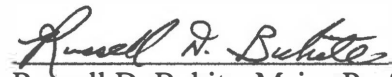
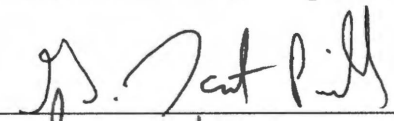
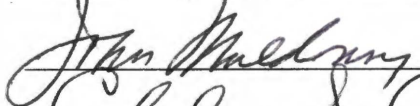
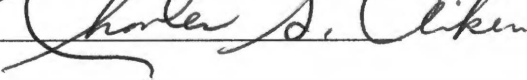


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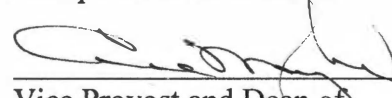
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Mark Kenneth Williams entitled "Dean Rusk: Southern Statesman." I have examined the final paper copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in History.


Russell D. Buhite, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Vice Provost and Dean of
Graduate Studies

**DEAN RUSK:
SOUTHERN STATESMAN**

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Mark Kenneth Williams

August, 2003

Thesis
2003b
.W566

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a biographically informed study of Dean Rusk, one of the most important American policy officials in the twentieth century. As an assistant secretary of state under President Truman and as secretary of state during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Rusk was practitioner of an ideology centered on principles of honor, credibility, fidelity, democracy, and the sanctity of national sovereignty. Dean Rusk: Southern Statesman is significant because it combines components of the methodologies of social and cultural history with the primary source material of military/ diplomatic studies to produce an original analysis of the development of Rusk's worldview and its effects on the American Cold War experience.

This work begins with an examination of the roots of Rusk's ideology, which are traced to his early years in the American South. A native Georgian, Rusk was born in 1909 and grew up in poverty on a rural tenant farm, as well as in urban Atlanta, and he resided in the South until 1931. The dissertation delineates the course of Rusk's early life from his childhood and adolescence in Georgia to his days as a college student in North Carolina, analyzing several key aspects of the Southern cultural experience influencing his ideological development. Arguing that Rusk's formative experiences in the region provide the key to understanding the statesman's nature and motivations, the author posits that Southern culture engendered Rusk's worldview.

After evaluating how Rusk's formative experiences in the South were reenforced by education at Oxford and military service during World War II, the application and

effect of his worldview during policy debate over issues such as the Korean War, Sino-American relations, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Vietnam War are examined. The research material for this project is comprised mainly of primary sources, including memoirs, family correspondence, oral histories, and government documents, many of which are recently declassified.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"History sees with a compound eye through many facets...."¹
Dean Rusk to Robert Kennedy, 1965

Few officials wielded greater influence on twentieth century American diplomacy than Dean Rusk. Rising quickly from mid-level bureaucrat during the Truman years to secretary of state during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Rusk forged a career in government service that spanned most of the history of the Cold War, involving him in many of the most important foreign policy decisions of the period. This important but frequently misunderstood American diplomat, whose tenure as secretary of state is surpassed only by Cordell Hull's, merits increased and vigorous scholarly attention.

A native Georgian, Rusk was born in 1909 and grew up in poverty on a rural tenant farm, as well as in urban Atlanta, residing in the South until 1931. Educated at Davidson College and Oxford, he served in the China-Burma-India theater in World War II, entering the Truman administration at the conclusion of the conflict. As an assistant secretary of state under Truman, Rusk implemented the containment doctrine, shaped policy toward the newly emergent states of Israel and the People's Republic of China, wrestled with decolonization, and helped guide America through the Korean War. In the

¹Transcript of Telephone Conversation, Robert Kennedy to Rusk, July 7, 1965, Folder: Transcripts of Telephone Calls 7/11/65-10/09/65, Box 54, Record Group (hereafter cited as RG) 5379, Rusk Files, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

1960s, when the United States was perhaps at the historic apex of its economic and military power relative to the rest of the globe, Secretary of State Rusk was at the center of an American foreign policy structure beset by crises over Berlin, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, North Korea, and the Middle East. He was a major architect and vocal public proponent of United States involvement in Vietnam, and for millions of Americans, he became emblematic of the government's efforts to prosecute the war.

Despite Rusk's obvious significance, for most of the nearly four decades since his tenure as secretary of state, he has remained a somewhat puzzling figure to scholars of the Cold War. Indeed, in an early assessment of the Kennedy presidency, the enigmatic elements of Rusk and his diplomacy prompted historian Arthur Schlesinger to hope that "historians in due course may be able to ascertain what the Secretary wanted the government to do during the great crises of those years." That Rusk has defied more precise examination for so long is due in part to his reticent, self-effacing nature and because the bulk of the documentary evidence relative to his years in office has only recently come to light through declassification. Moreover, Rusk has been inextricably entwined with the intense confusion, controversy, and debate surrounding America's experience in Vietnam.²

The Vietnam War is the aspect of Rusk's career to which the non-academic community is most strongly connected through familiarity and the attribution of singular significance to the conflict, and the general public's lingering and contrasting images of

²Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House (New York, 1965), 403.

Rusk and the struggle have obscured perception of the secretary of state. To his most extreme liberal detractors Rusk has seemed an immoral war monger, to staunch supporters a somewhat benign yet patriotic defender of American interests and traditions. Others have viewed him as a myopic and overly aggressive interventionist, while those holding to conservative revisionism of the Vietnam War have labeled Rusk an inept and cautious bureaucrat who worked behind the scenes to restrict the military, thus denying the United States a genuine opportunity for victory in the struggle.

Initial scholarly evaluations of Rusk mirror the American public's varied but largely negative assessment. He emerges from early portraits of the Kennedy-Johnson years, such as Arthur Schlesinger's, A Thousand Days (1965), and David Halberstam's, The Best and the Brightest (1969), as a bland, ineffectual figure unable or unwilling to control an unwieldy State Department. Conventional and misguided in his assumptions and recommendations regarding the Cold War, Rusk was often marginalized by more aggressive and innovative rival officials. Such thinking, which quickly gained credence as historiographical orthodoxy, began to be revised in 1980 with the publication of the first of only three available scholarly monographs on Rusk, diplomatic historian Warren Cohen's, Dean Rusk. Cohen's work delineates and analyzes Rusk's diplomacy while offering valuable --and often favorable--insights regarding the range and depth of Rusk's influence, particularly during the Truman years. Focusing narrowly on Rusk's years in government, Cohen's effort leaves the reader with little sense of Rusk "the person."³

³ Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, 401-405; David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest (New York, 1969), 32-37, 307-329; Warren Cohen, Dean Rusk (Totowa, 1980).

In Waging Peace and War: Dean Rusk in the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson Years (1988), University of Georgia professor of international law, Thomas Schoenbaum, takes a much more traditional, biographic approach to examining Rusk. He echoes many of Cohen's conclusions and enriches understanding of his subject through extensive use of oral histories and the attention devoted to Rusk's pre-government life, but his work fails at times to place Rusk's diplomacy within the broader context of United States foreign relations. Significantly, and through no fault of the authors, both Cohen's and Schoenbaum's works are of limited value because they were written before declassification of large amounts of primary source material.⁴

Thomas Zeiler's, Dean Rusk: Defending the American Mission Abroad (2000), forms part of a series of books intended primarily for use in undergraduate and graduate classrooms and is therefore necessarily--but severely-- restricted in the depth of its research. Zeiler argues that as an adult, Rusk became enamored with an ideology of Wilsonian idealism that emphasized a reliance on the rule of international law. Later, fascist aggression, World War II, and the early years of the Cold War led Rusk toward a "neo-Wilsonian" outlook that informed his diplomacy. While Zeiler's paradigm is useful, the secretary of state's ideology needs more extensive and accurate examination.⁵

⁴ Thomas Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War: Dean Rusk in the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson Years (New York, 1988).

⁵ Thomas Zeiler, Dean Rusk: Defending the American Mission Abroad (Wilmington, 2000).

Dean Rusk: Southern Statesman is not a "life and times" study but a biographically informed analysis of Rusk's worldview and its application to American foreign policy during the Cold War. Accordingly, it strives to answer the following questions: What was the origin, nature, and evolution of Rusk's ideology? How did his worldview affect his policy positions and prescriptions? And in turn, what influence did Rusk have upon the various, issues, debates, and crises shaping the course of American diplomacy during the last half of the twentieth century?

Part I of this project explores the education of a Southern statesman, examining how Rusk's tenure as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford during the 1930s and his military service in Asia during World War II reinforced a remarkably stable and consistent set of core values and assumptions acquired from the formative experience of growing up in the New South. A portion of this work's value derives from the development and employment of an original interpretive framework, illuminating the importance of ideology, issues of societal identity, and culture in shaping officials and their diplomacy as well as identifying aspects of Rusk's worldview reflective of the broader American historical experience.

This is the first work to view Rusk through the lens of his cultural background, defining culture as "the socially constructed context of communication and interaction that produces meaning among humans." It emphasizes the influence of culture in molding Rusk's ideology as well as the importance of cultural history as a methodological device that adds depth and breadth to the context of Rusk's decision making. However, this study's focus is how the late nineteenth-early twentieth century South as a place and

time influenced Rusk *alone*--it does not suggest that other officials from the region were affected in precisely the same manner. The dissertation appreciates the existence of agency and is not an attempt at cultural determinism.⁶

In the sense that this project seeks to "take ideas seriously" through examining Rusk's worldview, it is part of the "new" Cold War history advocated by historian John Lewis Gaddis. The roots of Rusk's ideology are traced to his early years in the American South, and his formative experiences in the region provide the key to a true understanding of his nature, motivations, and style of policy making.⁷

Rusk's immersion in a Southern culture awash in religious intensity, history, and patriotism engendered a moralism grounded on principles of justice, democracy, the sanctity of national sovereignty, and a firm belief in the importance of acquiring and maintaining honor and credibility. Furthermore, the same cultural tides that carved Rusk's moralism also fashioned a reverence for the military and the power of armed might. Thus, Rusk's ideology, most aptly described as "Southern moralism," centered on a highly developed and distinctive set of ideals tempered by the occasional use of pragmatic methods-- including military force--in defense and promotion of principled objectives. To Rusk, the notion of using armed power to enforce and promote ideals was not

⁶ Robert Dean, "Tradition, Cause and Effect, and the Cultural History of International Relations," Diplomatic History Vol.24, No. 4 (Fall 2000): 617. For a broader application of the Southern experience to American foreign policy, see Joseph A. Fry, Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations 1789-1973 (Baton Rouge, 2002).

⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History (Oxford, 1997), 281-283.

inherently contradictory. Indeed, as this study demonstrates, since the inception of Rusk's worldview during his youth, moralism and an appreciation for force and its uses had always coexisted and strengthened each other through a symbiotic relationship. In sum, Rusk's approach to foreign policy originated in the culture of the American South and was guided by a dichotomous ideology resting on the twin pillars of moralism and circumscribed pragmatism.

Part II of Dean Rusk: Southern Statesman examines Rusk's efforts to shape policy in a changing world, covering American diplomacy toward Europe, the Developing World, and the Korean and Vietnam wars. A largely topical approach is utilized in analysis of Rusk's role as an influential policymaker in the Truman years and as secretary of state during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. This section moves beyond a focus on the nature of Rusk's belief system, affording the opportunity to examine the application and effects of his Southern moralism within the historical narrative of the critically important years of his tenure in office. Part II develops a significant reassessment of Rusk regarding his role as bureaucrat and his relationships with other officials as well as his participation in several crucial areas of American diplomacy: Although a flawed administrator, Rusk was not a passive presidential advisor; he was a central figure in shaping America's response to the Cold War who was more flexible in approach toward many issues than previously assumed.

Anyone undertaking such a topic is immediately struck by the overwhelming volume of primary source material now available. Wrestling with thousands of pages of memoranda and summary minutes of meetings leaves the researcher in empathy with

Rusk's daily efforts to keep abreast of a myriad of concurrent issues and crises, some of which are captured on audio tape.

In 1962, President Kennedy installed a White House taping system used to record Oval Office phone conversations and discussions as well as meetings in the Cabinet Room. Upon ascendancy to the presidency, Lyndon Johnson implemented a similar but expanded system and also taped extensively. The Kennedy-Johnson presidential recordings offer exciting and important new dimensions to Rusk scholarship. Since Rusk preferred to discuss policy alone with presidents if possible and without notes or minutes of the discussions compiled, the tapes provide a valuable portion of the primary record that would otherwise be lost. Further, the recordings enhance understanding of decision making because they capture the expressive and meaningful nuances of conversation that are almost always missing from written memoranda and minutes of meetings.⁸

It is highly unlikely that Rusk was aware of the existence of White House taping systems. Knowledge of presidential recordings was a closely guarded secret of the Kennedy-Johnson administrations, restricted to a precious few aides and family members. Had Rusk known of the secret taping, he probably would have been greatly disturbed by a practice that violated his profound senses of privacy and propriety. Wary of FBI machinations and abuses of power, Rusk once warned the director of the FBI, J. Edgar

⁸ Michael Beschloss, ed., Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-1964 (New York, 1997), 552. Additional information on presidential taping is found in edited but reliable collections of recordings such as Timothy Naftali et al., eds., John F. Kennedy The Great Crises, Volumes I-III (New York, 2001); and Michael Beschloss, ed., Reaching for Glory Lyndon Johnson's Secret White House Tapes, 1964-1965 (New York, 2001).

Hoover, in President Kennedy's presence that he would resign his position and publicize his reasons for doing so if ever placed under electronic surveillance by Hoover's agency.⁹

Although Rusk routinely had stenographers listening and taking notes on a "dead" telephone extension during phone conversations conducted at the State Department, he was following commonly known Washington, D.C. bureaucratic practice. And as Michael Beschloss has observed, taping carried a negative connotation not associated with stenography because conversation participants could always dispute the accuracy of written notes, while refuting words caught on tape was extremely difficult. Seeking to preserve the confidentiality of presidential decision making, Rusk destroyed most State Department transcripts of his phone conversations with Kennedy and Johnson before leaving office. While this dissertation is by no means the definitive study of Dean Rusk, it represents the most complete evaluation to date of the historical record, relying heavily upon the enormous amount of documents and tapes declassified during the last decade. Such material is essential to a more comprehensive chronicle of one of America's most important diplomats, whose story begins in the early twentieth century South.¹⁰

⁹ Dean Rusk, As I Saw It (New York, 1990), 197.

¹⁰ Beschloss, ed., Taking Charge The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-1964, 548.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CRUCIBLE OF SOUTHERN CULTURE

Cherokee County

In the rural portions of Cherokee County, Georgia, cold winter winds and rain have long raged unobstructed over rugged landscape, wrapping around hills and slicing through stands of loblolly pine. On the stormy night of February 9, 1909, America's fifty-fourth secretary of state was born in a house built by his father, Robert Hugh Rusk, on a forty acre, red clay tenant farm. The infant was named David Dean Rusk, but he was immediately known as Dean, the family having taken his middle name after the horse that carried a doctor eight miles through the rain to assist in the delivery. The Rusk farm was harsh, hilly, unrelenting land that had been in the family for generations. In 1791, three Rusk brothers sailed from northern Ireland, landing in Charleston, South Carolina. One of these brothers, David Rusk, eventually moved westward into Georgia and established claim to property in present day Cherokee County, approximately thirty miles north of Atlanta. Nestled in the southern tip of the Appalachian mountain region, the Rusk farm was a "man-killing place to make a living," where David's grandson, Robert Rusk, Robert's wife, Elizabeth Frances Clotfelter Rusk, and their five children eked out a hardscrabble existence based largely on subsistence agriculture.¹

¹ Thomas Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War: Dean Rusk In The Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson Years, 32; Oral History F, 1-4, Dean Rusk Collection, Richard Russell Library, University of Georgia, Athens.

Although the Rusk family moved to Atlanta, Georgia when Dean was four, he was reared on stories of farm life and would spend many summers during his childhood and teenage years toiling on the farms of friends and extended family members in Cherokee County. The Rusks were "farm people," and their rural values shaped Dean's worldview. Dean loved his family and was proud of its heritage, but throughout his life he associated life on the farm with brutal poverty and grueling work, and accordingly he refused to be buried in the Rusks' Cherokee County family cemetery.²

While living on the farm, Robert Rusk realized an annual cash profit of approximately one hundred dollars through the sale of cotton and dairy products, and he also taught school several months during the year to bring in extra income. The Rusks owned various animals, including chickens, hogs, two cows, and one horse. Since the cows were needed for milk and the chickens for their eggs, pork became a staple of the family diet. Hogs were killed during winter to facilitate preservation of the meat, and the practical Rusks ate "everything but the squeal," resulting in a monotonous diet of pork and farm vegetables occasionally punctuated by chicken and store luxuries such as sweet pickles, prunes, or Vienna sausages. The Rusks' oldest son, Parks, retained fond memories of the traditional country cooking of his youth and later facetiously lamented the "signs of our modern culture" creeping into the food at Rusk family reunions, noting that at the 1979 reunion "Estelle Cook brought two boxes of Kentucky Fried Chicken,

² Oral History F, 1-2, Dean Rusk Collection; Richard Rusk Oral History, Dean Rusk Collection.

shame on her--- in the original Colonel cartoons."³

The term "trading" is still used by some Southerners to describe the process of conducting local commercial transactions, but its origins lie in an earlier era in which pervasive and abject poverty necessitated the existence of a barter economy. In the early twentieth century, the Rusks, like many other rural Southerners, at times literally swapped their agricultural produce for items at the general store. For the Rusks, this meant going three miles to the local country store, or for the acquisition of more expensive items, journeying into nearby Roswell or Woodstock.

