to the battle of Germany and that following which there would be the battle of France as though there would be that France would reserve its effort until the Soviets got to the Rhine, so that it was hard to decide exactly what was in de Gaulle's mind. But it was just inconceivable to him that the United States would suffer substantial damage in behalf of the security of Western Europe.

[-168-]

O'BRIEN: In the decision to extend the aid or the offer of nuclear sharing in terms of Polaris missiles, which takes place, I believe, first at Ottawa in May of 1961, is the Department fully aware of this? Do you discuss the matter with President Kennedy before and generally recommend this line of policy in terms of sharing.

RUSK: Well, this is an important matter which is worth some considerable attention by the historian. In the summer of 1960 Paul-Henri Spaak, who was then Secretary-General of NATO, and General Norstad [Lauris Norstad], the Supreme Commander of NATO, came to the American delegation at NATO and said that it would be necessary for the United States to take some action to make better partners out of the Europeans in nuclear matters, that the Europeans were becoming restive over being left out of nuclear matters to the extent that they were and that the idea that nuclear matters somehow would be a monopoly of the United States was no longer acceptable in the alliance. This initiative led Secretary Herter at the NATO foreign ministers meeting in December of 1960 to propose a NATO force -- he then had in mind, I think, submarines as a NATO force in which all NATO countries could participate.

When President Kennedy came to office, he looked at this and realized that the suggestion had come from a European initiative, and so he took the general view that it

would be for Europe to make some proposals which would satisfy the European need. We let it be known to our European allies that we were interested in looking at any proposals they had that would meet their point on this matter.

Well, a year or so passed and nothing came from Europe. And finally our European friends said to us that since they were not well informed on nuclear matters that they were not going to be capable of coming up with any proposals of their own and therefore they asked the United States to make a proposal of some sort that might meet the European point of view. This led to the development of the multilateral force idea. Now, that was never a proposal that was made on behalf of the United States; that is, it was not a proposal to achieve something that the United States wanted to

[-169-]

achieve. It was a proposal, an example of a proposal, which might meet the European needs. And so we put that multilateral force idea forward from the point of view of the European interests. Now, we were never pushing that as a United States requirement on our NATO allies.

Now, the Europeans themselves could never agree on the multilateral force -- Britain took one point of view; France would have nothing to do with it; Germany took another point of view; Italy was uncertain; there were differences of view among some of the smaller allies -- so that the multilateral force idea died because there was no European agreement on it or on any substitute for it. Now, we did move to establish a nuclear planning group inside NATO which went a long way toward satisfying our allies' need to be cut in on nuclear planning matters and nuclear strategy. But the collapse of the MLF idea came about chiefly because the Europeans themselves could not agree on it, and when the Europeans were not in agreement, then there was no interest in it on the part of the United States. And our own congressional leaders made it clear that if this was not going to be welcomed with open arms by Europe that we were not going to take any such move ourselves. And so the multilateral force idea died.

O'BRIEN: There was a great deal of reservation of the part of leaders in the United States government about the issue of sharing nuclear weapons, too, wasn't there, in terms of control?

RUSK: Well, we were never willing to allow control to move outside the hands of the United States; we reserved a veto on the use of nuclear weapons, at least the use of U.S. nuclear weapons. We were willing to go into various voting arrangements in which we had a majority vote, in which our vote would be essential before nuclear weapons would be employed, but we insisted upon reserving to ourselves the decision to use nuclear weapons in a way that would bring the United States into a nuclear exchange.

O'BRIEN: Did the Soviet Union clearly understand the nature of this proposal for MLF?

[-170-]

RUSK: Yes, they opposed it. They opposed it on the grounds that it would bring the German finger nearer the trigger. One thing on which the Soviets are passionate is that the Germans must never have control of nuclear weapons. I think this might well be an issue of war with the Soviet Union. Their experience with the Germans in this century has been pretty horrendous, and so they were passionate about that. I think they also would be opposed to it on the grounds that if it were successfully put forward, it would tend to consolidate the alliance itself, and in underlying the commitment of the United States to the defense of NATO countries would bring us much more intimately involved in NATO matters. But I think the German issue was the one which caused the Soviets to object to it so strenuously.

O'BRIEN: Now, the Soviet Union links the German issue -- at least early, as I understand it -- links the German issue with disarmament, particularly in the talks that go on between you and Gromyko on disarmament. Is there any point in which they separate the German issue from disarmament?

RUSK: Well, the best leverage which the Soviet Union had on the MLF idea was in connection with the discussions of the nonproliferation treaty. They looked upon the MLF as a proliferation of nuclear weapons, that it brought more fingers onto the trigger. We ourselves took the view that since we were not adding to the number of new entities that would have nuclear weapons at their disposal that the Russians should not be concerned about the MLF proposal. But nevertheless they were very adamant on it, and the historian will observe that when the nonproliferation treaty was signed it would have excluded the MLF. Under the nonproliferation treaty, if Europe should become a unified entity where foreign policy and defense matters are being handled from a central body, then such a Europe would be a nuclear power by direct succession from the roles played by Britain and France; they would succeed to the nuclear status of Britain and France. But no such loose arrangement as the MLF would now be possible under the nonproliferation treaty.

[-171-]

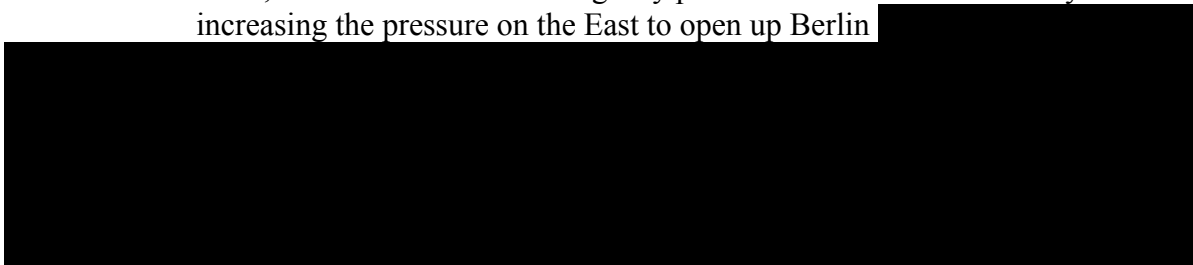
O'BRIEN: Well, early in the Berlin problem Secretary Acheson becomes involved and is responsible for a study which becomes a point of policy debate for at least the year 1961. How does he come into this?