Elizabeth Rusk had attended normal school for teacher training before marrying her husband Robert, but she accepted the almost daily toil that was her destiny as a farm wife without complaint. Most likely, Dean took his wry sense of humor from his mother. When Elizabeth became ill in 1959 and was visited at her sickbed by her sons Parks, Roger, and Dean, Dean said, "Well mother, here are your three freckle-faced boys." Elizabeth peered at her sons and replied, "Here is your freckle-faced mother." Elizabeth Rusk made much of her family's quilts and clothing, but giving vent to her frugal nature, she fashioned underwear from used flour sacks. As the fourth of five children and the youngest son in the family, Dean Rusk quickly became accustomed to wearing "hand-me-downs" and learned not to expect new clothes. The children's shoes were made by Robert Rusk, and during warm weather they went barefoot. The family lived in a three room,

³ Oral History F, 4-5, Dean Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk, As I Saw It, 33-38; Parks Rusk to Helen Rusk, 6-25-79, Folder 4, Box 1, Series II, Parks Rusk Collection, Richard Russell Library, University of Georgia, Athens.

wooden clapboard house built by Robert that was one of the first in the area to have glass windows. Winter meant enduring the cold that easily penetrated the uninsulated walls and braving the elements to use the family outhouse, equipped with Sears, Roebuck catalogs for toilet paper. In the summer, the hot Georgia climate wrought havoc on the Rusk home, which was protected only by shade trees. The Rusks' nearest neighbors lived miles away, and such relative isolation engendered extremely strong bonds of family unity and loyalty. Days were typically spent in agricultural work with family members, and nights were occupied relaxing with friends and kinfolk in or around the farmhouse.⁴

As in many Southern families, the Rusk clan was dominated by the patriarch. Robert Rusk was an intelligent, romantic, humble man endowed--or perhaps afflicted--with what the family would come to call "the Rusk reserve:" an acutely undemonstrative, careful, and at times inscrutable, nature. Although he loved his family deeply, affection was meted out sparingly. While Robert Rusk's aversion to intimacy was undoubtedly difficult for his family to understand and endure, to him it must have seemed an asset, allowing him to appear strong and focused and to bear burdens without complaint. Family members speculate that it was the harsh nature of Georgia highland farming that rendered the Rusks a "stern people." According to Dean's brother Roger, the Rusk men did not "talk about the things that were important." In other words, parental and sibling love and concern were assumed but often not overtly expressed.⁵

⁴ "Family History," Folder 4, Box 1, Series II, Parks Rusk Collection; Oral History F, 4-5, Dean Rusk Collection; Oral History F, 4-5, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 36-37.

⁵ Richard Rusk Oral History, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 35.

Information regarding the relationship between Robert and Dean Rusk is scant and opaque, and Dean would later speak of it only with great reluctance. Robert Rusk was a stern and at times emotionally frigid man, and perhaps Dean's reticence in talking about his father was born of an area of disagreement or resentment coloring the dynamic of the relationship. More likely, since Dean inherited the "Rusk reserve," his discomfort with speaking openly about deeply personal ties prevented him from being more forthcoming. Once, when asked by his son, Richard, to clarify his relationship with Robert Rusk, Dean quickly moved the conversation in another direction. Undeterred, Richard entered Dean's bedroom two days later, announced "Hey Pop, I love you," and was not surprised when his father responded only with "Thank you." As Richard recounts in the forward to his father's memoir, the pair then had the following conversation:

"Well, what did he [Robert Rusk] think of you?"

"I don't know," he said.

"Did he love you?" I asked.

"I suppose that he did," replied my father, "although I never heard him say that."

"Well, did you love him?" I asked.

"Knock it off, Rich! You know I don't talk about these things."

I kept after him.

Of course I loved my father!" He finally exploded, glaring at me.⁶

Dean Rusk later attempted to bridge the gulf of intimacy between himself and his father by relating small expressions of esteem and affection in letters written while studying in Europe. On the occasion of his father's retirement, he wrote, "I know it sounds funny for me to be congratulating you on work that you've done for me and the rest of us - - somebody ought to be congratulating me for having you for a Dad." Whatever the exact

⁶ Rusk, As I Saw It, 17.

nature of their relationship, it is clear that Robert and Dean Rusk shared an abiding mutual respect for one another.⁷

Although outward affection was not often apparent in the Robert Rusk household, punishment was another matter. The Rusks were strict disciplinarians, and they taught their children that there were definite--and frequently immediate and violent--consequences for disobedience or lapses in character. Dean's sister Margaret recalled, "We were expected to be well behaved when away from home; if we misbehaved at home that was taken care of in the form of warnings, spankings, and switchings, by either parent. We were not petted after punishment nor apologized to for it. It was up to us whether we wanted to go through with it again or not. Disobedience was the main invitation to punishment." The Rusk children were expected to do their best in every endeavor and to exemplify good behavior, and Dean was punished as a fourth grader for bringing home a report card that contained a "C" (denoting average performance) in conduct. Rusk remembered: "Father gave me a whipping because of that C, using a leather strap he called Billy. Mother never used Billy on us; she used switches instead, and we'd have to cut our own."⁸

Robert Rusk hailed from a family of eleven children and was very educated for a rural Southerner of his class and generation. He had planned to be a Presbyterian minister, and adhering to the Church's emphasis on an educated clergy, attended Davidson College

⁷ Dean Rusk to Robert Rusk, November 14, 1933, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

⁸ "A Few Words On The Parents of Dean Rusk," February 16, 1964, Folder 4, Box 1, Series II, Parks Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 52.

in North Carolina during the 1890s. Active in a variety of pursuits, Rusk played the violin and was center on the college football team. But when his father died during his senior year, he was forced to leave school and return home to Georgia. Since Rusk had attended college, his siblings decided that his education would count as his share of their father's estate, and he received no inheritance. Rusk hoped to pursue ecclesiastical service, but he developed a mysterious throat ailment soon after his career began that forced him to leave the ministry. He was so soft spoken that others in a room had to be silent in order to hear him. The exact nature of his throat problem has never been determined, and the Rusk family seems to have accepted Robert's reason for leaving the ministry at face value. Quite possibly, Rusk realized that his quiet nature would leave him ill-served in an age in which many successful Southern ministers were expected to yell--if not gyrate--during the course of their sermons.⁹

Unaccustomed to failure, Rusk's inability to fulfill his life long ambition and publicly stated goal of becoming a minister left him deeply disappointed and sent him spiraling into a state of profound depression. The family was so concerned Robert might develop suicidal tendencies that Elizabeth Rusk began discreetly monitoring her husband as he shaved with a straight edged razor each morning. Despite his personal torment, Robert was committed to enduring and providing for his family. Accordingly, he threw himself into farming a portion of the Rusk homestead, which he rented from relatives, as his vocation. Perhaps Robert's failure to achieve success in his chosen profession helped

⁹ Oral History F, 3-4, Dean Rusk Collection; Oral History H, 35, Dean Rusk Collection; Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War, 31.

foster the driving ambition and disciplined focus that Dean Rusk would bring to almost every endeavor he embraced as a young man and adult.¹⁰

Religion has always played an important role in shaping Southern society, and it was no less of an influence in the Rusk household. Religion formed the initial means of establishing personal values, as well as standards of behavior and rules governing human relationships, for the members of the Rusk family. Robert and Elizabeth Rusk espoused a fundamentalist brand of Presbyterianism that was a seemingly contradictory mix of fatalism, drawn from belief in original sin and Calvinist predestination, and an activist, evangelical, reform idealism. Such theology was permeated by a dualistic, almost Manicheian, strain that conceptualized individual and corporate human existence as a perpetual struggle between the forces of good and evil in which good would ultimately triumph. In a community dependant on agriculture, and with health care standards that were nearly premodern, the Rusks viewed falling cotton prices and diseases, such as typhoid fever and pellagra, as "part of the environment in which the good Lord had put us." According to Margaret Rusk, Robert and Elizabeth were "devoted Christians, but not of the sentimental or sanctimonious type. They were strong fundamentalists and taught us that God has a definite plan for the world and all mankind, and explained it to us as we grew and could absorb it. This greatly influenced their lives and their efforts in rearing their children." To the Rusks and many Southerners like them, there was a clear demarcation between right and wrong, leaving little room for any notions of moral

¹⁰ Richard Rusk Oral History, Dean Rusk Collection.

relativity.¹¹

As historian Ted Ownby has noted, by the late nineteenth century evangelical Protestantism had moved far beyond its colonial roots as a form of lower-class fringe protest and enjoyed prominence as the dominant form of religion in the South. Much of the focus of such evangelicalism was on instilling values of self-control and self-denial and curbing the excesses of an exuberant, frequently competitive, and inherently "sinful" Southern white male culture. Reform efforts emphasized a more personal relationship with God based on repentance and "salvation" but also sought the curtailment and/ or elimination of pursuits likely to work against values of home life and personal piety. This meant combatting not only traditional forms of male activity, such as gambling, excessive drinking, cock fighting, and gratuitous violence, but also more modern forms of potentially destructive entertainment and popular culture such as certain magazines, movies, and radio programs.¹²

Alcohol, playing cards, and dice embodied the sinfulness of male culture and were generally not allowed in the Rusk household. An alcohol related incident reveals Dean Rusk's early intelligence and sense of humor. On one occasion Elizabeth Rusk was sick and the family borrowed corn whiskey for medicinal purposes. As a joke, three year old Dean told family members that he had taken the whiskey bottle and tried "dus a drop." When the family soon found Dean curled on the hearth asleep and could not rouse him,

¹¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 40-42; "A Few Words On The Parents Of Dean Rusk," Folder 4, Box 1, Series II, Parks Rusk Collection.

¹² Ted Ownby, Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920 (Chapel Hill, 1990), 1-18.

they assumed he had drunken far more than a drop, and they became very concerned. At that moment, Dean leaped from the hearth and shouted "Boo!!!"¹³

Robert and Elizabeth Rusk were very determined to instill unquestioned devotion to their religious values in their children. This was effected through the Christian example they attempted to display in their conduct, but also through an extremely rigid regimen of church attendance and religious education. Robert Rusk conducted fireside family Bible readings and occasionally read and chanted Psalms from a Hebrew Bible. When the famously dramatic evangelist Billy Sunday held revival services in Atlanta, the Rusk family attended the event, and they made sure that Dean went to a special children's service. As Dean later recalled, Sunday's words and theatrics intrigued him, piquing his curiosity:

It was from that that I became interested in the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shall not commit adultery." Because he [Sunday] had a long table up there on the platform with him, and he was standing on this table at the beginning of this service ten colored vases....Then he told a story about a little boy who did this, and did that, and did the other thing, played hooky from Sunday School, and told a lie to his parents, and did all sorts of things. And after he got through telling the story, Billy Sunday took a hammer and went over to this table and went right through the Ten Commandments. Every one of the Commandments that this little boy had broken that day, he took his hammer and smashed that vase. But there was one vase left standing: the seventh vase. So I had to go home and find out what the Seventh Commandment was all about.¹⁴

In addition to the teachings of evangelists, the Rusks were interested in the relationship between religion and science, and Dean and his father once attended a speech given by defender of fundamentalist Christianity, self-proclaimed champion of the

¹³ Family Reminiscence, Folder 4, Box 1, Series II, Parks Rusk Collection.

¹⁴ Oral History H, 31-35, Dean Rusk Collection.

interests of rural America, and erstwhile Democratic presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan. Bryan's topic was the alleged evils and fallacies of the theory of evolution. Nearing the end of his speech, Bryan declared, "They call me an ignoramus." He then enumerated his various honorary degrees and stated, "Now I challenge any son of an ape to match degrees with me." According to Rusk, the crowd "loved it. We just roared."¹⁵

The Rusk children were almost always present in church on the Sundays when services were held by a "circuit" minister. The day began with children's Bible study, called Sunday School, followed by the morning worship service. After lunch, the children returned to church in the late afternoon for meetings of a youth organization known as Christian Endeavor and then attended a Sunday evening service. What little time that was left to themselves was not spent participating in games or playing with toys. Instead, the Rusks were expected to either study their Bibles or engage in physical exercise in the form of walks. They were not allowed to read the comic strips from the Sunday newspaper, although such "funny papers" could be saved and read on Monday. Dean Rusk recalled: "I never had a drink of alcoholic liquor until I got to Oxford at the age of twenty-two. So we were pretty law-abiding, straight kind of people in those days. The injunctions of the Bible were serious to us and we didn't fool around very much."¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid., 32.

¹⁶ Oral History F, 6, 13, Dean Rusk Collection; Oral History H, 19, Dean Rusk Collection.

Instead of bridling under such religiosity, Dean Rusk embraced it, and religion was a major formative influence. The structured ethical code, idealism, and altruism of the Christian faith appealed to him, and Rusk pursued religious education and participation in church activities with zeal and seriousness of purpose. Rusk's church awarded tiny pearls for the memorization of scripture, and he accumulated "a long string of pearls" for memorizing scripture passages and whole chapters from the New Testament. Church life also enabled rural folk to socialize and assume leadership roles and positions of respect and influence outside the home. For Rusk, the Christian Endeavor youth organization offered a public outlet for expressing religious conviction and the opportunity to develop valuable social and leadership skills. He became state president at the age of twelve, and in an era before driver's licenses, drove himself from town to town for Endeavor meetings in an old "Model-T" Ford car. The culmination of Rusk's early religious training was his plan to become a Presbyterian minister, abandoned during college.¹⁷

Although Rusk later renounced many of the fundamentalists' literal interpretations of the Bible and embraced a more mainstream form of Presbyterianism, he retained his belief in the tenets of Christianity, read the entire Bible several times throughout his life, and left instructions for a Presbyterian minister to preside at his funeral. In 1986, Issac Asimov, distinguished scientist and president of the American Humanism Association, contacted Rusk attempting to enlist his support in the Association's efforts against a movement to establish a "moment of silence" for prayer and meditation at the beginning

¹⁷ Oral History F, 6, Dean Rusk Collection.

of the day in public schools across the nation. In his written reply, Rusk deplored public officials' use of religion for political and state gain, but warned Asimov that "I think your own organized humanism is in some danger of developing its own dogma-- a tendency which you should watch if you are to avoid the same errors which you deplore."

Drawing on the religious conservatism of his youth, Rusk added:

Our First Amendment prohibits the 'establishment' of a religion. We know what established religions are. The queen is, among other things, the Defender of the Faith in England. Most Moslem countries have an established religion. In this country we have expanded that constitutional porhibition [*sic*] into a separation of church and state which is nearing the point where atheism is established as the official doctrine of the state. This is despite the fact that the Supreme Court itself meets with an invocation of God's protection; both Houses of Congress open their sessions with prayers; most of our citizens take oaths in court and before congressional committees ending with 'so help me God.'¹⁸

The late nineteenth-early twentieth century South was an ordered society revolving around an idealized, generally unbending socioeconomic-racial hierarchy. At the top were wealthy whites, followed in descending order of status and power by the white middle class, poor whites, and blacks.

White ascendancy was maintained largely through manipulation of traditional Southern societal customs and tensions. Blacks were legally marginalized through gradual implementation of discriminatory "Jim Crow" legislation, and wealthy whites made determined efforts to keep low income whites and blacks politically disunified and tied to economically debilitating agricultural labor such as tenant farming. Techniques

¹⁸ Oral History F, 6, Dean Rusk Collection; Oral History H, 32, Dean Rusk Collection; Richard Rusk Oral History, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk to Asimov, August 28, 1986, Folder: General Correspondence, Box 1, Subseries A, Series IV, Dean Rusk Collection.

used in attempting to enforce the racial-socioeconomic-political order ranged from sophisticated cajoling to raw, violent coercion, and the penalties--especially for blacks--for attempting to move beyond one's delineated position in society could be swift and devastating. Thus, acquiring and maintaining a firm sense of one's "place" was often central to surviving in Southern society. Adherence to the traditional Southern "code of honor" provided a means for many whites to define and comprehend their position and role in the complex web of racial, socioeconomic, and political relationships at the heart of a tragically flawed, hopelessly nostalgic, fiercely proud, and at times seemingly moribund South.

Much of distinguished historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown's work on the American South has emphasized the role of honor in shaping white male behavior. In a groundbreaking examination of Southern culture, not limited to the antebellum period, Wyatt-Brown defines honor as a "cluster of ethical rules, most readily found in societies of small communities, by which judgements of behavior are ratified by community consensus."¹⁹

According to Wyatt-Brown, the concept of a code of honor in Southern society is an Indo-European heritage transplanted to North America by Scottish, Welsh, and Irish immigrants, and it has both internal and external components. Internally, honor provides the individual with self-worth, diluting chaos and imparting purpose to life through restriction of choices. Because honor establishes guidelines for appropriate behavior in society, and since honor is reputation (due to constant community evaluation of an

¹⁹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor (New York, 1982), xv. For a more recent examination of the workings of honor in the antebellum South, see Kenneth S. Greenberg, Honor and Slavery (Princeton, 1996).

individual's public actions), honor is also inherently external. The confluence of the internal and external aspects of honor render it an "ethical mediator between the individual and the community by which he is assessed and in which he must locate himself in relation to others." Adherence to the Southern construct of honor was not restricted to planter elites and their postbellum cultural descendants --who sought to mimic the chivalry and customs of England's landed gentry-- but permeated, with varying intensity, nearly every strata of Southern society.²⁰

As with many rural Southern men, especially poor whites, farm culture was the catalyst for the initial development and manifestation of the conception of honor among the male members of the Rusk family. Dean Rusk remembered: "Farming was the only life our family expected to follow, and we didn't engage in self-pity.... We knew that we were poor, but we had a lot of pride and didn't think of ourselves as poor. We kept ourselves clean and our clothes washed." Success in agriculture required mastery of nature, and a man's masculinity, sense of self-worth, and reputation were often measured by his physical prowess, endurance, resolve, and general ability to do the grueling work dictated by life on the farm. Men took great pride in their farm work, and Robert Rusk set the standard for his household, as his son Dean recalled: "Weeding, gathering the crops, pulling fodder, picking cotton, cutting sorghum cane--we did everything by hand. Father helped compensate by working exceptionally hard, and he inspired the rest of us. He took pride in his farming--had a good eye for plowing straight furrows for example."²¹

²⁰ Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, 14.

²¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 40, 39.

Robert Rusk's efforts in digging the family well serve as a metaphor for his vocational life, an existence characterized by blind, dogged determination in the face of recurrent, seemingly intractable obstacles. Rusk and a sharecropper selected a site for the well and dug for thirty days in the hard Georgia dirt with a pick and shovel before hitting rock. Rusk believed that men did not shrink from challenges in life and that such problems were met with grit and focused hard work. Once a decision was made and a course was set, an endeavor had to be seen through to completion. Accordingly, instead of finding a more suitable location for his well, he bore holes in the rock with a steel drill and sledgehammer and filled the holes with dynamite, blasting the rock in an attempt to penetrate deeper. After ten days of this process, Rusk had progressed only nine feet. Unwavering in his determination to conquer the earth, Rusk continued his slow, grinding labor until he finally reached water after blasting an additional twenty-six feet.²²

As Ted Ownby has demonstrated, many recreational activities and "work sharing" events often had a competitive edge designed to exhibit farming ability and/ or masculine toughness. Group tasks, such as ground clearing , hog killing, and well digging, were opportunities for personal distinction and public acclaim if completed successfully, but they were also potential occasions of shame. If a man grew too fatigued before a field was cleared or could not stomach the sights and sounds of killing a hog, he risked personal and public dishonor.²³

²² Ibid., 35-36.

²³ Ownby, Subduing Satan, 89-99.

Although a farmer's sense of honor was shaped by work, it was also determined by his reputation for keeping his word. In a world marred by poverty and illiteracy in which farmers depended on family members and neighbors for help with work, reading deeds and wills, borrowing, medical care, and emergency assistance, mendacity was frowned upon, and honesty and trust were essential and highly esteemed commodities. In rural Cherokee County, "Borrowing was called neighboring. If you had something and your neighbor needed it, you let him have it, not waiting for him to ask. Of course, charging him would have been considered 'unneighborly'." Since many farm folk could expect to own relatively few material items, their "good name" was a prized possession earned through honesty, working hard, and maintaining commitments. There were few written contracts, and a man's word was truly his bond. Inevitably, legal disputes did occur, and late nineteenth century Cherokee County community members turned to Dean's grandfather, Justice of the Peace James Rusk, for redress. People trusted Rusk to render a fair and honorable judgement concerning their problems, and "they simply met with my grandfather under a tree and got them settled. Rarely did anything go to the county courthouse."²⁴

Occasionally, adherence to the code of honor through violent methods could skew the norms of justice. Since its early days as a frontier society, the South was a region permeated with various forms of violence, ranging from types deemed essential, such as hunting, combat with Indians, dueling, and punishment meted out to slaves and children, to the violence embodied in the recreational activity of cock fighting. And there

²⁴ Rusk, As I Saw It, 39, 34.

was a strong tradition of using force to maintain and restore individual and/ or corporate honor. Indeed, as historian George Tindall has observed, the turbulent nature of Southern history "bred a psychology of danger and defense...." As the experience of Dean's uncle, Jep Rusk, suggests, violence was still an accepted, and for males sometimes expected, means of maintaining honor within the Rusk family and the postbellum South in general. Jep Rusk once argued with and killed a man he believed was having an affair with his wife. When questioned by local authorities, Jep pleaded the "unwritten law" of honor, which allowed such vengeance when individual and/ or family reputation had been disgraced, and he was later acquitted in court.²⁵

Aside from modeling honor in his religious values and his work ethic, Robert Rusk also directly instructed his children regarding its defense, and he once told his son Dean "never to be ashamed of someone who fought for what he believed in." Reflecting on his family's socioeconomic status and attempts to defend corporate honor, Dean remembered, "We knew we came from good Scotch-Irish stock, and if anyone would have called us poor, we would have socked him."²⁶

Honor was an essential tool for many white Southerners, but it was not monolithic in nature. Some were certainly unaware of, or chose to ignore, the code of honor, and among the individuals and communities that acknowledged, used, and /or relied on honor, its meaning could vary.

²⁵ George Tindall, The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945 (Baton Rouge, 1967), 687; Rusk, As I Saw It, 42.

²⁶ Schoenbaum, Waging Peace & War, 34; Rusk, As I Saw It, 49.

For Dean Rusk acquiring, utilizing, and defending honor meant maintaining personal and family credibility through honesty, fidelity, hard work, and the occasional use of violence. This conception of honor could be expanded to include vouchsafing the reputation of friends, especially those perceived as weak and unable to mount an adequate defense. Two incidents from Rusk's youth illustrate his early acceptance of, and adherence to, the system of honor. Honor compelled Rusk to defend the reputation of a female friend, as he recalled:

There was still a good deal of that southern tradition of chivalry around in those days: insults to your women folk, and things like that. I remember when I was in the second grade of school, I fought all afternoon with another guy because he had called out to a girl that I thought well of, 'You're just like a cash register, [all] it takes [is] money to open your drawers.' That was a deep insult and I took him on and we fought all afternoon.²⁷

Rusk was commandant of his high school Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) unit during his senior year and was selected to serve as cadet commander during a county wide parade and accompanying ceremony designed to recognize ROTC units in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Each cadet commander was expected to choose a female sponsor and present her with flowers at a designated time during the ceremony. As Rusk attempted to present his flowers, reporters and photographers from the Atlanta Journal intervened and insisted on substituting Miss Atlanta beauty pageant winner and future Hollywood actress, Estelle Bradley, for Rusk's sponsor. This meant that Rusk would be presented to the large parade crowd as Bradley's escort and the couple's picture would appear in the Atlanta Journal. While many young men in Rusk's position would have

²⁷ Oral History H, 14, Dean Rusk Collection.

relished the chance to be linked publicly with Miss Atlanta or perhaps would have yielded to the pressure of strident appeals from reporters made in front of a large audience, Rusk flatly refused to allow the substitution. As far as Rusk was concerned, once a commitment had been made, it had to be kept. Most likely, the perceived need to uphold his sponsor's, as well as his own, honor and reputation through the public maintenance of his prior commitment overrode the potential opprobrium of the crowd or any benefits gleaned from association with a local celebrity.²⁸

The Southern system of honor meshed neatly with the Rusks' idealistic, evangelical faith, which emphasized personal and corporate morality, truth, justice, altruism, and a disciplined work ethic. The convergence of honor and faith and its significance to the Rusk family is perhaps best encapsulated by the epitaph on the tombstone of Dean Rusk's great-grandfather, David, in the family cemetery in Cherokee County: "An honest man, the noblest work of God." This moralistic legacy was repositied and nurtured in the character of Robert Rusk, who was known in the community as an honorable "Christian gentleman" who was "strictly reliable." The Rusk confluence of honor and religion is further evinced by Robert's characterization of Martin Luther as a religious pioneer who combined Christian virtue, fidelity, and determined resolve in defense of principle while facing the grave dangers and difficult challenges engendered by what Rusk termed "the cruelties of Rome."²⁹

²⁸ Oral History F, 12, Dean Rusk Collection.

²⁹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 33; A. C. Conn letter, October 26, 1900, Folder 4, Box 1, Series II, Parks Rusk Collection; Robert Rusk sermon, "The Providence and the Mission of Luther," Folder 5, Series II, Parks Rusk Collection.

Robert Rusk's faith, sense of honor, and self-worth were surely tested when, after years of success as a farmer, washed out crops and his wife's failing health due to the physical strain of farm life led him to move his family to the city of Atlanta in the spring of 1913, where he found a job as a postal worker. Abandoning yet another vocation and leaving the nurturing ties of rural kinfolk was an extremely difficult move for Rusk, but the family would in time consider itself fortunate to have left Cherokee County. Within a generation, all the remaining Rusks' farms had collapsed and the extended clan departed, having been "spewed out by the unforgiving land."³⁰

Atlanta

Turn of the century Atlanta was a bustling center of Southern commerce and culture that presented both opportunity and challenge for the Rusk family. Atlanta was the "big city," and the family was amazed at the many contrasts to rural life. To young Dean, it seemed that "even the air we breathed was different: Atlanta was heated with soft coal in those days, and soot covered the city in winter. Whenever I wore a white shirt, it was sooty by noontime."³¹

Starting life anew in the city meant that the Rusks could no longer grow their own food in large quantities and were now almost wholly dependant on Robert's meager postal salary for survival. Rusk approached his new career with the same earnestness and determination to succeed in the face of adversity that he had earlier applied to farming.

³⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 43-44.

³¹ Ibid., 45.

Forty-five years old when he began working for the postal service, Robert Rusk carried a heavy mail bag on foot over a sixteen mile daily route for years.

Although Robert now had a steady income, the Rusks remained poor. Dean and his brothers once had to wait two years before their father was able and willing to purchase them a new bicycle tire, and the Rusk children often went to school barefoot. Dean wore knee length "knickerbocker" style pants, which were fashionable for young boys, while in high school. His parents wanted him to graduate from high school in a new suit but could not afford one with trouser length pants, so they bought new knee length pants, making Dean the only young man to graduate in knickerbockers.³²

Through hard work and frugality Robert was eventually able to move his family to the largely middle class residential area known as the West End. Paying five dollars a month over many years, Rusk was even able to invest in land in Panama City, Florida. As the area became a mecca for summer tourists, its property value increased dramatically, providing Elizabeth Rusk with a substantial amount of money when the land was sold after her husband's death. All the Rusk children were required to work in order to help pay family expenses. Two of Dean's siblings quit school after sixth grade to give full time financial support to the family, and Dean worked various jobs as a small child, including selling Coca-Cola and delivering groceries and newspapers.³³

World War I captured the attention of Atlanta, and Dean's awareness of the conflict came largely through propaganda and relatives who were in serving in the

³² Oral History F, 5-6, Dean Rusk Collection.

³³ Ibid., 21; Rusk, As I Saw It 50.

military. He also spent time watching German prisoners of war laboring in a large West End warehouse used to store military supplies. Fascinated, he occupied hours looking at the prisoners through the warehouse fence, talking with those who spoke English.

Curious and eager for more contact, the precocious child actually invited some of them home with him for a meal. During the "Spanish flu" epidemic that ravaged America after World War I, the Rusk family wore packets of malodorous asafetida around their necks, hoping to reduce the chance of contamination by warding off close contact with other people. Like most people, the Rusks were unable to comprehend the exact nature of the disease, which ultimately killed more than 500,000 Americans. Evangelist Billy Sunday claimed that the Germans had transported the flu to America via submarines, declaring: "There's nothing short of hell they haven't stooped to do since the war began. Darn their hides!"³⁴

Although appalled by the grisly horrors of the war, many Southerners embraced the moralism infusing President Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric regarding American involvement in the conflict and efforts to shape the emerging post-war peace structure. When Wilson journeyed to Atlanta seeking Southern support for the League of Nations, an enthusiastic nine year old Dean was in the crowd holding a placard backing the League.³⁵

³⁴ Oral History H, 12-13, Dean Rusk Collection; George Tindall and David Shi, America: A Narrative History (New York, 1992), 1016.

³⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 55.

Atlanta was an extremely exciting environment for the Rusk children, and they would frequently explore the city in search of playful adventures, which served as provocative stimulants to their imaginations. The Rusks lived close to a Atlanta Fire Department firehouse, and young Dean loved to watch the firemen train the horses and harness them to the fire carriages. Rusk also spent a lot of time playing near the Central of Georgia Railroad tracks that ran through his neighborhood. With coal in short supply during and after World War I, the Rusk children learned that if they threw rocks at the crewmen on passing coal trains, the men would throw lumps of coal back at them, providing buckets of fuel. After the war, the financially strapped Rusks would make inexpensive, army surplus, canned roast beef hash a mainstay of their diet. For refreshment, the children frequented an ice manufacturing plant and a local Karo Syrup factory, where they would suck on ice or sugar cane while observing manufacturing operations. The Rusks found further distraction in the marvels of early twentieth century technology, such as phonographs, electric lighting, automobiles, radio, and movies.³⁶

Dean Rusk's initial racial attitudes were very much a product of his time and place. Racism and xenophobia were two seemingly intractable Southern traditions openly thriving at the turn of the century. It was generally assumed by most white people that blacks were inherently inferior and perhaps even physically and/ or economically threatening. Suspicion and prejudice also extended to Jews, Catholics, and "foreigners." The West End was predominantly Protestant and bigotry regarding Catholicism distorted

³⁶ Oral History F, 8-9; Oral History H, 38, 15-25, Dean Rusk Collection.

the religious dynamic of the community. The Rusk children heard rumors that Catholic priests were allowed to spend the wedding night with the bride after every marriage, and the Rusks viewed the local Catholic church as "a den of iniquity." Dean and his siblings thought the church building dark and foreboding, "almost like a haunted house." The Rusks occasionally took in boarders in order to make extra money, and one of them apparently was part of the mob that lynched Leo Frank, a Jewish man accused of killing a young girl, Mary Phagan. The boarder was gone when Frank's lynching occurred, and when he returned he showed the Rusks what he claimed was a piece of the rope used in the hanging.³⁷

Such discriminatory attitudes were simply taken for granted and were reinforced by the South's legal system, social customs, schools, and Protestant churches, as well as the literature, advertisements, folk tales, and humor of Southern popular culture. The use of racial epithets, such as "nigger," in reference to blacks was commonplace. Rusk's first real exposure to Southern blacks and their vibrant subculture came when, at eight years of age, he accepted a job delivering groceries for a local grocery store. The store served both poor whites and blacks, and as he delivered goods in his "little red wagon," Rusk witnessed the sights and sounds of the daily discrimination, substandard living conditions, and limited socioeconomic opportunity that constituted the reality of the Southern black existence. Although very young, Rusk "could sense the unfairness of it all." The Rusk children played happily with local black children most of the time, but

³⁷ Rusk, As I Saw It, 48; Oral History H, 5, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 49.

occasionally their fun would take on a more adversarial tone when they split into teams for games of "Cops and Robbers" and "Cowboys and Indians." The division reflected prevailing racial attitudes because the blacks were always forced to be the villainous Indians and Robbers. Rusk's regular contact with the black community diminished as he progressed through Atlanta's segregated school system.³⁸

As Rusk grew older, he would feel the sting of class prejudice, which served as a reminder of his poverty stricken roots. Rusk's academic ability gained him admittance to Atlanta's prestigious Boys High School, where he befriended the children of Atlanta's elites. Although his intelligence brought distinction and acceptance while in class, once the school day ended the great equalizer of academic merit disintegrated and familiar social class barriers engaged. Each day, Rusk returned home to the urban poverty of the West End, never to mingle with his upper class friends at their parties, dances, and other social events.³⁹

Robert and Elizabeth Rusk were firm believers in the value of education. They had both spent time as school teachers, and they ensured that Dean could read and write before he entered elementary school. Realizing that Dean had advanced beyond her other first grade students, his teacher gave him an exam allowing him to move directly into second grade. Rusk's teacher smiled when he made his only mistake on the exam: when asked to spell "girl," he replied "g-a-l." The teacher later described Dean as a "brilliant

³⁸ Oral History F, 23-24, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 48; Oral History F, 6, Dean Rusk Collection.