RUSK: Well, he was Mr. NATO himself. He had been Secretary when NATO was signed; he had played a large part in the organization of NATO; he was a very distinguished American, former Secretary of State; and it was natural for us to turn to him to reflect upon the status of NATO as we saw it in the early 1960's. President Kennedy asked him to take on this job with my full enthusiastic blessing. And he did so, and he worked with great distinction on it. It amounted to a reaffirmation of our basic commitments to NATO. I think no major changes in policy occurred as a result of the

Acheson study, but it did confirm the importance of the alliance and a need to work out arrangements in NATO which brought us closer together rather than separated us from each other.

O'BRIEN: Well, in his recommendations on Berlin he comes up with some very hard choices as far as responses to any Soviet move in the city, including the attempt to force open with military force. Did you concur in these recommendations at that point?

RUSK: Well, there were various contingency plans developed to deal with the Berlin crisis, and most of these contingency plans saw it in terms of steadily increasing the pressure on the East to open up Berlin



[-172-]

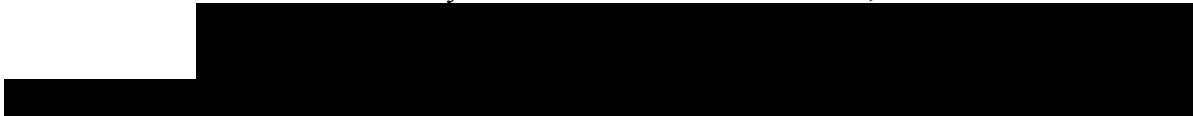
Dean Acheson took the view, as did I, that Berlin was a vital interest to the United States, that we were there as one of the conquering powers of World War II, that our rights there could not be assumed by the Soviet Union, could not be given away by the Soviet Union to anybody else, such as the East Germans, and that we had to insist upon our presence in Berlin and access to Berlin as a part of the total defense of the West. NATO had itself adopted that view, and it embraced Berlin as a part of the NATO commitment. But we were all fully aware of the gravity of Berlin as an issue between the two sides.

O'BRIEN: So this is really a NATO view as much as it is the product of an Acheson study. There's a good deal of concurrence there.

RUSK: That's right. That's right.

O'BRIEN: Well, what's the response of some of the people involved here? As I understand it, the Kennedy-Macmillan talks are taking place about the time that the recommendations are made by Secretary Acheson. Did you get any feel for the response of Foreign Secretary Home [Alexander F. Douglas-Home] or Prime Minister Macmillan?

RUSK: The British basically took the same view that we did, that Berlin was critical.



[REDACTED]

at the end of the day the British and we would have taken the same view on Berlin.

O'BRIEN: Were there any particular anxious moments that you remember in 1961 regarding Berlin -- I guess we would include the building of the Wall with....

[-173-]

RUSK: The building of the Wall was a dramatic and soul-shaking event because it registered for the first time that the East Germans were going to isolate East Berlin from the West and stop the flow of German refugees coming out of East Germany to the West. The Wall did not change anything basically except to stop that flow of East Germans. Long since the East Germans had taken over full responsibility for the conduct of operations in East Berlin, and that had been yielded during the Eisenhower Administration. The four power arrangements for the entire city had broken down. We did not like the Wall, but we did not see any way to prevent the Wall's going up. After all, the East Germans, in effect, had a right to stop the flow of their own people from coming out, and it simply extended the Iron Curtain which stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea right across Europe and plugged a hole in the Iron Curtain which had existed there in Berlin and through which many refugees were escaping to the West.

O'BRIEN: Well, how about the President responding to this at this point? What are you recommending to him as far as an action or non-action on the part of the United States?

RUSK: Well, the President was sobered by the talk he had with Khrushchev in June in Vienna about Berlin, and yet he was determined to do everything that we could to maintain our position in West Berlin. During the summer there the President brooded about the matter and gave it a lot of thought and talked to congressional leaders about it. I think it was in September, he made a speech in which he called for substantial additions to our defense budget. We called up National Guard Reserve units, and we sent additional troops to Berlin and to Western Europe. We tried to impress upon Khrushchev that we were serious about Berlin. And I think we succeeded [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

But we had some very tense moments there, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[-174-]

[BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I]

O'BRIEN: Well, I think one important issue here on Berlin particularly is the response of not only of other areas of the American government but the other nations that are involved. I think, first of all, the Germans: What is the German response at this point to the building of the Wall? What are they asking the United States to do? Or are they asking the United States to do anything?

RUSK: As I recall it, the Germans were shocked by the Wall and took a very negative view about it, but they didn't have any very good ideas about what to do about it. As a matter of fact, we all were faced with a situation where we did not like what was happening, but we did not see any alternatives that would improve the situation. The idea that you would knock down the Wall would mean that at best you would simply move the Wall back fifteen or twenty feet. There was no way to prevent the East Germans from erecting barricades to prevent their own people from leaving East Germany. We were not prepared to fight a war over the issue of the Wall since it did not intrude into the responsibilities of the Western powers for West Berlin and in itself did not interfere with access to the city so that it was not an issue of war as far as the West was concerned. But Berliners themselves were shocked by it, and morale sank, and it was necessary for us to send Vice President Johnson over to visit Berlin, and we sent General Clay [Lucius DuB. Clay] to be stationed in Berlin for a period to help boost the morale of the Berliners. But that was a chapter which was disagreeable, but we had no solution for it.

O'BRIEN: How about the French and the British? Do they become involved in consultations?

RUSK: Yes, we all were consulting very closely at that time, and the French and the British didn't have any good ideas, either, as to what might be done so long as West Berlin was left free to operate.

[-175-]

O'BRIEN: Well, how about in Washington now? What's the reaction of, let's say, the Defense Department, the various military people concerned with German relations?

RUSK: I don't recall that we ever had any recommendations from the Defense Department to do anything specific about the Wall that we did not do. They did not recommend, as I recall it, that we knock the Wall down. They did not recommend that we go to war to prevent the Wall from being built. I think they regretted the Wall just as much as we did in the State Department, but I don't recall the Defense Department having any special point of view at that time.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any anxious moments with members of Congress?

RUSK: No, in general, Congress remained steady in the boat. They were very much interested, and I briefed them assiduously on the situation about Berlin. And, of course, when they added several billion dollars to the defense budget, this was very much with the German question in mind and the Berlin question in mind, and they did that with speed and with large majorities, so that we had no particular problems with Congress at that time.

O'BRIEN: Well, in your negotiations with the Germans over the remaining years of the Kennedy Administration -- I'm thinking of Chancellor Adenauer [Konrad Adenauer] as well as -- was Schroeder [Gerhard Schroeder] Foreign Minister during...

RUSK: von Bretano [Heinrich von Bretano] was for a time, then Schroeder became the Foreign Minister.

[-176-]

O'BRIEN: What was your feeling in terms of negotiations with these people? Did they ever become a problem in any of the policies we've been talking about, MLF or in regard to U.S.-Soviet relations in regard to Berlin?

RUSK: Chancellor Adenauer was very much the cold warrior. He was very much concerned about the further spread to the West communist ideology. He gave me some books on the subject to read about the flow of the Slavs into Central and Western Europe. But he faced the frustration that the rest of us faced that there was not much to be done about it. Now they, the Germans, were more susceptible to gestures of support, demonstrations of support, than anything else, and so we had to do what we could to reassure them of basic United States support for NATO and for West Berlin during a period when German opinion was very much upset by the Wall and by the pressures from the Russians.

What the Germans were afraid of was that in discussions of the Berlin crisis between the British and ourselves on the one side and the Russians on the other that we and the British would make major concessions to the Russians on Berlin. We had no intention of doing so and, as a matter of fact, there were no concessions we could make that would not be seriously injurious to our own national interests. Over the years we'd pretty well already given away most of the concessions we had to make to East Germany and to the Russians, so that there was not much for the Germans to worry about. But nevertheless the Germans are constant worriers: They're in the front line; they're very sensitive to the moods of public opinion; they worry about ghosts; they constantly needed reassurance. I finally got to point in a NATO meeting once when I said that I was not going to continue to come to each NATO meeting to promise that the United States was going to be loyal to NATO, that that had been done enough and that we should take that for granted, that if they all wanted a pledging session in which everybody comes in and says, "We're going to be loyal to NATO," that's all right, we'll take part in it, but I was no longer going to include in each one of my speeches to

NATO a reaffirmation of United States support for NATO. And that was pretty well received, as a matter of fact. It was looked upon as a dignified position to take.

[-177-]

O'BRIEN: Well, is this constant questioning of U.S. policy stirred by de Gaulle and by French diplomacy in those years? In other words, did the French seek to exploit the doubt that the United States would really support NATO commitments?

RUSK: I don't know to what extent the French tried to work on the Germans on this point. President de Gaulle began pulling in France's commitments very early in the Kennedy Administration. He told President Kennedy, for example, in 1961 that there would never be another French soldier in Southeast Asia, and that from that point on de Gaulle for all practical purposes withdrew from SEATO. And I think he also had, beginning in 1961, ideas about the gradual withdrawal of France from the military arrangements of NATO. He didn't like the U.S. commanders being such a key position there as SAC Europe [Supreme Allied Commander, Europe]; he felt that the United States dominated the alliance too much; he didn't think that the voice of France was heavy enough in the alliance; he did not think that France was accepted as the spokesman for all of Western Europe. And I think he began early in 1961 to think about withdrawing from France from the military arrangements of NATO.

O'BRIEN: As I understand, you had a few difficult moments with General de Gaulle at various times, particularly in regard to the proposed foreign ministers meeting. Do you have any reflections on that?

RUSK: Well, it's very difficult to talk to President de Gaulle. It was a little bit like climbing on your knees up a mountainside to talk to the oracle. There was never any give and take with President de Gaulle; you'd get pronouncements from on high, but you wouldn't get any real discussion. I never enjoyed my talks with President de Gaulle, and he was always very sensitive about matters that he thought were France's business and not ours. On one occasion I opened up with the question of Tunisia with whom France was then having great difficulties about the base in Tunisia. Well, President de Gaulle was very brusque about it. He said, "Well, I will be glad to give you information about Tunisia," but he made it very clear that he thought that Tunisia was

[-178-]

none of our business and we should stay out of it. No, there was very little discussion between France and the United States during that period.

O'BRIEN: Why did France take the position they did on the refusal of a high-level foreign ministers meeting on Berlin?



RUSK: Well, President de Gaulle just took the view that there was nothing to discuss, that if the Russians moved on Berlin there would be war [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

And that was the basic difference between us, I think.

O'BRIEN: In your discussion with Couve de Murville [Maurice Couve de Murville], does he basically support this view?

RUSK: Yes, I had the impression in the first two years of my administration as Secretary of State that Couve de Murville was trying to save as much as he could out of NATO and transatlantic cooperation from the pronounced attitudes of President de Gaulle, that he as Foreign Minister was trying to modify in some respects the attitude of President de Gaulle. But after about two years of that, I found that Couve de Murville had become fully Gaullist in character and was simply playing the de Gaulle line to the hilt, which he had no alternative to do as Foreign Minister under President de Gaulle. But Couve de Murville had been a strong NATO man in the past and had been strongly in favor of transatlantic cooperation. But he eventually accepted the de Gaulle line and pursued it very harshly.

[-179-]

O'BRIEN: Well, with the shift in defense strategy in the United States -- of course, this becomes a major topic within NATO and within the NATO nations -- did you realize at the onset of this that it was going to cause the difficult that it did later and you're going to have these problems of constantly attempting to assure the Germans that you really were interested in supporting NATO and checking the Russians with nuclear weapons?