³⁹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 49.

little boy. He was not only gifted, he was modest." Rusk attended Lee Street School, an institution heavily influenced by the Progressive reform movement sweeping early twentieth century America. Progressivism advocated broad social, political, and environmental reforms, as well as experimental educational techniques.⁴⁰

Much of Rusk's experience at Lee Street was spent in a the innovative "open air" portion of the school, which consisted of four classrooms resting on a square foundation divided by two inner walls and covered by a roof. Believing that exposure to the open air helped prevent the spread of disease, educational reformers designed the building with no outer walls, leaving it almost totally exposed to the elements. Classes were held there throughout the school year, and a large curtain was drawn around the building during rain. When the weather turned cold, students were given large woolen bags to pull around their legs and waists and were served hot cocoa intermittently throughout the day. Occasionally students would bring wrapped, heated bricks from home to place in their woolen bags in order to warm their feet. Such practices proved controversial, and although Rusk and other students testified before the Atlanta Board of Education on behalf of the school, it was eventually closed. Teachers at Lee Street infused their curriculum with a heavy dose of morality, constantly pressing their students to excel with exhortations such as "Be somebody!" and "Do something with your lives!" They also sowed in Rusk the seeds of belief in American exceptionalism, devoting particular attention to extolling the virtues of democracy in the United States. The notion that

⁴⁰ Oral History F, 14, Dean Rusk Collection; "As A Boy He Asked A Million Questions," Folder 4, Box 1, Subseries A, Series II, Parks Rusk Collection.

America was a unique nation where moral purity and steadfast industriousness could propel citizens up the ladder of socioeconomic achievement was reinforced by the books Rusk and his siblings read, which "tended to be from rags to riches stories, stressing the rewards of success, virtue, and character."⁴¹

Rusk was a voracious reader and devoured any available reading material available to his family, typically the Bible, the Farmer's Almanac or books from the local Joel Chandler Harris children's library. It was at Lee Street School that Rusk first gained exposure to the geography, culture, politics, and races of other areas of the world. For four years beginning in the fourth grade, he and his fellow students were assigned selections from Carpenter's Geographic Reader textbook. Each year the readings were from a single volume focusing on a specific area of the globe, with an interactive curriculum developed around each respective region, fostering Rusk's early interest in the international affairs.⁴²

Atlanta's public high schools were segregated on the basis of race and gender, and Rusk attended the preparatory school for males, Boys High. Similar to the famous Boston Latin School, Boys High offered a rigid classical curriculum and sought to foster academic and behavioral discipline. Rusk's math teacher meted out corporal punishment with a paddle named "Sternonium." Students were eligible for punishment if they made mistakes on homework or in class assignments but were paddled only if classmates sentenced them to their fate by voting "thumbs down" after hearing the teacher's charges.

⁴¹ Oral History F, 14-15, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 52-53.

⁴² Oral History F, 7, Dean Rusk Collection.

"Usually, most of the thumbs went down," resulting in "some good whacks across the bottom."⁴³

Boys High was administered by Harvard educated principal Herbert O. Smith and his assistant, Preston Epps, who later received a Ph.D. at Chicago and served as the Kenan Professor of Classics at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. In addition to his administrative duties, Epps was also Dean Rusk's Greek language, literature, and philosophy instructor. A dedicated and enthusiastic teacher, Rusk praised Epps as one of the "great men" in his life because of his inspirational pedagogical style and his careful discussion of the practical application of the ideals of Greek philosophy. Doubtless Epps exposed his students to the Greek concept of *arete*- the pursuit and maintenance of mental and physical excellence- and its emphasis on individual sacrifice, achievement, and public service. Rusk and his fellow students read many of the works of Plato and Homer in the original Greek and were so enthralled that they journeyed to Epps's house once a week for extra readings of the Illiad.⁴⁴

Participant in a variety of school activities, Rusk was on the swimming team, served as editor of the Atlanta Journal's "School Page," was president of his class, and was cadet leader of his ROTC unit during his senior year. Rusk is remembered as a bright, well respected, highly principled student who led by example and "could avoid all the temptations of youth and be respected by his contemporaries for doing it." Socially, while other teenage couples engaged in some "heavy courting," Dean and his dates

⁴³ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁴ Oral History F, 15-16, Dean Rusk Collection.

attended Sunday evening church services, chaperoned parties, or would visit cemeteries and "sit on tombstones and talk about everything under the moon, from politics to religion to world conditions." When asked to comment on Rusk, a classmate paid him a high complement among Southerners by comparing him to Confederate hero General Robert E. Lee, asserting that the pair shared "unblemished character" and "loyalty to principle."⁴⁵

Rusk's education consisted of more than the formal instruction received through the Atlanta school system. He was also immersed in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century South's sacrosanct cultural dogma regarding the region's experience in the American Civil War. Although Rusk later claimed that while growing up he "did not question the licking the South had received" during the Civil War, this is unlikely given Southern conceptions and collective memory of the conflict as well as the Rusk family's, and his own, admiration for the ideals and leaders of the Confederacy.⁴⁶

With their cities and farms devastated, dreams of autonomy shattered, and fierce pride deeply wounded, many white Southerners wrapped themselves in the mantle of the "Myth of the Lost Cause" as a means of weathering the sting of defeat and Reconstruction. The Lost Cause rationale diverted Southern collective memory from the reality of failure, focusing it instead on the South's "honorable" reasons for engaging in the war and the prowess and gallantry of the Confederate military. It romanticized the

⁴⁵ Oral History FFFF, 2, 20, Dean Rusk Collection; "As A Boy He Asked A Million Questions," Parks Rusk Collection.

⁴⁶ Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War, 34.

Civil War as a tragic struggle in which a peace loving yet determined South honorably defended its citizens, property, and sovereignty against an aggressive, expansionist, tyrannical North intent on imposing its political economy and values. Similarly, many Southerners viewed Reconstruction as an inherently oppressive federal policy designed to grant blacks and Northerners unprecedented political, economic, and social power in the region. This authority was subsequently used to enact vengeance on white Southerners, trample traditional racial/ cultural mores, and manipulate Southern agriculture and industry.

Such thinking was an unquestioned and pervasive part of Rusk's turn of the century Atlanta milieu. Indeed, Atlanta was burned by Union troops during General William T. Sherman's famous "March to the Sea," and the city's inhabitants commonly referred to the Civil War as "the war of Northern aggression." In his classic literary commentary on Southern culture and history, Absalom, Absalom!, William Faulkner aptly describes the burden of the South's Civil War legacy as "a kind of entailed birthright father and son and father and son of never forgiving General Sherman, so that forever as long as your children's children produce children you wont [sic] be anything but a descendant of a long line of colonels killed in Pickett's charge...." As Tony Horowitz details in his book, Confederates in the Attic, this sentiment still survives in many parts of today's South and is an inexorable portion of the region's efforts to come to terms with the cultural/ racial legacies of the Civil War.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (New York, 1990), 289; Tony Horowitz, Confederates In The Attic: Dispatches from The Unfinished Civil War (New York, 1998).

Although the nationalism surrounding United States participation in the Spanish-American War and World War I ultimately mitigated and transcended a portion of the sectionalist tension lingering from the Civil War, the Rusk family clung proudly to its Southern nationalist heritage, which was infused with the region's traditions of patriotism and military service. The Rusks were particularly proud of the exploits of their most famous ancestor, Thomas Jefferson Rusk. As a young boy growing up near Pendleton, South Carolina in the early nineteenth century, Thomas Rusk's neighbor and friend was legendary states' rights advocate John C. Calhoun. Calhoun served as Rusk's mentor, encouraging Rusk to study law and using his considerable influence to help secure Rusk employment upon admission to the bar. Rusk eventually moved to Georgia, where he prospered as a lawyer and businessman. When officials of a mining business in which Rusk had invested embezzled company funds and fled to Texas, he pursued, determined to reclaim his money. Once in Texas, Rusk gave up hope of retrieving his money, but he liked the Mexican province so much that he decided to settle near the city of Nacogdoches.⁴⁸

Believing that an expansionist Mexico was trampling Texans' rights of sovereignty and self-determination, Rusk was active in Texas's independence movement. He commanded a company of Texas volunteers and was stationed at the ill-fated Alamo near San Antonio in 1835. Rusk was spared death at the hand of Mexican general Santa Anna's forces because he was ordered to leave the embattled mission to secure supplies,

⁴⁸ "Dean Rusk's Kin Left Mark In History," Folder 4, Box 1, Series II, Parks Rusk Collection.

and while gone was elected delegate to Texas's constitutional convention. Soon after news reached the convention that the Alamo had fallen, Rusk was appointed major general in the Texas military and served as General Sam Houston's immediate subordinate in battle of San Jacinto, in which Santa Anna was defeated and forced to grant Texan independence. Rusk's star continued to rise as he gained fame as an Indian fighter and judge, and he eventually was elected United States senator from the state of Texas.⁴⁹

Familial devotion to ideals of sovereignty and self-determination continued to thrive in the person of Dean Rusk's paternal grandfather, James Edward Rusk. James Rusk was a slave owner before and during the Civil War and according to family lore was a benevolent and paternalistic master. When he informed his slaves after the war that they were free, they chose to stay with the Rusks, and the family taught them to read and write. They eventually moved to California but maintained a running correspondence with the Rusks until their deaths.⁵⁰

When the Civil War erupted, James Rusk volunteered for duty, and approximately one-eighth of Cherokee County's white male population served in the conflict. Upon recruiting approximately a hundred men to join him in the struggle for Southern independence, Rusk was commissioned a colonel and eventually given charge of the Georgia Cherokee Legion Infantry Regiment, State Guard which spent most of its time assigned as a "home guard" unit within Georgia. Dean Rusk's maternal ancestors fought

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Richard Rusk Oral History, Dean Rusk Collection.

for the Confederacy as well. David Felix Clotfelter, Dean's maternal grandfather, was wounded in battle and loved to boast about the "Yankee bullet" that remained lodged in his body after the war.⁵¹

Dean's father Robert was a vessel, from which his children often drank, overflowing with pride in the family heritage and respect for the South's efforts in the Civil War. While a student at Davidson College in North Carolina in 1893, Robert wrote an essay titled "Types of the Old and New South." Contemplating the 1889 deaths of Jefferson Davis and Atlanta journalist Henry Grady, Rusk asserted that the South's best hope for a bright future lay in supporting Grady's "New South" movement, which sought to attract Northern industry to the South by promoting the region as racially responsible and politically reconciled to union. Although the necessity of reconciliation is Rusk's dominant theme, his deep respect and admiration for Jefferson Davis, as well as the ideals of the Confederacy, are evident in the following excerpt:

When Jefferson Davis died, the people of the South turned back to heap high their tributes of honor upon the hero of a cause lost except to memory-- of a past gone forever. Since his death, the howlings of abolitionists, the tumults and thunders of a civil war, and the fierce mouthings of a hostile world have all departed, but, the principles upon which the Confederacy was founded and for which Jefferson Davis struggled will live as 'long as liberty has a friend or patriotism a champion.' No man that ever lived, and no country that ever survived, perhaps, has been more misunderstood than Jefferson Davis and the South he represented. The charges of 'traitor' and 'treason' were never hurled at victims more innocent or heroes as stainless as when imposed upon the South and its noble leader.⁵²

⁵¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 34; Stewart Sifakis, Compendium of the Confederate Armies: South Carolina and Georgia (New York, 1995), 280-281; Schoenbaum, Waging Peace And War, 34.

⁵² "Types of the Old and New South," Folder 5, Box 1, Series II, Parks Rusk Collection.

So cognizant of the Southern Civil War experience was Robert Rusk that when Dean later married and brought his new bride home to Atlanta to meet his family, the first thing his father did was take her outside and give her a lecture tour of the Civil War trenches still present behind the Rusk home. Contemplating his father's motivation, Dean later mused, "She [Dean's wife] was a Yankee, you see."⁵³

Dean Rusk and his siblings grew up hunting relics in the Civil War trenches that stretched behind his house, and they were weaned on stories of their fabled ancestors' contributions to Southern history, particularly the Civil War. Rusk was taught that the South was not defeated on the field of battle during the Civil War; it simply relented because Confederate general Robert E. Lee and his men were so exhausted from winning battles that they were physically unable to continue fighting. Lee was a personal hero to Rusk, and was admired for his military prowess, courage, humility, concern for his men, and sense of honor and commitment. Late in his life Rusk recalled, "We were very proud of Robert E. Lee as a general and tactician. He was one of my early heroes, and still is to a considerable degree." Veneration of Lee was widespread during Rusk's early years, and to many, the general personified the glory and tragedy of the Southern Civil War-Reconstruction experience. Indeed, iconography depicting Lee as a martyr conversing with Jesus Christ or angels was not uncommon.⁵⁴

⁵³ Oral History H, 17, Dean Rusk Collection.

⁵⁴ Schoenbaum, Waging Peace And War, 34; Oral History F, 26, Dean Rusk Collection.

As with many Southerners, Reconstruction bred an increasingly bitter defensiveness toward "outsiders" among Rusk family members. Growing up in turn of the century South engendered a strong sense of "we and they," and when the Rusks lived in rural Georgia, "anybody from across the river was a foreigner." The Rusks considered Northerners and Republicans aggressive interlopers, whom they regarded with deep antipathy and suspicion, and they "called Northerners 'damn Yankees' and really meant it." Dean and his family were dedicated Democrats, and during his childhood Dean had more exposure to blacks than white Republicans. In fact, Dean was fifteen years old before he "saw a live Republican on the hoof." White Republicans were referred to as "black Republicans," reflecting white Democrats' low opinion of their political opposition as well as Democratic pairing of black progress toward socioeconomic and political equality with the post-Civil War gains of the Republican party in the South.⁵⁵

As a young boy, Rusk paid the nickel admission price to watch D. W. Griffith's film, Birth of A Nation, at a local theater. The movie portrays the Southern view of Reconstruction in melodramatic terms and did much to sear such an interpretation into the broader American consciousness. Rusk and his playmates thrilled to scenes of Southerners organizing resistance to Reconstruction, and when the Ku Klux Klan began to exact retribution on empowered blacks and their Northern allies as the theater player piano hammered out the Southern anthem of "Dixie," the audience "whistled and cheered and stomped their feet."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Oral History F, 23, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 49.

⁵⁶ Oral History H, 6, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 48-49.

During his adult years, the shadows of the Southern attitude regarding Reconstruction still abided with Dean Rusk. He termed late twentieth century efforts to expunge Joel Chandler Harris "Uncle Remus" stories, Confederate flags, and the playing of "Dixie" from Southern society counter productive "cultural censorship," but as secretary of state he refused to enter his former college fraternity house until the Confederate flag flying in the front yard was removed or the United States flag was added to the flagpole.⁵⁷

Although Rusk later conceptualized Reconstruction as a time of missed opportunities for racial and sectional healing and reconciliation, he blamed the failure to achieve these objectives not on resurgent Southern whites determined to regain political and economic control but on the allegedly overly harsh agenda and methods of Radical Republicans in Congress and the "abuses" that occurred during their tenure. According to Rusk, it was "that radical Yankee group in Congress that was largely responsible for the character of Reconstruction," and he lamented that it was "too bad that [Abraham] Lincoln and [Robert E.] Lee did not live longer to work together for reconciliation of North and South and avoid much of the bitterness of Reconstruction."⁵⁸

When asked in an interview if he subscribed to the theory that Reconstruction was "beneficial" because it laid a foundation for Civil Rights efforts, Rusk stated, "No, those are just a bunch of damn Yankees imposing their views on us." Questioned as to whether the original, late nineteenth century Ku Klux Klan "served any useful function," Rusk

⁵⁷ Oral History H, 25-26, Dean Rusk Collection.

⁵⁸ Oral History H, 7; Oral History F, 25-26, Dean Rusk Collection.

replied, "Well, the first KKK at least helped resist Reconstruction." When Rusk was fourteen years old, he unwittingly accepted a job as an errand boy for the "Knights of the Mystic Kingdom," a local offshoot of the Ku Klux Klan. Rusk ultimately quit his position, but not because he found the organization's beliefs offensive. He discovered that the packages he was paid to carry throughout Atlanta contained bootleg alcohol, and he promptly resigned.⁵⁹

With adolescent odd jobs and high school behind him by 1925, Rusk decided to leave Atlanta to follow in his father's footsteps and attend Davidson College in North Carolina. His family had always emphasized the importance of education for its own sake and as a means of attaining increased financial success and social prestige. Having excelled in secondary school, higher education was the next logical step. But college was expensive, and since his family could not afford to pay for his schooling, Dean worked in an Atlanta law firm in a largely unsuccessful effort to earn and save enough money to defray the costs of education. After two years of frustratingly fruitless labor, a still undeterred Rusk determined that higher education could be delayed no longer and was not about to let financial concerns stand in his way. As one Boys High classmate recalled, Rusk had a "spiritual zeal about him--not fanaticism, but resolution to accomplish what he set out to do." Accordingly, "with more faith than cash" he departed Atlanta for Davidson in the fall of 1927.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Oral History F, 25-26, Dean Rusk Collection; Oral History H, 25, 24, Dean Rusk Collection.