RUSK: One of our problems was that very few Europeans had given any real thought to the nuclear issue, very few of them had really studied the effects of a nuclear exchange or the realities of nuclear war, so that the plate glass doctrine was very popular in Europe. It meant a bigger bang for a buck; it meant cheaper expenditures for conventional arms. It relied wholly upon deterrence and did not take into account what might happen if deterrence should fail, whereas we were concerned that the deterrence was losing its credibility because the plate glass theory was simply irrational and the Russians would judge it to be irrational and that therefore the Russians might move on the reasonably certainty that the West would not be anxious to move to nuclear war at a time when we had very few conventional forces with which to meet a conventional attack.

Now when the Western Europeans became more fully familiar with nuclear issues, as they did later in the nuclear planning group in NATO, they became much more interested in a graduated response because they realized that a nuclear exchange would mean the destruction of Western Europe, that nothing would survive that nuclear exchange. There are hundreds of Soviet medium range and intermediate range ballistic missiles targeted on Western Europe, and that megatonnage was such that there would just be nothing left in Western Europe. It was not until some of those ideas struck home in Western Europe that they began to think more of a graduated response.

O'BRIEN: Well, we've talked a little bit about the MLF and some of the problems that were involved with it. It did become a very popular idea, didn't it, as I understand, within the Administration?

[-180-]

RUSK: Well, we appointed a task force to present MLF to our allies, and that task force got to be thoroughly committed to MLF as an idea. Excuse me a minute. Turn that off. [Interruption]

The task force developed a degree of enthusiasm that went considerably beyond the attitude of the President. From the President's point of view, the MLF proposal was a sample of what might be done to create a NATO nuclear force to meet the needs of our allies for greater participation in nuclear matters. If the allies did not want it, the President did not wish to put it forward as an American requirement and put American prestige fully behind it to ram it down the throats of our allies, so that those who were designated to present MLF to our allies became theologians on the subject, thoroughly committed to it, and developed an attitude that the MLF was a great thing in itself and that the United States should throw its full weight behind it. President Kennedy was never that sold on MLF. If our allies had embraced it enthusiastically, President Kennedy would have gone forward with it. But when our allies failed to agree on it, then President Kennedy more or less lost interest in it and was not at all disappointed when it did not move forward.

O'BRIEN: McGeorge Bundy made a trip to Europe in 1962. Was it primarily concerned with the promotion of MLF as a means of shering up...

RUSK: I don't recall. I don't recall that trip or what was involved in that particular visit. My guess is if he went there in '62 he did talk about MFL.

O'BRIEN: Was there much...

RUSK: The big problem was that the Germans and the British never got together on what the nuclear force of the alliance should look like. The British were not at all interested in having a German finger on the trigger, nor were the British interested in diluting their own role as a nuclear power; whereas, the MLF would have

incorporated the basic structure of a British nuclear force into a NATO nuclear force and would have downgraded the British nuclear force as a national force to a very

[-181-]

considerable extent. And this the British didn't particularly like.

O'BRIEN: Is there any division in the State Department over the issue of MLF?

RUSK: There's some division between me and the proponents of MLF because I took generally the view of the President that this was a proposal, it was not a proposal made in the interest of the United States but in the interest of our allies, that if it met the needs of our allies we were prepared to go forward with it, but if our allies didn't want it, all right, no harm is done; so that I was more cool on the MLF than some of those down the line in the Department who were working on MFL.

O'BRIEN: Did Secretary McNamara follow along in your view, or did he become a proponent of MLF?

RUSK: He was somewhere in between, because as Secretary of Defense he had the primary responsibility of working out the details of MLF, and that was done under his direction. It looked like a good force from the point of view of the Secretary of Defense, all these surface vessels with missiles that could reach the Soviet Union reasonably invulnerable to Soviet attack. It seemed to be a workable plan from McNamara's point of view. But he was not wholeheartedly committed to it in a way that went beyond the attitude of the President.

O'BRIEN: Well, there is the so-called Smith [Gerard Smith] - Lee [John M. Lee] mission that comes up.

RUSK: Right.

O'BRIEN: What is the origin of this?

[-182-]

RUSK: Well, we felt that we needed a mission which could present the MLF and all of its technical details to our allies so that we could thoroughly explain it to them and what it would involve and problems of control and command and staffing and manning and costs and things of that sort. The Smith-Lee mission was simply a mission to go from capital to capital and talk about MLF with various governments and to give them a full picture as to just what was involved and what it would mean.

O'BRIEN: Did it raise any problems in bilateral relations with these nations?

RUSK: I think the Germans were fretful that we were not able to deliver the British. We, on the other hand, were not prepared to put maximum pressure on the British because this was a proposal, again, that was put forward in the interest of our allies and not in the interest of some United States point of view. So we felt it was up to the allies on the other side of the Atlantic to come to their own view of MLF without any special pressures from the United States. Now, we would have been prepared to look at some alternatives to MLF. The British came up with something called the Allied Nuclear Force at one point, which was a modification of MFL. We would have been prepared to look at almost any proposal that came out of the European allies, but they didn't come forward with any proposals that had any chance of success.

O'BRIEN: This is a point that has come up several times this morning, that the United States was waiting for European allies and NATO to come together with a particular proposal and at the same time they were, in a sense, waiting for the United States to take some position of leadership. Is this one of the major problems that complicates the relationship, particularly on defense matters, in those years?

[-183-]

RUSK: Well, this question of leadership is a very tricky one because these cannot be a leader unless there are those who are willing to follow. On the one hand the Europeans would call for American leadership, and on the other hand would not follow when we led. I think the alliance had got in a position where it was stable and the threat from Eastern Europe was considered to be somewhat less than it had been earlier: Europe was recovering from an economic point of view; they were paying attention to their own domestic concerns; and they were not taking the guidance from the United States that they did from when we were in the position of creating NATO and when we were moving forward with the Marshall Plan. It's easy to lead when you're coming up with a Marshall Plan or joining in NATO because there the United States was volunteering to do something which the Europeans would not dare to ask us to do. We were committing ourselves to the defense of Western Europe and coming up with many billions of dollars of economic resources in the Marshall Plan, and so American leadership came naturally under those circumstances. But leadership became a more complex phenomenon in the sixties as the Europeans felt more secure and more independent and were more ingrown into their own domestic affairs in their respective countries. There can't be leadership unless there are those who are ready to follow.