⁶⁰ "As A Boy He Asked A Million Questions," Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 56-57.

Davidson College: "A Breathless Experience"

Established twenty miles north of Charlotte, North Carolina, Davidson College had an exclusively white male student population of approximately six hundred in the late 1920s. Known as the "poor man's Princeton," Davidson had a solid reputation in the South as an institution of higher learning offering a strong liberal arts education. Dean had pictured the attractive campus many times in his mind's eye, and as he toured the school for the first time, he was genuinely moved. His father attended but did not graduate from Davidson, and Dean's admittance was the fulfillment of a life long dream.⁶¹

Davidson College was a Presbyterian institution founded to prepare young men for work in the church, and its board of trustees was dominated by ministers. Many of Dean's fellow students were studying for careers in religious related work. All students were required to take Old and New Testament courses, as well as attend daily morning chapel services. The emphasis infusing such instruction was on morality, spiritual values, self-improvement, and public, as well as ecclesiastical, service. Rusk "greatly valued" Davidson's efforts to instill a moral underpinning in its students, and it reinforced the religious education of his past. While some students surely resented compulsory spiritual training, given Dean's family and cultural background, to him it was simply more of the same. Indeed, as Rusk later stated, he "knew nothing else." As Rusk progressed through his studies, he was perplexed by, and increasing skeptical towards, certain tenets of Protestant Christianity, particularly the seemingly contradictory doctrines of free will and predestination. Rusk's interests began to change from pondering the ties between God

⁶¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 56-57; Oral History F, 18-20, Dean Rusk Collection.

and humankind to examining relations between nations. By his last year at Davidson, Rusk had abandoned his plans to become a Presbyterian minister and was instead majoring in political science.⁶²

Rusk's fascination with international affairs ripened under the political science curriculum, in which he took courses in American government, international law, and the history and practice of American foreign policy. His favorite political science professor was Archibald Currie, an inspirational teacher with a legal background who preached adherence to Wilsonian ideals. Much of Currie's focus was on World War I, a conflict caused in part by the expansionist yearnings of European powers. The 1920s was a decade of burgeoning isolationism, but Currie was an internationalist, and he viewed both the struggle's precipitants and America's failure to contribute to the post-war peace structure through participation in the League of Nations as tragic. Under Currie's tutelage, Rusk became enamored of a Wilsonian vision of international order based on self-determination, free trade, arms reduction, and collective security administered by the League of Nations; Wilsonianism lent delineated form and international focus to the substance of the young student's ideology. Aside from Currie's influence, Rusk had a natural affinity for Wilson. Like Rusk, Wilson was a Democrat and a Southerner who spent a portion of his childhood in Georgia, and he attended Davidson College. Rusk proved himself an exceptionally bright pupil with a well disciplined, analytical mind who often amazed his classmates with his ability to do well on exams after having studied the material only briefly. He excelled academically at Davidson and graduated Phi Beta

⁶² Rusk, As I Saw It, 61.

Kappa.⁶³

While Rusk studied at Davidson during the 1920s, the United States experienced marked social/ cultural anxiety as many Americans attempted to integrate aspects of an evolving modern mass culture with their more established beliefs, customs, and attitudes. This tension between tradition and modernity in American society manifested itself in events such as the debate over prohibition, the controversy regarding the theory of evolution exhibited in the Scopes "monkey trial" in Dayton, Tennessee, conservative backlash against the expanding role of women in economic and social arenas, and a national resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan.

In some ways, Davidson was a microcosm of American society during this period because faculty and students struggled with the effects of encroaching modernism and relativism upon familiar beliefs and standards. The Davidson administration was determined to cling to traditionalism and keep its students as isolated as possible from the temptations and changes of the outside world. Students were not allowed to keep cars on campus and could not leave the college without permission. Card playing, drinking, and dancing were forbidden, forcing students to travel twenty miles to Charlotte to attend dances. Against his father's wishes, Rusk participated in an unsuccessful student effort to petition the college trustees to amend their policy and allow campus dances.⁶⁴

The battle was joined against atheism and moral relativism as well, and there was "considerable evangelical pressure" placed upon non-Christians. Non-believer and

⁶³ Rusk, As I Saw It, 59-62; Oral History UU, 7, Dean Rusk Collection.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

football player Thad Brock was once asked to lead a morning chapel service in the hope that the experience would force him to reconsider his spiritual status. A reluctant Thad finally agreed, and students and faculty were shocked when Brock read passages from the pacifist novel All Quiet On The Western Front and prayed, "Oh , God, if there be a God, help us if you can."⁶⁵

As Davidson struggled with change, certain things remained constant for Rusk, one of which was his relative poverty. Having arrived at Davidson with approximately one hundred dollars and a small scholarship, Rusk was forced to borrow money and take a job to help meet expenses. He soon found employment as a bookkeeper and teller in a local bank and worked there every afternoon, six days a week, for four years, working full time during summer. He also waited tables at a boardinghouse. The bank job gave Dean the opportunity to get to know most of the local townspeople, and he soon became one of the town's favorite students. Known for his honesty, he was sometimes asked by local black tenant farmers to look over their accounts and did not hesitate to point out mistakes made by their white landlords. He first lived in a dormitory and then in a dilapidated room known as the "Crow's Nest," which was attached to the ROTC armory. In exchange for firing the armory's furnace as needed, Rusk and his roommates received free rent. The "Crow's Nest" was rat infested, and shooting the rodents with rifles was a favorite pastime. ⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 61-62.

⁶⁶ Schoenbaum, Waging Peace & War, 39; Rusk, As I Saw It, 57-61; Oral History F, 18-20, Dean Rusk Collection.

Rusk's Boys High experience was characterized by hard work and participation in a variety of extracurricular activities, and Davidson was no different. Enrollment in ROTC classes was required, and as in high school, Dean was an eager participant, serving as cadet commander his senior year and as president of the "Scabbard and Blade" honorary military fraternity. Reflecting the South's strong military traditions, Rusk and most of the students at Davidson considered ROTC "an honorable calling."⁶⁷

Having learned basketball at the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Atlanta, Rusk decided to try out for the Davidson team. Physically, Rusk was six feet one, lean, and rapidly balding, with a touch of the sun ripened freckles of childhood still present on his cheeks and forehead. His height and athletic skill earned him the position of center on the Davidson College basketball team in an era when a player six feet five inches or more was considered a "glandular freak."⁶⁸

Collegiate basketball in the 1920s was, by modern standards, a decidedly slow paced game with designated foul shooters and compulsory center jumps after every basket. Davidson's coach came from a football background and was new to basketball, and he once returned from a coaches' clinic intent on integrating a new innovative tactic, the intentional foul, into his game plan. Their moral sensibilities offended by the concept, Rusk and his teammates branded intentional fouling dishonorable, and boldly told the coach they "would not play that way."⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Rusk, As I Saw It, 58; Oral History F, 18-20, Dean Rusk Collection.

⁶⁸ Rusk, As I Saw It, 58; Oral History UU, 3, Dean Rusk Collection.

⁶⁹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 58.

Mature, affable, and quietly confident with a keen sense of humor, Rusk was a popular and active student leader who, as one former classmate states, "did a great many things and did them all well." He was president of his freshman class, on the college yearbook staff, a member of Robert E. Lee's fraternity, Kappa Alpha, and president of the local YMCA. Rusk's leadership skills and convictions made him an ideal president of the YMCA, the campus's leading religious organization, and he was "the type of fellow that would impress you in what he believed and the reasons why he believed them." Leading the YMCA also honed Dean's budding diplomatic skills as he tried to organize and manage a membership comprised mostly of numerous, headstrong, opinionated ministerial students who believed, as a Davidson alumnus recalls, that they "had not only the wisdom but the sanction of the Almighty behind them." Along with managing YMCA members and concentrating on his studies, Rusk's other jobs and activities kept him extremely busy, and he had little to no spare time. As he would later write in his memoir:

Not even my years in government service were busier.... A typical day for me was conducted at a fast trot: classes in the morning or whenever I had them, waiting on tables at the boardinghouse at lunch, on to the bank, and then, in season, across campus to basketball practice. When that was over, I would take off to wait tables again at dinner. For me, Davidson was a breathless experience.⁷⁰

Rusk is characterized by former Davidson classmates as someone who was invariably composed under stress and could acquit himself well in difficult situations, whether challenged in a classroom debate, or harangued by angry bank or boardinghouse customers. Rusk's calm under pressure proved particularly valuable when, during one of

⁷⁰ Oral History UU, 4,8, 7, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 59.

his occasional moments of spare time, he and a friend decided to travel to Charlotte, North Carolina to watch a movie. Since the college did not allow students to keep automobiles on campus, they were forced to hitchhike the twenty miles to Charlotte. They caught a ride with two older, slightly inebriated gentlemen, and after driving awhile, the two men stopped their car approximately two miles outside of the town of Cornelius and began to imbibe more alcohol. The men beckoned Rusk and his friend out of the car and insisted they drink with them. When the Davidson students exited the car but refused to drink, their hosts edged towards them in a menacing manner. Rusk quickly signalled to his companion, and the pair began inching away from the men, eventually breaking into a full sprint as their would be assailants pursued. Aided by their youthful athleticism, Rusk and friend outran the men and made it safely back to Cornelius.⁷¹

As Rusk approached graduation in the spring of 1931, he planned to attend graduate school and pursue a career as a professor of international law. Attaining a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford University offered prestige and funding, and encouraged by his German professor, a former Rhodes scholar and member of the state selection committee, Rusk applied. Dean traveled to Raleigh, North Carolina for an interview with the selection committee, which was chaired by former secretary of the navy, Josephus Daniels. When a skeptical Daniels asked Rusk to justify awarding a North Carolina appointment to a native Georgian, Rusk kept his wits about him and explained that he had lived and worked four years, including summers, in North Carolina and had even paid the state poll tax. Daniels seemed impressed that Rusk had paid North Carolina poll

⁷¹ Oral History UU, 9, Dean Rusk Collection.

taxes, and the committee selected Rusk as its North Carolina representative. Soon after, Rusk was accepted by St. John's College, Oxford. Rusk had paid the annual one dollar poll tax as a lark while working as a bank teller, and convinced that its payment helped persuade the equivocal Rhodes committee to select him, he referred to the tax as "the best dollar I ever invested."⁷²

Although greatly excited at the prospect of studying in Britain, it was not easy for Rusk to leave the South. He had spent his whole life in the region, and it also meant ending his romance with his college sweetheart, Sarah Withers. Moreover, for all their emphasis on the pursuit of education, Dean's parents disapproved of his Oxford plans. They seemed to have viewed the Rhodes scholarship as a heedless waste of time better spent securing employment or a graduate degree in the United States. In an effort to embarrass Dean and voice her strong disapproval, while attending a Davidson graduation reception his mother pointed to Dean's brother, Roger, and said, "You see that one over there? *He's* the smartest one in the family." As a student in Atlanta's Boys High School, Rusk wrote a remarkably prescient essay titled "What I Want To Do With The Next Twelve Years Of My Life," in which he predicted he would graduate high school, work two years in Atlanta, attend Davidson College, and win appointment to Oxford. In fulfillment of this plan, he left the South for Britain in the fall of 1931.⁷³

⁷² Rusk, As I Saw It, 63.

⁷³ Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War, 43; Rusk, As I Saw It, 62-63.

During Dean Rusk's Rhodes scholarship interview with the North Carolina selection committee, he was asked to explain the ideological paradox manifested by his active ROTC background and his stated interest in world peace achieved through improvements in relations between nations. Rusk averred to the committee: "The American eagle on the great seal has arrows in one claw and an olive branch in the other. The two must go together. Armed force and world peace are two sides of the same coin."⁷⁴

Thus, moralism and a pragmatic willingness to use military power were compatible, intrinsically valuable, inexorably linked, and mutually enhancing facets of Rusk's ideology. Rusk revered the American military and its influence but believed that its use should never be gratuitous; it was essential that moral purpose govern the application of force. In addition, although the employment of armed might in the furtherance of principle was a serious and carefully considered undertaking, it could not be postponed or neglected when needed. To Rusk, military power's greatest asset was its service as the ultimate guarantor of security, but it was also valuable because it infused moralism with temporal credibility and authority. Within the realm of Rusk's worldview, moralism too was endowed with a vibrant element of agency, rendering its counterpart, pragmatism, palatable by imparting constraint, purpose, and legitimacy.

Rusk's statement to the Rhodes committee reflects his formative experience in a Southern culture fraught with paradox, in which distinct polarities had traditionally existed but had come to complement each other through a strained symbiosis. Strong

⁷⁴ Rusk, As I Saw It, 62

currents of militarism and violence flowed alongside rivulets of moralism born of religious fervor and white males' sense of duty and honor. A vibrant black subculture thrived within the dominant white mainstream. The vestiges of a contrived, genteel, planter aristocratic tradition mingled with the simpler customs of poor whites, while females and religious reformers attempted to remind men engaged in male cultural rituals, such as cock fighting, heavy drinking, and card playing, of their professed allegiance to values of home and piety.

Moreover, Rusk's vision of an international community in which peace was enhanced through the maintenance of military strength and judicious use of economic sanctions and/or armed force against those nations breaking international law mirrors the reality of his existence in the South. Rusk's native region was a world seemingly dependant on a well established, discriminatory, racial-socioeconomic-political order imposed and maintained through reliance on time honored traditions and the threat of the consequences that would befall those who transgressed the prescribed rules of personal and societal behavior. Blacks and poor whites were expected to stay in their "place," corporal punishment was applied to disobedient children, and Southern evangelical Protestantism taught that unrepentant sinners would suffer eternal damnation. Furthermore, the system of honor decreed that the use of violence and force were acceptable in maintaining reputation and masculine virtues, defending morality, pursuing justice, and punishing transgression.

The cultural construct of honor was one way white males comprehended and exercised their role in Southern society. The grinding poverty endured by the Rusk

family fostered the lesson that determined effort enabled survival, if not success, and that honorable males worked hard, accepted responsibility, were honest, and kept their commitments. Honor was worth defending and imparting to future generations, and it was modeled by Robert Rusk and other men in Dean Rusk's environment. Honor also infused the region's cultural idiom and collective consciousness, particularly regarding its past. Indeed, the South was a society where history was a tangible source of present identity and a necessary guide to the future, in which preoccupying rationalizations for defeat in the Civil War and lamentations over the region's alleged victimization at the hands of an aggressive and expansionist United States were abundant and ubiquitous features of the cultural landscape.

Although forty years passed before Dean Rusk returned to reside in the South, when he left the region in 1931 the critical aspects of his ideology were firmly established. Life in the South had bred deep admiration for the military and a pragmatic respect for the power of armed force, and additionally, a core set of components forged in the crucible of Southern culture was steadfastly imbedded in the framework of his emerging moralism. Religious convictions and an appreciation for societal order based upon established rules and customs, a highly developed sense of honor and loyalty, an understanding of the nature and ramifications of grueling poverty, patriotism and reverence for American democratic institutions, and an aversion to expansionist aggression as a matter of state policy would serve as remarkably consistent compass points guiding and shaping important personal and policy decisions throughout Rusk's life. Rusk's racism and religious bigotry were the only important legacies of his Southern

heritage that would fade with time. The key elements of Dean Rusk's Southern moralism were reinforced by many of the people and events encountered during a long life and career in public service, beginning with his studies at Oxford.