O'BRIEN: Well, Under Secretary Ball in some of his later writings as well as some scholars have suggested that beginning with the Kennedy Administration that the United States begins to shift away from Europe, their attention from Europe, and in terms of geopolitics and in terms of real power that we should have, in a sense, continued this emphasis on European relations. How do you see that, reflecting back over to the beginning of your term as Secretary of State?

RUSK: Well, Mr. Ball was a great European man and was very strongly in favor of European unity, transatlantic partnership and a closely knit NATO and things of that sort. But we were advised by our European friends to remain relatively quiet about European unity. Some of them advised us that the more the United States spoke about European unity the more de Gaulle would

[-184-]

resist it and therefore the United States should play a tactful role on the sidelines, letting it be known that we were in favor of it but not trying to inject ourselves into it in a way that would complicate the relations among the Europeans themselves.

Then President Kennedy and President Johnson would not let us launch a frontal attack on President de Gaulle as a personality. George Ball wanted to do that -- as a matter of fact, George Ball once made a speech that went beyond the limits of what the President wanted at that time in attacking President de Gaulle. George Ball was in favor of a frontal attack on the policies of President de Gaulle, but President Kennedy and President Johnson did not want to make this a personal matter between themselves and President de Gaulle. So George Ball's view is a rather special view.

O'BRIEN: I see. Well, in some of the problems between the United States and Great Britain the cancellation of the Skybolt missile system becomes, of course, a major issue. When do you first become aware that that's a possibility, that the Skybolt is going to be phased out as a weapon?

RUSK: Secretary McNamara had told me some months before the Nassau meeting that he was going to have to cancel out Skybolt and that this would cause great difficulties with Great Britain. He also informed the British Defense Minister, Thorneycroft [G.E. Peter Thorneycroft], about this prospect, and Thorneycroft took no action in Britain to prepare the way for the cancellation of Skybolt. So when the cancellation came it got to be a major issue in Great Britain because Great Britain's continued role as a nuclear power was closely related to Skybolt. Had Thorneycroft taken Bob McNamara seriously and prepared the way, both in his own Cabinet and with British public opinion, the cancellation of Skybolt would not have created quite the furor that it did.

[-185-]

O'BRIEN: Is there any evidence to the effect that either the Air Force or the contractor tell the British, and Thorneycroft in particular, that this cancellation is not going to take place or, if it does, that the decision is going to be reversed or reconsidered in that regard?

RUSK: I don't have any information on that. I just don't know.

O'BRIEN: Did you imagine that the furor that did take place was going to take place on the part of the British?

RUSK: I was a little surprised that it got to be such an issue in domestic politics in Great Britain. I thought it was making a mountain out of a molehill. After all, it was not all that fundamental a matter. And I think also probably what happened was that the British made it into an issue in order to increase their bargaining power with us about getting an alternative to Skybolt, namely the Polaris submarine or the Polaris missiles for their submarines. But my net impression is that the British side handled the cancellation of Skybolt in a rather awkward way. They could have been more skillful and could have passed it over without it becoming such a fuss.

O'BRIEN: Well, are you at this point, or is the President, concerned about the possibility of the Conservative government falling and Harold Wilson coming in?

RUSK: We weren't concerned about that. We never tried to anticipate that kind of a problem as between the Conservative and Labor governments in Britain. We have to deal with whatever government is in power there, and we try to deal with them on as close a basis as possible. But I don't recall that Prime Minister MacMillan related this to the possible fall of the Conservative government.

[-186-]

O'BRIEN: In the channels of discussion that are going on here in regard to the Skybolt matter, you have the Defense Department to the British Defense Ministry and, of course, you to the Foreign Office, and at the Presidential and Prime Ministerial level. Is there any time in which the discussions which are going on get out of, well, any of the participants in this get out of contact with each other?

RUSK: The two principal channels of communication turned out to be defense minister to defense minister and then chief of government to chief of government. We had relatively little to do with the Skybolt issue in the Department of State through diplomatic channels. I don't recall having taken up with the British Foreign Secretary, for example.

O'BRIEN: Well, you decided not to attend the Nassau meetings. What went into that decision?

RUSK: Well, it was a very simple problem. I had a diplomatic dinner laid on for the entire diplomatic corps in Washington, and I did not feel that it was -- I thought that it would be an affront to the entire diplomatic corps for me to cancel my dinner for them in order to go off to a bilateral meeting with one country. And I felt it was necessary for me to stay here for the diplomatic dinner. That was the simple explanation for it. Now, that might have been right or wrong; there were those in the

Department of State who felt that I should have gone to Nassau, but I felt that I owed an obligation to the diplomatic corps not to affront them by considering that our relations with Britain were so important that I could cancel off the dinner for the entire corps.

O'BRIEN: Well now, do you get involved in the decision for the Polaris missiles to Great Britain as a...

RUSK: That was pretty well handled by George Ball, who was a Nassau, and was handled by President Kennedy himself.

[-187-]

O'BRIEN: Did you have any reservations about that?

RUSK: No, I didn't.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any discussions with the President on the Polaris problem?

RUSK: I don't recall, because that was done more or less at the Nassau meeting itself.

O'BRIEN: Well, now the offer of the missiles to France arises as another part of this. Did you concur in that decision?

RUSK: Yes. We made a rather tentative offer to France. It was a rather carefully worded communication. And President de Gaulle probably judged that if we were to move forward that we would expect a lot of conditions from France which he was then unwilling to give. But in any event, he never took it up and never treated it as a serious offer and didn't do anything about it, didn't follow up on it.

O'BRIEN: There has been some suggestion that that was the hope of President Kennedy that de Gaulle would not take the United States up on the Polaris missile. Is there any truth to that?

RUSK: I think that we were unenthusiastic about this offer to France. What the later discussions with France would have eventuated in, I just don't know. But I think President de Gaulle was quite right that we probably would have asked for conditions that President de Gaulle would not have been willing to accept.

O'BRIEN: Later on, in the selection of Livingston Merchant as special representative for NATO affairs, and the MLF movement, after de Gaulle makes this announcement in January, begins to jell, did you realize that this was going to have the adverse reaction that it did on some of the allies?