CHAPTER THREE

A GEORGIA BOY GOES TO OXFORD

On October 7, 1931, twenty-two year old Dean Rusk, a self-described "rube from Georgia" with "a great deal to learn," arrived in New York City, his embarkation point for Britain. Although he had experienced "a feeling of distinct loss" as he left the South, such sentiment was mitigated by his busy preparations and excitement over the impending journey. Rusk's departure for Oxford had been delayed because of a bout with malaria, and he was due to board the Cunard liner RMS Berengaria on October 8th. This was the young Georgian's second time in New York, his first trip occurring during a brief excursion to the North during his Davidson College days. The earlier journey had taken place during St. Patrick's Day festivities, and when Rusk entered a restaurant he noticed that the food had been colored green in celebration of the holiday. Fearing the meat spoiled, he initially blanched at the meal set before him, deciding to eat it only because he had already paid.¹

Rusk was filled with anticipation as the Berengaria pulled out of New York harbor around 2:45am on October 8th. As he stood gazing at the glow cast by the Statue of Liberty's torch, he was approached by a deck steward, who offered him a ham

¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 64; Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, October 13, 1931, Folder 1, Box 1, Series 1, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, October 20, 1931, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection; Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War, 40; Rusk, As I Saw It, 64.

sandwich. Rusk took one bite and threw the sandwich into the ocean, disgusted by the strong tasting English mustard. Although as a Southerner Rusk harbored a "special fondness" for the English because, as he later stated, "Britain came within a hair's breadth of recognizing the Confederacy during the Civil War," initially he found the process of cultural acclimatization somewhat daunting.²

Indeed, as he revealed in a missive to his family, Dean felt like "a strange man in a strange country." He wrote his mother from aboard the Berengaria that although he liked English people "very much" he would have to modify his heavy Southern drawl to be understood, adding, "Don't worry, I won't have an 'accent' when I get back." During his three years in Europe, Dean tempered his speech, but he retained a soft Southern drawl the remainder of his life.³

Despite the cultural adjustments Rusk was forced to make, to a poor boy from rural Georgia, the voyage was a genuinely thrilling experience, and his letters home reflect his sense of excitement and wonder. According to Rusk, no one went hungry on the Berengaria; the "food was fine, there was lots of it, and they begged us to eat plenty." International tennis celebrity Bill Tilden was on board, and Rusk watched him play in an exhibition ping pong match, concluding that Tilden was equally proficient in both sports. Aside from Tilden, the ship's other cargo of note was 35,000,000 pounds of closely guarded gold headed for France. It was Rusk's first time on the high seas, and he was

² Rusk, As I Saw It, 64-65, 79.

³ Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, October 13, 1931, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

delighted to discover that he was not affected by sea sickness. Convinced that his recent battle with malaria had left him "pretty peaked and pale," he rented a deck chair for a dollar in an effort to improve his complexion but found to his dismay that the sun was not strong enough "to darken a freckle."⁴

Rusk's amiable personality allowed him to strike up easy friendships with some of the other young people on board, and they playfully developed nicknames for themselves and the large variety of passengers. All of the people assigned to Rusk's dining table were given monikers, and Dean retained "Old People" from his tenure at Davidson College. A "dignified English lady [of] about forty" was known as "Miss Prim," and a Scottish doctor was labeled "the Sot" because "he spent almost all of his time in the bar, getting to but one meal a day, the evening meal," which "served as an excellent base for the evening's alcohol." Rounding out the group was an aloof English gentleman who was called the "Diplomat," because of his habit of bringing books on diplomacy to the table each night and his claim to have served in the British embassy in Washington. The Diplomat was not particularly well liked by the other passengers, and Rusk noted that "his habitual expression was a glare." Privately, Miss Prim doubted the Diplomat's membership in the foreign service.⁵

Along with Rusk's table companions, the dining room was usually filled with other "interesting folks." He noticed a woman from India who "wore gorgeous robes to every meal and never the same robe twice," and he became acquainted with a Cuban

⁴ Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, October 20, 1931, Parks Rusk Collection.

⁵ Ibid.

student traveling to Paris to study medicine. Also, there were five Japanese travelers fluent in French, German, and English. In addition to serving as a source of diversion, consistent companionship, and stimulating conversation, the ship's passengers gave Rusk a glimpse into the type of diversity he would encounter while in Britain.⁶

Although he had been exposed to English culture while on the Berengaria, as Rusk left the ship and began to explore his new home, he was still astonished by aspects of British society. Apart from differences in food and speech, British attitudes towards public discussion of the human body, as well as sexual relations, were decidedly more open than those governing the conservative and largely sheltered existence Rusk had led in the American South. Upon arriving in London, he encountered a billboard with a drawing of a stork, beak tilted upward, and an adjacent caption declaring, "GUINNESS'S STOUT KEEPS YOUR PECKER UP!" Further, signs encrypted in Greek and hanging above London urinals warned, "Players with short bats should stand close to the wicket."⁷

Rusk quickly settled into St. John's College, Oxford, and after a short while felt "completely at home there," although he found the food hopelessly bland and at times deplored the lack of central heating. Able to make friends easily, confident in his academic ability, and generally pleased with his surroundings, Dean seemed certain his time at Oxford would continue to be a "wonderful experience." As he informed his sister Margaret in a letter that reveals his Southern preconceptions of the English, after living approximately a month in Britain he had concluded that:

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Rusk, As I Saw It, 65.

Oxford is all that I expected it to be and then some thrown in to boot.... The method of instruction is ideal, the living conditions ultra comfortable, and the companions very delightful in every respect. The English lads are not anything like we had always imagined. They are just as friendly and cordial as can be, of course with the usual amount of reserve that every Englishman has. There's none of the monicle-wearing, sissy-talking, stuff at all though.⁸

Oxford proved a stark contrast to Dean's previous experience with formal education. Judged by American standards, the structure of academic life at Oxford was very loose, and students were unencumbered by requirements to complete requisite courses and to sit for midterm and final exams during the course of a term. Instead, the focus was on passing the comprehensive exams required for completion of a degree in a selected area of study. The academic year was divided into three, two month terms, and at the beginning of each term students consulted with an assigned tutor and chose lecture classes and paper topics most beneficial in readying them for comprehensive exams. The Oxford academic environment sharpened Rusk's analytical, critical thinking, and writing skills, providing valuable experience for his career in government service.⁹

Compared to the frenetic nature of Rusk's existence at Boys High School and Davidson College, life at Oxford seemed to amble along at a "relaxed pace." Dean was emancipated from a regimented curriculum, but because of the Rhodes scholarship, he was also freed, for the first time in his life, from having to work while in school. In any case, as Rusk later recalled, "no one worked his way through Oxford; this just wasn't

⁸ Rusk, As I Saw It, 66; Dean Rusk to Margaret Rusk, November 3, 1931, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

⁹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 66-67; Oral History O, 2.

done."¹⁰

Although the Rhodes scholarship brought Dean financial freedom never before enjoyed, he remained conscious of his poverty stricken roots. In fact, he was burdened by a heavy load of largely self-imposed guilt because he was studying abroad in an effort his parents considered somewhat frivolous, while his family struggled through the Great Depression. His letters home are tinged with his self-conscious worry that his family would think him an irresponsible and ungrateful loafer, callously taking advantage of the good fortune that had smiled upon him. He wrote his mother that he reasoned he had a "toe hold on being the black sheep of the lot [his siblings]. But even sheep sometimes change color as they grow older." Dean was well aware that some of his siblings had previously sacrificed their educational desires and other opportunities in order to help stabilize family finances, and he offered repeated assurances that he would someday fulfill his "obligations" to them. He urged his family to continue to persevere and "strain everything" in order to allow his sister Helen to finish college, promising that "if my help becomes essential ...I'll be glad to leave Oxford, however deadly a blow that would be."¹¹

For most of his time at Oxford, Dean shared an apartment with two fellow Americans. Every morning, he and his roommates were awakened by their "scout," a servant assigned to tend to the needs of Oxford students. Each scout looked after eight to ten men, and Rusk's scout was named Dudley. Dudley's daily duties included building

¹⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 68; Oral History O, 1.

¹¹ Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, June 20, 1932, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, August 6, 1932, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

and lighting a fire in the apartment fireplace, boiling water for morning tea, and serving each student breakfast in his room. He also prepared lunch, served in the downstairs kitchen. This was pampering on a scale heretofore rarely experienced by a poor Southerner like Rusk, and he greatly appreciated it and other aspects of the "leisure" that often accompanied learning at Oxford.¹²

Students were free to spend their afternoons engaged in athletic pursuits or occupying individual free time, and evening activities were designed to promote an appreciation of Oxonian traditions and provide opportunity for fellowship and informal discussion. The evening meal was a formal affair held in the dining hall, with the school's dons, adorned in black tie. Although structured, dinners were stimulating social occasions punctuated with Oxford eccentricities, which each student was expected to observe. As Rusk recalled:

We began each meal with grace in Latin, given by a senior scholar. The rest of us kept a stopwatch on him, and if his grace went for more than a given number of seconds, he had to buy beer for all. Conversation was lively and animated on all topics but one: women. If anyone broke this prohibition, he had to buy a round for all. After dinner, evenings were free for study, bull sessions, bridge, evening lectures, or other entertainment.¹³

Along with attendance at formal dinners and involvement in impromptu, free-wheeling student debates, it was understood that Oxford students would participate in some kind of athletic activity during their tenure. Each applicant to the institution was supposed to have some demonstrated interest in athletics, and Rusk's background in

¹² Rusk, *As I Saw It*, 68-69.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

college basketball fulfilled this requirement. The school viewed athletics as a means of building camaraderie, character, physical fitness, and as a diversion from studies. Although play was competitive, there was little to no institutional structuring of teams or pressure to win, and Dean considered this approach to sport much more relaxed and "wholesome" than what he had encountered in the United States.¹⁴

Rusk had never played lacrosse, but he tried out for the university team and made the squad, ultimately earning his "blue," the Oxford equivalent of an American sports "letter," in play against archrival Cambridge. He also participated in intercollegiate sports, playing on the St. John's College tennis team and trying his hand at cricket and rugby.¹⁵

In addition to partaking in athletics, students were encouraged to travel and take advantage of the six months of breaks built into the Oxford academic schedule. Dean enjoyed bicycling through the local English countryside two to three times a week, and made a new hobby of examining and photographing old churches. He also spent a vacation living with a family on the Channel Island of Guernsey.¹⁶

On one occasion, he took part in a reading/camping trip to the Lake District in northern England, where he and his classmates read in the mornings and hiked in the afternoons. After borrowing the group's motorcycle, Dean took off on a sight seeing trip

¹⁴ Ibid., 70.

¹⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 70; Dean Rusk to Margaret Rusk, February 21, 1932, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

¹⁶ Ibid., 68; Oral History O, 3; Dean Rusk to Margaret Rusk, November 3, 1931, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

through the countryside. While stopped to refuel his bike, he noticed a rather imperious looking woman scrutinizing him disdainfully from the back of her limousine. Dean realized that he looked somewhat unkempt with his beard, newly grown during the vacation, and his comfortable, well worn clothes. He promptly shaved when he returned to camp and discovered that the group had been invited for tea at the local manorhouse the following afternoon. When the students arrived, Dean found that the lady of the manor was the same woman who had observed him from the limousine. When she exclaimed, " Oh young gentlemen, I must tell you. Yesterday I saw the most horrid looking creature I have ever seen in my life!" and detailed Rusk's disheveled appearance, he nervously revealed his true identity. Everyone laughed, including the hostess.¹⁷

Thus, Rusk was exposed to the seemingly inherent class discrimination permeating social life in Britain. He learned that the upper classes afforded blue-collar workers little social standing and dim prospects for advancement. Although his status as a student at Oxford provided him social respectability, he experienced the opprobrium accompanying upper class condescension when the woman in the limousine mistook him for a laborer, and he remained sensitive to class distinctions and etiquette. When describing in a letter home an upcoming social event in which British officials and nobility would be in attendance, Dean quipped, "I hope that I don't spill my soup in any Duke's hat. It would be very un-English."¹⁸

¹⁷ Rusk, As I Saw It, 68-69.

¹⁸ Ibid., 80; Dean Rusk to Robert Rusk, November 17, 1931, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

As Dean discovered parallels between the class discrimination he suffered in America and that witnessed at Oxford, he began to reevaluate his attitudes and assumptions regarding race and religion, two hallmarks of his Southern upbringing. Although far from home, Dean was constantly reminded of the American South's racial traditions and Europeans' perceptions of them. During his voyage to Britain aboard the Berengaria, his friend, "Miss Prim," chided Dean about Southern violence towards African Americans. His response is illustrative of his pre-Oxford defensiveness regarding race relations in his native region as well as his willingness to treat the subject glibly. As Rusk described the encounter, she "asked me what part of America I was from and upon hearing 'Georgia', she all but called to the captain to have me locked up as she exclaimed, 'Oh, that's where you butcher your negroes!' I assured her that they are rare delicacies [sic]." In an Oxford seminar, Dean was surprised to find that an American black woman in attendance maintained an air of deference toward white Southerners even while in Europe. When Rusk informed her that he was from Georgia, she replied, "Then you can call me Annie."¹⁹

Rusk's Oxford milieu was dramatically more diverse than the Southern society of his youth. Decades of British imperialism had drawn people of varying races and cultures from every area of the nation's global dominions to reside in the mother country, and significantly, by the early 1930s many of these transplanted colonial subjects or their descendants had gained positions of relative influence and stature within British society.

¹⁹ Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, October 20, 1931, Parks Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 65.

Not only was Rusk exposed to what must have seemed an astonishingly varied environment, he witnessed free people of color succeeding in their efforts to achieve prominence through their hard work and merit.

Racial/ cultural discrimination did exist however, and although many of the British Rusk encountered were far more racially tolerant than American Southerners, they did not subscribe to a concept of complete racial equality. Instead, they seemed imbued with a paternalistic racism bred from an imperialist tradition rooted in the principles of Social Darwinism.

Developed and refined by British philosopher Herbert Spencer, Social Darwinism was a precipitant and popular justification of the dislocations and inequities of the late nineteenth-early twentieth century world. Its adherents maintained that individuals, groups, or nations failed to prosper and/ or flourish because of genetic, moral, or racial inferiority. Applying Charles Darwin's theories of natural selection to the human realm, Social Darwinists believed that competition and struggle for resources, land, influence, etc. propelled the superior "fit" nations to the top of the societal/ international hierarchy and compelled them to assume their position of power over the "unfit," who were left to languish at the bottom of the "natural order."

Such thinking was, to a degree, institutionalized at Oxford. According to Rusk, most of the British he encountered "exhibited a superior and supercilious attitude toward other non-British people." Moreover, renowned imperialist and benefactor of the Rhodes scholarships, Cecil Rhodes, believed that Anglo-Saxons were "the first race in the world" and that "the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race." Rusk later

speculated that if pressed, "most Oxonians would have admitted that Anglo-Saxons had a special talent for leadership. The Rhodes scholarships were meant in part to prepare Britain's colonies to accept Anglo-Saxon rule."²⁰

If adherence to the foundations of imperialist ideology kept many at Oxford wedded to notions of paternalism, the school's emphasis on reason, empirical observation, and critical thinking--sharpened through the constant structured and informal debates emblematic of the Oxford experience--helped move Rusk toward acceptance of racial equality. Oxford was an integrated institution, and Rusk socialized, dined, played, studied, traveled, and debated with students of various cultural and racial backgrounds. His observations that these were generally intelligent, moral, hard working, and honorable people led him gradually to the conclusion that the assumptions guiding his racial attitudes were false and that any system of racial discrimination was inherently wrong and inconsistent with democratic values.

Rusk's emerging racial views were reinforced by his experiences studying in Berlin, Germany, while on leave of absence from Oxford during 1933-1934. Dean was appalled by the disintegration of democratic institutions attending Hitler's rise to power, and he twice undertook small protests against the beginning manifestations of what would ultimately become the tragically destructive racial policies of the Third Reich. When Dean's Indian friend and fellow Oxonian, Eric da Costa, visited him in Berlin, Rusk took his guest to what he described as "the best show in town--a Hitler rally at the Sports Palast." As they attempted to enter the arena, a Nazi brownshirt noticed da Costa's dark

²⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 80, 65-66.

skin and barred his path stating, "Only Aryans are admitted here," to which Dean's bold riposte was, "But he is the purest Aryan in all Berlin!" The brownshirt erroneously concluded that Rusk had insulted the Fuhrer, and he hauled Dean away for three hours of interrogation at the hands of his commanding officer. The officer finally decided that his detainee was simply a "crazy American" unfamiliar with Nazi Germany, and Dean was released.²¹

Dean's additional response to German discriminatory policy occurred while he was living with a middle class family in the Potsdam suburb of Neubabelsberg. While there he joined a tennis club located on the estate of a local Jewish man. When the town council availed itself of Nazi racial law and confiscated the estate, Rusk resigned from the club in protest, and as he later stated, "quit playing tennis because of Hitler."²²

For all his progress toward a more enlightened view of other races, Rusk's speech remained plagued by the racial epithets that were a lingering element of his white Southern patrimony. In the postscript to a letter to his mother, Dean commented, "I'm 'most as black as a nigger from sun." As the following excerpt from a letter near the end of his tenure in Europe illustrates, although Dean's thinking regarding racial equality and the South's segregationist policies had clearly changed, it was an ongoing, slow transformation:

Yesterday I heard a lecture on the Negro problem in the southern United States! It was very fair, although I doubt if many folks in Dixie would agree with it in every respect. I've changed a good bit in my attitude toward the negroes since I got away

²¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 78.

²² Ibid., 77.

from them for a while. It'll be interesting to see how I'm affected by a 'Yass-suh, boss' when I get home again. But it just seems like something's wrong when you realize that there are 84 blacks in our American Who's Who, who wouldn't be able to get a decent hotel room in Atlanta. I've lived in hotels with niggers over here - many of them American negroes, and I haven't noticed any difference.