[-188-]

RUSK: No, I don't recall that the appointment of Livingston Merchant created an adverse reaction.

O'BRIEN: Well, I phrased it wrong; I'm sorry. Well, actually, the mission -- as I understand, the mission did cause somewhat of an adverse reaction among the allies in their contact with the government, the feeling of some of the allies that we were pushing the MLF point of view at this point too strongly.

RUSK: I think that might have been the case with Great Britain and possibly with Italy, but I don't think it was the case with Germany. The Germans were all in favor of the MLF. But Italy had internal problems about it and did not want it to come to an issue between their parties. The British were cool to the idea from the very beginning. So I think that the reaction among various allies varied at that time.

O'BRIEN: Passing over some Common Market questions and economic questions, earlier you expressed that this was something that you left primarily to George Ball. Were you involved intimately with any of the problems in the Common Market or on any specific instances that you recall?

RUSK: Well, my principal involvement was to make judgements as to what role the United States ought to play in relation to the expansion of the Common Market, the judgment as to whether we should be strongly and publicly in favor of British entry or whether we should remain quietly on the sidelines. I was faced with advice from several European friends that we ought to remain quietly on the sidelines, and so my role was to help us do that and not get ourselves out in terms of trying to tell Europe how Europe should act but to leave it to the Europeans to make their own decisions on these matters.

I was always very much in favor of British entry to the Common Market, but the attitude of France was such that the more the United States pressed for it the more resistant would become the French. And so when President de Gaulle vetoed British entry into the Common Market on the grounds that Britain would merely be a running dog for the United

[-189-]

States inside Europe, I felt that the role for us to take was a very low-key role, a low-posture attitude, so that we would not complicate that problem any more than it already was complicated.

O'BRIEN: Well, this presents a real problem as far as the problem of tariff and the problem of trade with the United States and its arrangements, of course, which you worked out with the Common Market. As I understand it, George Ball wanted to let the Trade Agreements Act expire in 1962 and go after a completely new agreement. Did you concur in this decision?



RUSK: Well, I have some recollection that at the beginning George Ball was in favor of getting an extension of the Trade Agreements Act, but it appeared that getting that extension would involve a major fight in the Congress. I helped make the decision to go for a much more far-reaching trade act on the grounds that if you were going to have a fight anywho, you might have a fight over something that was worthwhile and try to do something much more far-reaching. Now, Kennedy's Trade Expansion Act was a revolutionary act, the most far-reaching act since about 1933. I threw myself strongly into the position that we should go for the more far-reaching act than merely for an extension of the existing Trade Agreements Act. I think my view prevailed as far as George Ball was concerned and that he came around to my point of view, but at the beginning I have the impression that he was in favor of the lesser route.

O'BRIEN: How did the President respond in all this?

RUSK: He decided to go for the broader act, particularly when we got some encouragement from Capitol Hill -- when Wilbur Mills expressed an interest in it, for example -- and it looked as though a far-reaching trade expansion act might be possible. Then President Kennedy became very much interested in it.

[-190-]

President Kennedy was very cautious about legislative matters because he was always aware of the fact that he had won election on the narrowest of margins, and he did not press his luck with a Congress across a broad range of issues any more than he had to. He tended to pick the issues on which he would tussle with Congress very carefully and did not take the sweeping approach that President Johnson later took on the Great Society program, but selected his issues with great discretion. President Kennedy's basic attitude was that he did not really have a sweeping mandate from the people, and so he was rather restrained in his relations with Congress. But on the Trade Expansion Act he did get encouragement from Congressional leaders to go ahead on it. And he did decide to go ahead on it, and the Trade Expansion Act passed the Congress with better majorities than we dared dream of when we first started the effort.

O'BRIEN: Well, did the President become involved or did he concern himself with economic problems, not only, let's say, this particular one but in economic relations between other nations?

RUSK: He did, but I personally was not as heavily involved in those issues as I might have been -- perhaps, in retrospect, as I should have been -- because I delegated an awful lot of that to George Ball.

O'BRIEN: As I understand, on the Trade Expansion Act there were some complications that were basically political in nature, that certain commitments has been

made to the textile interests and the oil interests, and prior to...

RUSK: And glass and rugs and a few others.

O'BRIEN: Oh, is that right?

RUSK: Yes.

O'BRIEN: Would you care to discuss some of those, the nature of those?

[-191-]

RUSK: Well, I'm not familiar with the details, but in the course of the campaign and otherwise President Kennedy had indicated to various groups that he would try to take care of their special needs when he became President, and when you translate that into a worldwide trading policy it becomes very difficult. What we tried to do during the negotiation of the Kennedy round that followed the Trade Expansion Act was to keep in close touch with the industries involved and try to work out arrangements in the Kennedy round that would be at least tolerable to the various interests. Then we had in the Trade Expansion Act a provision which made it necessary to make some adjustments, some relief to industries that were put upon by the Kennedy round negotiations where there could be some retraining of labor or it could be some adjustment in terms of tax benefits for those who were being specially pressed by the Kennedy round results. And we thought that some adjustment on American production would be necessary -- as was true in Europe when they formed the Common Market in Europe -- and we tried to make provision for that in the Trade Expansion Act.

O'BRIEN: Did you feel that the bill was too strongly tied to, well, let's say, Britain's entry into the Common Market? It's been suggested by some that it had as a...

RUSK: Well, it was devised in anticipation of Britain's entry into the Common Market, and the failure of Britain to get into the Common Market made the Kennedy round negotiations somewhat more complicated. But the atmosphere of the Trade Expansion Act was clearly the atmosphere of British entry into the Common Market and partnership between the United States and that expanded Common Market in world trading problems. Now the de Gaulle veto of British entry into the Common Market was a setback, and we thought that it would do a good deal toward lessening the interest of the Congress in the results of the Kennedy round, but, in fact, it did not work out that way.

[-192-]

O'BRIEN: What reactions did you see immediately after Britain's rejection in the Common Market? What directions did you see U.S. policy taking?