Which reminds me of an interesting item. The Indians, from India, have a very peculiar odor. It isn't rancid like our negroes - it's rather like dusty velvet curtains with lavender talcum powder sprinkled in them. I have a very good Indian friend in Oxford, and I mentioned the subject to him. And he said that it was their racial odor, and that we have a most distinct odor ourselves. He tried to describe it to me. It seems that members of the same race can't detect this racial odor in each other. Do you suppose we smell bad to the niggers at home? It isn't a particularly nice subject, but interesting, isn't it? ²³

As with race, Rusk's views on religious discrimination were evolving. Whereas Dean was imbued with religious intolerance, especially towards Catholics, during his formative years in the South, he fell victim to religious bigotry while in Britain. Soon after arriving at St. John's College, Rusk was told that since the school was an Anglican institution and he was Presbyterian, his attendance at the compulsory early morning chapel services was strongly discouraged. Initially surprised, Rusk ultimately came to consider this good news because it gave him a break from mandated religious services, having attended compulsory chapel regularly during his four years at Davidson.²⁴

Rusk's exclusion from Anglican chapel services combined with his exposure to various belief systems while in Britain moved him toward an attitude of religious tolerance. He admired the Catholic church in Germany for resisting the Nazi suppression of religious freedom, describing Catholicism as "the best defence of traditional

²³ Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, August 2, 1933, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, 1933, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

²⁴ Rusk, As I Saw It, 68.

Christianity." When Dean's brother Parks caused a minor family scandal by marrying a divorced woman, Elizabeth Rusk was extremely upset. Dean supported Parks, and wrote to assure his mother that although his brother had deviated from Presbyterian doctrine regarding divorce, he was still a Christian and a sovereign individual who should be left free to make his own decisions without incurring the interference or judgment of others:

Gladstone, the most religious great man that the 19th century had, had to admit that there is no necessary connection between character and belief. After having seen some wonderful characters with such varying beliefs, Moslem, Buddhist, atheist, among them, I can well believe that it's true. That Parks doesn't agree with the Presbyterian church is no sign of weakness - it may be one of strength.²⁵

Dean's once black and white conception of morality was now shaded by flecks of gray, and religion was becoming a more personal, private matter. While he still enjoyed mulling over doctrinal questions as an exercise in abstract thought, he was also interested in the practical temporal applications of Christian theology. He began studying the "politics of Christ," and hoped to write a book on the topic. He conceded to his father that the work would "hardly be a contribution to political science, but it might contribute a little to the political thought of church people, who seem to spend so little thought on such important subjects."²⁶

In a world engulfed in tremendous social, political, and economic change, the Christian church had to maintain relevance and viability, and Dean was concerned whether it would ever "adjust itself to twentieth century life" by becoming more actively

²⁵ Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, 1933, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, August 6, 1932, Parks Rusk Collection.

²⁶ Dean Rusk to Robert Rusk, November 17, 1931, Parks Rusk Collection.

involved in healing the social and political ills of society. If history were any guide to the future, the prospects for effective change seemed dim because "nearly all progress has to be made over the most strenuous opposition of the Christian church," and Rusk was "sorry" that the church had grown increasingly conservative, often siding with the forces of reaction and playing an "unChristian part for 2000 years." According to Rusk, a key element of reform would be the church's willingness to "go back to Christ " and concern itself more with substance than style, and he complained that ministers were becoming too "intellectual, professional and efficient instead of personal, inspiring, and sympathetic."²⁷

Chagrined over the Christian church's past role as an effective agent of change and skeptical about its resolve and ability to lead in future societal reforms, Rusk advocated applying a remedy bordering on muscular Christian pragmatism to the task at hand:

Far reaching social reforms will not come about if those who object to present conditions are content to turn the other cheek and endure everything.... We have been trying to use Christian methods for twenty centuries to right some of the wrongs about us and have miserably failed. Perhaps it is time that Christian ends are sought by whatever means will bring them. It may be time for the operation, the medicines have proven useless. After all, God cleansed the promised land by warfare almost as ruthless as our own good effort in 1917.

As previously noted, moralism and the use of armed power were not mutually exclusive within the context of Rusk's Southern cultural background. Indeed, the concept of using

²⁷ Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, March 6, 1932, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Robert Rusk, December 18, 1932, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Robert Rusk, November 17, 1931, Parks Rusk Collection.

forcefully coercive methods to accomplish principled goals was prevalent.²⁸

Along with his angst regarding church history and the role of the church in society, modifications in Rusk's behavior suggest that he was moving to dissolve some of the ties binding him to his strict religious background, while maintaining his strong commitment to the essential moral dictates of Christianity. Rusk wrote that although he still attended church, the services were "not a very important part" of his "religious life;" he went to "stay in the habit." Dean assured his sister Margaret that he would avoid the "extremely fast social life that a small percentage of the fellows indulge in." Not long after he arrived in Britain, he became involved in the pervasive social drinking he considered a part of the Oxford experience, a significant departure given his heritage of abstinence, and scotch became a favorite beverage. Many years later, Rusk vividly, and somewhat facetiously, recalled his first drink: "...I was handed a glass of sherry. I had never so much as touched a drop of alcohol, excepting those times when my father administered his medicinal drops of corn whiskey. I sat there staring at that glass for a long time, finally lifted it, took a sip...and fell from grace."²⁹

Dean also took up card playing at Oxford, learned to dance while in Germany, and, during a momentary sojourn from his standards of morality, attempted to procure pornography in France. While on a sight seeing trip to Paris, he was approached by "a sleazy little fellow" offering to sell him a packet of "French postcards" for ten francs.

²⁸ Dean Rusk to Robert Rusk, December 18, 1932, Parks Rusk Collection.

²⁹ Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, March 6, 1932, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Margaret Rusk, November 3, 1931, Parks Rusk Collection; Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War, 46; Rusk, As I Saw It, 71.

Thinking "French postcards" a euphemism for exotic pornography, Rusk purchased the packet and opened it upon his return to his hotel room. To his astonishment, and perhaps relief, he discovered that they were indeed French postcards--pictures of tourist attractions such as the Eiffel Tower and Arc de Triomphe.³⁰

Activities such as a holiday in Paris were welcome but brief diversions from Rusk's academic pursuits, which occupied the majority of his time at Oxford. He opted to pursue an MA degree known as the "Modern Greats," comprised of the study of philosophy, politics, and economics, and he devoted particular attention to international relations, history, law, and politics as subfields. Rusk became greatly interested in various aspects of British imperialism and began researching the British Commonwealth system, devoting focused attention to the nationalistic efforts of colonial dominions striving toward complete independence.³¹

The pride and arrogance of empire were ubiquitous at Oxford, and such an environment was fertile ground for someone with Rusk's interest in colonialism. Rusk was surprised to find that more than a few of the British people he knew "had a colonial attitude even toward the United States; they talked about 'going out to America' as if they were traveling to the colonies." Many of Rusk's classmates seemed bred for the various elements of imperial duty, and the emphasis at Oxford was on service--service to Britain and its empire.³²

³⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 68; Oral History O, 6.

³¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 67; Oral History O, 8, Dean Rusk Collection.

³² Rusk, As I Saw It, 79, 65.

While exhortations to sacrifice and service appealed to Rusk, the underpinnings and ramifications of British imperialism did not. Immersed in the tenets and nature of empire, and aware of the American South's postbellum status as a pseudo-economic colony of the North exploited for its natural resources and cheap labor, Rusk came to regard colonialism as inherently distasteful, oppressive, incompatible with modern democracy, and rife with the racist paternalism he was beginning to eschew. Just as it was imperative for individuals to choose and follow their own religious and political dictates, nations required and deserved the freedom to determine their respective political and economic systems. Although a coercive imposition of values was wrong, Rusk was possessed of a reformist optimism, emanating from his evangelical background, that persuaded him that nations could lead by example and force of argument and that the virtues of democracy could be a powerful agent for change in the world.³³

Rusk's interest in colonialism nurtured an intellectual zeal for the study of foreign relations, particularly international law, that had been maturing since his days at Davidson College. Rusk considered his reading of William Searle Holdsworth's History of English Law "one of the highlights" of his time at Oxford, and the work gave him a firm grounding in the theory, development, and application of the British parliamentary system and constitutional tradition. He began an intensive examination of the history of appeals to the British Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on overseas courts, and eventually concluded that as "the British achieved dominance and extended their empire

³³ Ibid., 66.

around the globe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they brought in their knapsacks seeds of freedom with which Britain governed itself." Appreciative of the English contribution to the foundations of American democratic institutions, Rusk became intrigued by the concept of multinational acceptance of a common body of legal ideals and statutes with the potential to achieve universal validity and serve as the threads binding the fabric of international discourse, conduct, peace, and order.³⁴

Rusk's belief in the legitimacy and efficacy of international law as the basis for relations between states found natural expression in his enthusiastic support of the League of Nations. Formed after World War I, the League of Nations embodied Woodrow Wilson's dream of an international organization dedicated to preserving world peace through collective security. Along with armament limitation agreements, such as the Four and Five Power Treaties, the establishment of the World Court, and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, whose signatories disavowed the use of military aggression, the League was widely viewed as an essential part of the international peace structure emerging from 1920s.

Dean's faith in the League was strained by its response to crisis in East Asia during the fall of 1931. Seeking to secure its perceived economic and political interests on the Asian mainland, not the least of which were the raw materials needed to fuel its burgeoning military-industrial complex, Japan invaded Manchuria in September. Rule over Manchuria had been contested by China, the Soviet Union, and Japan for years, but

³⁴ Rusk, As I Saw It, 80; Oral History O, 8, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 66

the question of control was quickly settled as Japan used its "Kwangtung Army" to occupy the region. By the spring of 1933, it had succeeded in rendering Manchuria the first in a long line of expansionist conquests, having renamed the area Manchukuo and established a puppet government.

Preoccupied with the ravages of global economic depression, the world's response was largely one of muted ambivalence. In January, 1932 the United States issued the Stimson Doctrine, which decried the Japanese action as a violation of America's Open Door policy, as well as the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and stated that the United States would not recognize any government resulting from Japanese offensives in Manchuria. Sympathetic to China's concerns but unable to rally international support, the United States lacked the political will and military resources for enforced unilateral opposition to aggression in an area of the world where it had relied mainly on diplomacy to achieve its objectives since the dawn of the twentieth century. In February, 1933 the League of Nations adopted the Lytton Report condemning Japan's territorial seizure, but such belated and anemic action proved futile.

An assiduous and enthusiastic observer of the world scene, Rusk followed the Manchurian crisis closely, watching events unfold "with a sinking heart." Japan's attempts to secure an empire on the Asian mainland stoked the fires of Rusk's anti-colonial sentiment. Moreover, steeped in a Southern cultural tradition that mandated the maintenance of honor for its own sake and as a means of upholding societal order, Rusk was distressed by Japan's "wholesale violation of international law" and was "terribly disappointed" in the League's unwillingness "to defend its own principles." To Rusk, the

League had failed a "crucial test" of upholding its reputation, and its inaction and lack of resolve seemed "ominous indeed." If international law were to function effectively as a means of ordering the world community, just as the system of honor served as a means of defining human relationships in the South, the League's credibility had to be maintained.³⁵

Rusk believed in employing the weapon of nonrecognition against governments arising from Japanese machinations in Asia, but he favored the Roosevelt administration's efforts to extend diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union. Rusk's moralism was not terribly offended by the Soviet government's acts of domestic oppression, particularly against the Christian church, during the 1920s and early 1930s. He thought that the Christian church in Russia--in the form of Russian Orthodoxy during Tsarist period--had long been corrupt, had enjoyed too close a relationship with the state, and had itself become oppressive, helping to create an atmosphere that facilitated communist abuses of religious freedom. Dean explained his thinking to his family, writing, "If the American Church ever gets into the position that the Old Russian Orthodox Church was in, I'll be one of the first to try to drive it out of the country bag and baggage. Corruption and oppression aren't to be excused because they hide behind the cross of Christ. No wonder the reaction in Russia has almost gone to paganism of the most primitive type."³⁶

To Rusk, American recognition of the Soviet Union was long overdue, could possibly serve to bring additional international pressure on Japan, and might prove a

³⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 74; Oral History O, 3.

³⁶ Dean Rusk to Robert Rusk, November 14, 1933, Parks Rusk Collection.

practical means of checking Japanese expansion if Soviet-American cooperation in Asia could be achieved. He discussed the subject in a letter to his father dated November 14, 1933, two days before the United States formally recognized the Soviet government, stating, "The negotiations with Soviet Russia please me very much.... [Soviet foreign minister] Litvinow [sic] is very clever and knows what he'd [sic] doing. He's been the outstanding figure in world politics for two or three years, but people are too prejudiced to admit it. He and Roosevelt would do well to become friends, especially with the prospect of new Japanese adventures." Rephrasing his pragmatic rationale, Dean later explained that "If there are a lot of devils running loose about the world, it's a good idea to make friends with some of them!"³⁷

Dean's sense of general disappointment in the course of world events deepened while studying in Germany during 1933 and 1934 as he witnessed the collapse of the democratic Weimar Republic and the swift and brutal ascendancy of the Nazi party. In several ways, Germany seemed a natural destination for Rusk. His mother's ancestors, the Clotfelters, traced their roots to the Black Forest region, and he was intrigued by the economic chaos and significant political change occurring within the nation, writing, "I can't see how they [Germany] are going to avoid both civil war and trouble with France, they're between the devil and the deep blue sea.... When the fun begins, I'm going over as an innocent bystander." He began his stay in Germany by taking German language and economics courses in Hanover and Hamburg while on vacation from Oxford, and after

³⁷ Dean Rusk to Robert Rusk, November 14, 1933, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Margaret Rusk, November 16, 1933, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

securing a leave of absence from the school, spent several months studying politics and international law in Berlin. Rusk's tenure in Germany left him proficient in the language, but he preferred to use an interpreter when dealing with Germans as secretary of state.³⁸

As Rusk later recalled, it was "a momentous time" to live in Germany, and he observed the changes occurring from a variety of perspectives. The methods of organized violence, suppression of civil rights, and destruction of property employed by the Nazis were readily apparent. Although cautious in his written criticism of the German government in order to avoid the attention of Nazi censors, Dean complained to his father that "the protestant churches have been merged under a Nazi bishop and Christianity has been brought into line with the National-Socialist Revolution," and he lamented the Nazi practice of depicting Christ as "the first great Nordic and a rebuke to Israel." On one occasion two hundred people were killed in street fights between Nazis and socialists near Rusk's Hamburg hotel. Indications existed that the Nazi's use of force would not be limited to domestic opponents; Germany was rearming. Rusk tagged along on a Hitler Youth camping trip and found that it closely resembled a military exercise, "with young boys practicing close-order drill, doing calisthenics, running an obstacle course, and dismantling and reassembling weapons."³⁹

³⁸ Rusk, As I Saw It, 75; Oral History O, 11-12; Dean Rusk to Margaret Rusk, January 12, 1932, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

³⁹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 75, 76, 78-79; Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, August 2, 1933, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, 1933, Parks Rusk Collection; Oral History O, 4.

While most of the native German students Dean knew maintained a cautious reticence regarding Nazi policy and actions, it was obvious that the growing Nazi hegemony had extended to the German system of higher education. Rusk began studying international law with a distinguished professor at Berlin's Hochschule für Politik. The first day of the seminar, when the professor inquired as to which subjects the class should focus its attention, a uniformed Nazi student declared, "There is only one thing we ought to study, and that is the illegality of the Treaty of Versailles!" Rusk was "rather glad" when the institution was soon converted into a training academy for Nazi leaders and the other students transferred to the University of Berlin.⁴⁰

But Nazi influence was also entrenching itself at Dean's new place of study, where he surmised that a history professor was being coerced into altering his lectures to conform to Nazi ideology and propaganda. During one lecture, the professor began "speculating rather wildly" about potential methods of assimilating ethnic Germans living abroad into the German state. He mused that a Nazi party could be organized for that purpose in the United States, or that Germany might possibly demand territory in cities such as Milwaukee and St. Louis.⁴¹

Attending a memorial service for German war dead at Tempelhof Airfield gave Rusk insight into the workings and power of Nazi propaganda. By Rusk's estimate, a million people quickly filed onto the field in carefully choreographed sequence and watched as Adolf Hitler spoke "hypnotically," repeating his familiar mantra of economic

⁴⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 75; Oral History O, 5.

⁴¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 76; Oral History O, 5-6.

recovery and restored international prestige. Listening to the crowd shout "Today Germany, tomorrow the world!" in unison was "an eerie, frightening experience," but Rusk maintained his courage and convictions and refused to give the Hitler salute. He could not resist poking fun at the pompously contrived Nazi rituals, and he puckishly commented that the Nazi bugle corps "sounded like a flock of geese." His remark was reported to a Nazi brownshirt usher, who detained and questioned him until Dean gained release by arguing that he was merely commenting on the unique tonal quality of the horns.⁴²

Although Rusk had read Hitler's Mein Kampf and was repelled by the dissolution of civil and human rights he observed as the Nazis consolidated their rule all around him, he initially adopted what he called a "wait and see attitude" toward the possibility of Hitler expanding his authority beyond Germany's borders. Apparently Rusk, a number of concerned Germans, and frightened European nations all clung desperately to the same hope: that Hitler's bombastic, polemical posturing was merely a device used to attain power and that his policies would moderate as the decade of the 1930s progressed.⁴³

While cautious in his appraisal of Hitler's foreign policy designs, Dean was more forthright in his ideas about political and economic conditions within the United States. Democrat Franklin Roosevelt was elected to the presidency in 1932, and one of his campaign promises was the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment and its prohibition of alcoholic beverages. The issue was hotly debated in the South, and Rusk supported

⁴² Rusk, As I Saw It, 78; Oral History O, 4, 11.