RUSK: Well, there were various suggestions, some of them about free trade areas involving Britain and the United States and some countries of Western Europe and Latin America and things of that sort. Those always looked much too complicated to me. I generally took the view that we'd just have to wait out de Gaulle and wait for de Gaulle to leave the scene before any real progress could be made on European unity and expansion of the Common Market. Now, in March 1970, the prospects for British entry into the Common Market appear somewhat better now that de Gaulle has left the scene.

O'BRIEN: Do you recall the President's response or George Ball's response after de Gaulle's rejection in January of 1967?

RUSK: George Ball was very angry and wanted us to launch a frontal attack on de Gaulle as an individual, but President Kennedy would not let him do that nor did President Johnson let him do that.

O'BRIEN: Well, passing from some Common Market questions to just some general questions about Europe and the world scene in the Kennedy Administration. As you reflect back, and in your recollections of the President's views during those years, do you see Europe as essentially reaching a state of balance allowing the United States to become more deeply involved in some of the other areas of the world, or is it... I guess what I'm trying to say is, is it a period in which a balance has been reached in Europe and both the Soviet Union and the United States because of this move into, let's say, the developing areas of the world? Is this a matter of policy?

[-193-]

RUSK: Your attention necessarily goes to where the action is. When there was a Berlin crisis we gave full attention to the Berlin crisis; when there was a Cuban Missile Crisis we put our attention on that; when there was a problem of the pound sterling we devoted attention to that; when there was a Kennedy round negotiation we put a lot of attention on that. I think that the success of the Marshall Plan and the success of NATO tended to take Europe off the front pages, that they had reached a period of stability in Europe where crises were not a regular occurrence, where the attention of the public was not focused, so that there came about an impression that somehow European matters were somehow less important than they had been during the forties, and indeed they were somewhat less important than they were when we were creating NATO and organizing the Marshall Plan and meeting the Berlin blockade of 1948 and things like that.

My chief regret about Europe is that Europe has drawn into itself and is not playing the role on the world scene that is waiting for Europe to play. The United States is too lonely as a world power. We need to have others associated with us, and we ought not to be the only ones who have some capability of action in all parts of the world. Now, a unified Europe could play that role. But a Europe of national states is not likely to be able to play a leading role as one of the great powers.

Looking ahead ten or fifteen years from now, there's some speculation about the relations between the so-called two super powers. Well, actually, I'm not at all sure that the United States is going to be willing to play the role of the super power unless Europe emerges as a super power capable also of playing a role as a super power, that the United States is not likely to be willing to play that game with the Soviets and the Chinese without Europe, and that the super power table ought to be a table of at least four: the Soviet Union, Red China, the United States and Western Europe. But that means that Western Europe has to organize itself to play that role, and thus far it has not succeeded in doing that.

[-194-]

President Kennedy was faced with the growing relaxation of Europe as Europe become comfortable and fat, somewhat lazy about its international political responsibilities, and we were always trying to encourage Europe to do more rather than less, and we heckled our European friends rather hard during the Kennedy Administration to do more about their NATO budgets, their defense budgets, to do more about events in Africa and things of that sort. So we were something of a nuisance during the Kennedy years as far as Western Europe was concerned because we were always urging them to do more than they were doing on the world scene. This included foreign aid; we constantly urged them to move their foreign aid appropriations up to 1 percent of their gross national product (that was at a time when the United States foreign aid appropriation was about 1 percent.) Then when the United States began to cut back on its own foreign aid, of course, our voice was not listened to very much in Western Europe on that subject. But we were pressing Europe during the Kennedy years to do more rather than do less in a wide variety of fields.

O'BRIEN: Well, in your own personal handling of the office, if I'm not mistaken, you're the first person who occupied this position as Secretary of State that has anything else but a focus on European affairs, and that is your own background on Far East. Did you sense at that point that the major theater of American operations or at least of action was going to shift out of Europe?

RUSK: It never shifted away from Europe because to the extent that Europe needed attention, it got the attention. But again, the question is where is the action. Now, in 1959 and 1960 the North Vietnamese made a decision to go after South Vietnam. They began to put troops in Laos; they began to set up their infiltration into South Vietnam. Southeast Asia was the principal subject of discussion between President Eisenhower and President Kennedy just before Inauguration, and the only recommendation that President Eisenhower made to President Kennedy was to put troops in Laos if necessary to stop what the North Vietnamese were trying to do in Laos.

[-195-]

It just happened that during my period as Secretary of State these Asian communist regimes were very active and aggressive. They not only had their regiments moved into

South Vietnam but regiments into Laos, assistance to the guerrillas in Cambodia, the training of guerrillas for Thailand, the movement of men and arms out of China into Burma, the Chinese participation in the tribal revolts in eastern India, North Korean infiltration into South Korea; so that our attention to the Far East was caused by what was happening in the Far East and not because of the accident that I personally had had a considerable interest in the Far East in my previous years. Had the Far East been stable and quiet and calm, this phenomenon would not have occurred.

O'BRIEN: Well, do you have a problem in the Department finding people once that these problems do begin to emerge in other areas of the world? Do you have problems in finding people to fill the key positions in State with an understanding, people with an understanding of Far East, of problems of other areas, the so-called developing nations, if you want to call it that?

RUSK: There's always a problem of staffing important jobs because people make the crucial difference. Unless you have capable people on important jobs things just don't go well. Fortunately, we have some considerable talents in the Foreign Service, and we could call on Foreign Service officers to do many of the crucial jobs that had to be done. I did not anticipate becoming Secretary of State. Therefore, I had not built up any personal coterie of my own younger assistants in whom I had complete confidence. I didn't bring anybody into the Department of State with me -- I had not expected to be Secretary of State -- so that I worked with what was there.

But the search for talent is a never-ending search because everything turns on the quality of the people who are on the key jobs. On the whole, I think we've done pretty well. I think the Foreign Service of the United States is the best foreign service in the world has a lot of talent in it, particularly among the younger men, and we have some very distinguished men in the Foreign Service like Llewellyn Thompson, Charles Bohlen, and Jimmy Riddleberger [James W. Riddleberger] and others who take real leadership. But there's always a shortage of men.

[-196-]

During World War II and just after World War II we gave very important tasks to relatively young men because we had to, and that developed a generation of people who were able to take high responsibility in public affairs. Now, we're losing that generation of people -- age is taking its toll -- so we're losing people like Robert Lovett and Jack McCloy and Ellsworth Bunker and Averell Harriman and Llewellyn Thompson and people like that. We don't have a clear generation on top leaders coming forward to take their place. We have a few -- Cyrus Vance is one; Nicholas Katzenbach would be another -- we have a few second-generation men. But Kennedy was faced with the problem of staffing throughout his Cabinet of course, but in the foreign affairs field of staffing with relatively new men, men who had not been tested by previous experience. And so we had a good deal of trial and error during the Kennedy years in staffing key positions.

O'BRIEN: Well, in retrospect, then, going back over U.S. policy in regards to NATO and the Common Market, the Soviet Union, MLF, do you have any reservations or anything that you today would have done differently?

RUSK: I think that probably the principal regret I have is that we were not able to stimulate our Western European friends to take a more active role in world affairs and to get them to look at the total world scene. When I tried to talk about matters outside the NATO areas at NATO foreign ministers meetings, I got the feeling that they felt that I was bringing in issues that were not the concern of NATO. Europe became indrawn, and we were not able to shake them out of that. I think that had Europe moved ahead dynamically to play a great European role in world affairs that things would have been much easier for the United States. But you had retractions. The British -- the Labor government, particularly -- wanted to cut back on its commitments abroad, and there was reluctance on the part of Europe to insert itself into major world problems. This isolationist trend in Europe was a problem for President Kennedy. It's now being matched by isolationist trends in the United States.

[-197-]

O'BRIEN: Well, I'm through with any questions. Do you have anything that you feel that should be added at this point?

RUSK: Turn it off a minute and let me think a minute.

O'BRIEN: Okay. [Interruption]

RUSK: One question which arises from time to time is this so-called special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. Bear in mind that this special relationship really started in World War II when Churchill and Roosevelt were carrying the main burden of the war against the Axis powers, and they fell into a natural partnership and what was a genuine special relationship because of that circumstance.

Now, our relations with Great Britain depend upon the extent to which we both are engaged in important problems. During the Kennedy years there was a very close working between ourselves and Great Britain because we were dealing with important issues together -- the Berlin Crisis, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Laos conference of 1962, economic matters, MFL, the nuclear structure in NATO, issues of that sort -- so we had a lot of business to transact with the British. In later years this diminished, and so to the extent that we and the British are working together on common problems, there develops a close relationship, but to the extent that that does not occur, then our relations with Britain become more normal and more like those with anybody else.

We had always supposed that if Britain went into the Common Market that Britain would take into Europe a special relationship with the United States and that that expanded Europe would have a very intimate relationship with the United States and that it would be

Europe that would have a special relationship rather than merely Great Britain. So we were rather set back when President de Gaulle tried to use the special relationship between Britain and the United States as an excuse for vetoing British membership in the Common Market because we were waiting and ready to transform that special relationship into a similar relationship with Europe as a whole.

[-198-]

See, one of our problems in dealing with Europe is that there is nobody to talk as "Europe;" there is no "Europe." It is not easy to deal with fourteen or fifteen individual countries as Europe, so that from the point of view of American diplomacy and American action we needed a unified Europe with whom we could act as a partner on important matters rather than dealing with a disparate group of fourteen or fifteen different nations.

But the special relationship with Great Britain was never seen by us as an obstacle to British entry into the Common Market. It just happened that we and the British were forced to work together on a great many things in common beginning with our entry into World War II. It was never based upon any special sentiments or any sense that we were picking and choosing among our European colleagues or that we favored Great Britain over Western Europe or that somehow we felt that the Anglo-Saxon element in the two countries meant that we and the British had special common interests together. There were common interests and they were important ones, but it was in the pursuit of those common interests that the special relationship developed. And we'd be glad to see the same special relationship develop with Europe.

O'BRIEN: Just one question on that: There is a problem here, though, isn't there, when some of the Commonwealth countries -- and I'm thinking, as an example, of Australia -- become involved in this because, of course, their relation as a Commonwealth country to Great Britain? Do you feel as Secretary of State and does the United States government feel much in the way of pressure from countries like Australia too, in a sense, take care of them in any relationship that Britain might achieve with the Common Market?

[-199-]

RUSK: There would be some trading problems if Commonwealth preferences gave way to British membership in the Common Market. This would be particularly true in the case in New Zealand, and there would have to be some adjustments made in the trade relations between New Zealand and the Common Market when Britain entered the Common Market. We were prepared to make some adjustments in our own trade relations with those countries to help in the transition. But, on the whole, we found that Australia and New Zealand did not actively oppose British entry into the Common Market, although they realized that that would cause some problems for them.

On political issues Australia and the United States are more close than Australia and Great Britain. The British withdrawal from east of Suez suggests a diminution of British

influence in Asia that the Australians have taken full account of, so that the Australians looked upon their friendship with the United States as being the fundamental relationship to their own security in the Pacific. And so the Commonwealth tie between Australia and Great Britain has shrunk in importance as the United States-Australian partnership in the Pacific has grown in importance. But we had no special problem with Australia and New Zealand about British entry into the Common Market.

O'BRIEN: This relationship with Australia is one that really shifts during the time that you're Secretary of State, doesn't it?

RUSK: To a considerable extent. We concluded the ANZUS [Australia, New Zealand, and the United States] Treaty with Australia at the time of the signing of the Japanese peace treaty. That ANZUS Treaty represents about as natural an arrangement as one can imagine because if there's anything that can be taken for granted is that the United States has an interest in the security of Australia and New Zealand in the Pacific area. We have to be interested both in the Atlantic and in the Pacific. So that I have never heard any criticism of the ANZUS Treaty from any quarter. It's just one of those fundamental facts of international life. But during my own period as Secretary of State, the partnership between Australia and the United States became very close, chiefly because of developments in Southeast Asia and the reluctance of Great

[-200-]

Britain to become involved in those events in Southeast Asia so that Australia and Great Britain moved apart from each other whereas we and Australia moved closer together.

O'BRIEN: Do you have anything more?

RUSK: I think not.

O'BRIEN: Well, thank you for a very informative and interesting interview today, Secretary Rusk.

RUSK: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-201-]