⁴³ Rusk, As I Saw It, 79; Oral History O, 11.

Prohibition, although not in the form of a constitutional amendment.⁴⁴

Rusk monitored events in America closely and sympathetically through newspapers and correspondence, and the winter of 1932-1933 was particularly devastating, as the nation grappled with freezing cold and the crippling effects of the Great Depression. The United States endured twenty-five percent unemployment, and labor and social unrest, homelessness, and bread lines abounded. Britain was also suffering economically, and socialist and labor groups were active at Oxford. Aware of America's difficulties and surrounded by the rhetoric of change, Rusk's belief in the tenets and merits of capitalism as an effective economic system "came under sharp and skeptical questioning."⁴⁵

Frustrated and disappointed by capitalism's seeming inability to deal with the monstrous economic calamities bestriding the industrial world, Rusk temporarily embraced socialism, which he defined as "any kind of community action in industry," as an alternative. Rusk believed capitalism was discredited and morally bankrupt, and socialism seemed the logical means of maintaining a reasonable, equitable level of sustenance and prosperity while ensuring the survival of political and social liberty. In a letter to his mother, Dean gave full vent to his frustrations and feelings of unease:

The authoritarian state is coming, and even more extensive control of our everyday life. It's the only way to freedom. By submitting six hours a day of our life to rigid control in order that we can earn our bread and butter without the heartbreaking anxiety involved in the hitherto scramble for gold is the only way that we'll ever be

⁴⁴ Dean Rusk to Margaret Rusk, December 22, 1932, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

⁴⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 66.

able to use the other 18 hours a day for cultural, recreational, or religious activities. If people try to make Democracy mean a shadow of political freedom along with economic, social, and spiritual drudgery and slavery, then down with Democracy.... We've got to do something to make good our boast about being something more than an animal. And we aren't going to do it in a system where every man is fighting against every other for bodily satisfactions. The spiritual and mental satisfactions are FREE - but we can't have them because all our strength has been taken up in this perpetual dog fight. I'm sick of it.

In a similar letter Rusk stated, "Call it socialism, fascism, or anything else, if it means the reorganization of the country to get rid of this killing problem of making a living, I'm for it. Poverty and slavery have been served up as Christian virtues far too long." At first glance, such statements seem remarkable given Rusk's faith in traditional American institutions as well as his subsequent role in shaping United States foreign policy and reputation as a fervid anti-communist. But the pervasive hardships of the Great Depression, Rusk's struggle with poverty within a capitalist system, his sense of morality and justice, and his typical youthful exuberance for exploring new ideas must be considered.⁴⁶

Rusk was a staunch Democrat, and he supported Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs for dealing with the Great Depression, but, reflective of his infatuation with socialism, he feared that Roosevelt's reforms were not radical enough. Additionally, it appeared that the president was temporizing for the sake of political expediency. He confided to his parents that he was "not at all optimistic" about the New Deal, arguing that "It's got to be whole hog or none." It was imperative that Roosevelt "go further with

⁴⁶ Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, August 2, 1933, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, 1933, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, August 2, 1933, Parks Rusk Collection.

his state control or give way to general chaos." Dismayed, he observed that "This standing in the middle on certain issues tends to muddle everything up."⁴⁷

Despite his concern over the economic and political fate of America, his demanding schedule, and the many captivating places and events swirling around him in Europe, Dean at times fell victim to homesickness. He admitted his feelings to his mother, writing, "I got to thinking of corn-on-cob, corn-bread, hot biscuit, sweet potatoes, fried chicken, butterbeans, Bell pepper, watermelons, mush, grits, and all the other wonderful things I haven't had since I left there, and I ended up by being about the homesickest fellow in the world. I can't allow myself to be homesick about people because that would hurt too much."⁴⁸

Early in 1934, as Dean was preparing to leave Berlin to return to Britain and take his comprehensive exams, he received a telegram from his Oxford roommate informing him that the deadline for entering competition for the Cecil Peace Prize was fast approaching. The Cecil Prize was an annual award given to the British university student submitting the best essay on a topic related to international affairs, and it carried a stipend of one hundred pounds. In need of funds to cover his expenses for his remaining few months in Europe, Rusk secluded himself in a Berlin hotel for five days and emerged with the prize winning essay. His paper was a comparative analysis of the British Commonwealth of Nations and the League of Nations that argued for an enhanced role

⁴⁷ Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, August 2, 1933, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Robert Rusk, November 14, 1933, Parks Rusk Collection.

⁴⁸ Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, August 2, 1933, Parks Rusk Collection.

for international organizations in the securing of global peace.⁴⁹

Dean left Europe in August 1934, having passed his comprehensive exams and attained his degree from Oxford University. Although he would miss the life of an "Oxford gentleman" he had led in Europe, he was looking forward to a reunion with the people and culture of the South, having written his family to "have some butterbeans in the pot waiting for me, and some fried chicken, and some buttermilk, and some cornbread, and some sweet potato pie, and-- well, that'll be enough for the first meal anyhow!"⁵⁰

Dean was also excited about returning to the United States because he had secured a one year appointment to teach at Mills College, a liberal arts school for women located near San Francisco, California. He accepted the job after his inquiries into a post in the Western European Affairs division of the State Department had been rebuffed in a letter by Stanley Hornbeck, in which the official explained that Rusk lacked the requisite experience for a position. Dean's anticipation regarding the Mills College appointment was tempered by the knowledge that when he reached Atlanta he would be urged by his family to repeat his explanations as to why, after having been gone for three years, he would once again leave them after a brief visit. He had broken the news regarding his new occupation in a letter written while still in Britain. Dean related that the job would enable him to continue paying debts owed to family members and noted that "California

⁴⁹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 81-81; Oral History O, 7.

⁵⁰ Dean Rusk to Margaret Rusk, April 29, 1934, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

may sound about as far away as Europe, but it isn't...." Rusk continued, pleading:

Please don't be disappointed that I'm going out to California. I feel as attached to the south as ever, but then no one in the south has offered me a job nearly as good as the one I'm taking.... If Oxford has done nothing else, it has given me a chance to adjust my ambition to my limited capacity and position in life. The sky isn't the limit as it used to be when old ladies in Christian Endeavor work used to tell me that I was sure to become a great man. I know that my real job is to brighten up the little corners that I'm thrown into without worrying about power and wealth and influence and all that.⁵¹

Rusk's experiences at Oxford provided him with far more than the opportunity to evaluate his talent and ambition. Collectively they constitute a critical moment in his maturation as a person and future policy maker. He entered Oxford somewhat socially crude and harboring the narrow, prejudiced outlook so common among white Southerners of his generation but emerged with a sharpened intellect, sophisticated refinement, and more tolerant, cosmopolitan conceptions of race and religion. While retaining his commitment to Christianity and his fundamental sense of morality, Rusk shed his attachment to the more austere aspects of his conservative, regimented religious background such as proscriptions regarding drinking, dancing, and playing cards.

Rusk's interest in economics, politics, and world affairs deepened while at Oxford, and he little realized that the Rhodes scholarship would afford him the academic credentials needed to someday move freely within the American foreign policy establishment and influence the issues and events that continually held his fascination. Witnessing the Western world's economic distress during the Great Depression led Rusk

⁵¹ Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War*, 62; Dean Rusk to Robert Rusk, July 5, 1934, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

to question the legitimacy and effectiveness of largely unrestrained capitalism but also sparked faith in the proposition that the power and resources of national government should be devoted to active maintenance of a state's economic and social welfare. Dean's brushes with German totalitarianism illustrated the dangers that could crawl from the rubble of unchecked economic chaos and benign international neglect, increasing his attachment to democracy. The axiom that familiarity breeds contempt proved true for Rusk and British imperialism, and his distaste for colonialism was strengthened by Japanese expansion in Asia. Moreover, the Manchurian Crisis bolstered his aversion to aggression and cemented his conviction that adherence to an effective system of collective security and international law was the wellspring of hope for stability and peace among nations.

Later in life, when reflecting on his student days in Europe, Rusk's mind would frequently turn to two events that left an indelible impression. In February, 1933 a much publicized debate took place in the famous Oxford Union, in which the audience voted overwhelmingly in favor of a motion that stated "This house will under no circumstances fight for King and Country." A pacifist organization, known as the Oxford Movement, soon materialized, and Hitler referred to the debate as illustration of the lack of British mettle. The second event occurred while Rusk was living in Neubabelsberg, Germany. Neubabelsberg was a picturesque community, and Dean loved to drink in the local scenery through outings in the surrounding hills and waterways. Once, he left his canoe unsecured while eating lunch at a lakeside restaurant, and the craft was stolen. Because he had failed to lock the canoe, he was fined five marks for "tempting thieves." Rusk would

forever consider the incident a metaphor for his belief that the pacifism, isolationism, apathy, confusion, and weakened credibility of the League of Nations and the Western democracies during the 1930s invited fascist aggression and plunged the globe into the cataclysm of war. Indeed, early in his tenure as secretary of state he warned in a speech that "peace-loving peoples who neglect their arms can tempt the ambitious...." Dean Rusk thought his ambition quenched and his career choice finalized as he journeyed to California to begin his post at Mills College, but his education and talent--along with the events of World War II--would propel him toward a destiny of power and influence first predicted during his Georgia youth by the "old ladies in Christian Endeavor."⁵²

⁵² Rusk, As I Saw It, 72, 66, 82-83; Dean Rusk, The Winds of Freedom-Selections from the Speeches and Statements of Secretary of State Dean Rusk (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 327; Dean Rusk to Robert Rusk, July 5, 1934, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

CHAPTER FOUR

"WHEN ARMED BATTALIONS BEGIN TO MARCH:" DEAN RUSK AND WORLD WAR II

Mills College

Warm California weather welcomed Rusk as he arrived at Mills College in the fall of 1934. Nestled beside San Francisco Bay in Oakland, the lush campus of the all-women's school seemed "an oasis" to him, so long in the rain and cold of Oxford. Having dreamed of working in higher education, Rusk was eager to begin his appointment.¹

Despite his enthusiasm, Rusk initially found teaching at Mills a somewhat challenging endeavor. He had no formal pedagogical training and little experience, and his Southern accent with its lingering English inflections could make comprehension of his lectures difficult for students, at times forcing him to write words on the chalkboard to facilitate communication. Rusk enjoyed teaching, and his intellect, diligence, and sense of humor soon rendered him a popular and respected instructor.²

Rusk taught political science and history and instituted an interdisciplinary program patterned after his Oxford experience. Although he had no scholarly publications to his credit, and would add none while at Mills, Rusk's teaching and interpersonal skills eventually led to his promotion to associate professor, and he later ascended to dean of

¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 85.

² Ibid.; Oral History CCCCC, 3, Dean Rusk Collection, Richard Russell Library, University of Georgia, Athens.

faculty at the tender age of twenty-seven.³

Since his student days at Oxford, Rusk had accomplished the enviable feat of securing dependable income in the midst of the Great Depression, but his doubts regarding the efficacy of capitalism in America remained. He was a Democrat and supporter of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, but he brooded over the nation's ability to survive the Depression with a semblance of political and economic freedom intact and thought that the prevailing economic chaos might necessitate fundamental changes in traditional financial-political relationships. Writing to his father in 1935, the year in which the Roosevelt administration launched some of its most ambitious and controversial reform legislation, Rusk stated:

I still do not see how rugged individualism in economic life is going to be possible if we expect to retain democratic forms of government.... If we prevent unreasonable accumulations of wealth and take political power away from money power, we may have democracy, but not before. Maybe we don't really want democracy. If democracy is rugged individualism ("every man for himself and devil take the hindmost"?), then maybe we must get rid of democracy.⁴

Along with worries over the economic situation and the responsibilities of his academic position, an active social life occupied Dean's time. He and other men at Mills formed an exclusive male organization, known as the Kiva club, which served as a catalyst for poker games, sports, and group vacations. Other social activities attracted his attention; he developed a close friendship with one of his students, Virginia Foisie.

³ Rusk, As I Saw It, 85.

⁴ Dean Rusk to Robert Rusk, 9-23-35, Folder 1, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection, Richard Russell Library, University of Georgia, Athens.

According to one 1930s era Mills College student, "Every single man on the Mills campus was snatched up by a Mills woman sooner or later," and the tall, athletic, and charming Rusk was the focus of considerable female attention. Virginia Foisie registered for two of his classes assuming that they were taught by Frank Buck, the professor whom Rusk replaced. She cried when she learned that Buck was not the instructor but soon decided that Rusk was a suitable substitute. Raised in Washington, D.C. and Seattle, where her Harvard educated father was a labor relations consultant, Virginia was intelligent, interested in foreign relations, attractive, and like Rusk, she was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. To Rusk, Virginia was a "grandly talented girl" whom he found appealing "in every way," and after he selected her as his research assistant, their friendship blossomed into romance.⁵

As Rusk later noted, it "wasn't easy for a young professor to court a student in a women's college in the thirties without creating a sensation," and theirs was a surreptitious affair consisting of pre-dawn campfire breakfasts in the countryside and dinners in isolated, out of the way restaurants. They were aided by a sympathetic "dorm mother" who gave Virginia a key and permitted her to leave the building in the early morning hours. The faculty at Mills generally approved of the relationship and were especially appreciative of the decorous manner in which it was conducted. Although the couple mastered the logistics of secret rendezvouses and gained the sanction of the Mills establishment, difficulties remained. Virginia later recalled: "Dating a professor at a women's college was hard on me. He [Dean] was friendly to everyone, and I was

⁵ Oral History CCCCC, 4-5, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 86-88.

extremely jealous. He didn't like that at all and almost called it off. But he was ready to be plucked...." Rusk was indeed prepared to surrender to marriage, and he and Virginia Foisie were wed in Seattle, Washington on June 19, 1937. Since Dean was so far removed from Georgia, only a few of his family and friends were in attendance. He was nervous, and as the couple exchanged vows he stated, "With this wing, I thee wed."⁶

The couple set up house near Mills College, and Rusk continued his studies, begun a year earlier, at the University of California, Berkeley college of law. Rusk planned for a career as a professor, but pursued a degree in international law rather than a Ph.D. because of his abiding interest in the field and because he believed political science departments would value a professor trained in legal matters. Moreover, Rusk concluded that the increasingly dire world situation would soon necessitate a greater reliance on international law as a mechanism for regulating relations between states. Significantly, he believed that "nations needed standards of law and justice in dealing with each other. Purely political considerations were inadequate in resolving disputes between nations, because they left out what was most essential-- morality. Power politics pitting the strong versus the weak were an inadequate basis for peace."⁷

Challenges to Rusk's faith in international law arose during the late 1930s, as Japan embarked on conquest of China proper and began to extend its hegemony toward Southeast Asia, while Germany used a mixture of diplomacy and armed force to conquer portions of Central and Eastern Europe, igniting World War II with its invasion of Poland

⁶ Rusk, As I Saw It, 86-88; Oral History CCCCC, 13, Dean Rusk Collection.

⁷ Rusk, As I Saw It, 86-88..

in September, 1939. Feeling restless and frustrated with the relative isolation academic life afforded, Rusk was determined to influence world affairs. His moralism led him to become active in pacifist organizations, such as the Quakers' American Friends Service Committee, and he participated in a protest against the sale of American scrap iron to Japan. However, he remained an avowed internationalist and was a reserve officer in the United States Army. War was to be avoided when possible, and pacifist movements were useful in promoting the cause of international tranquility, but as he would later aver, "when armed battalions begin to march," the United States must be prepared to intervene with military power "or the armed battalions will get what they want...."⁸

Rusk was intensely dismayed by the course of world events. Axis expansion disrupted global stability, violated ideals of justice and the sanctity of national sovereignty, and visited brutal oppression upon weaker, conquered nations. Additionally, conditioned by a Southern culture that equated honor with reputation and sanctioned decisive action and the use of violence in defense/ promotion of prestige and values, Rusk feared that the Western democracies had allowed their credibility to evaporate by failing to "gird themselves to ward off and end" ... the "growing momentum of aggression." Continued idleness would only bring further expansion, but the United States had "done nothing." So distraught was the normally stoic professor that he was almost moved to tears when recounting the "passivity of the democracies" to his international relations class. Rusk and other future Cold War policy makers came to regard Western democratic actions at the Munich Conference in September, 1938, in

⁸ Rusk, As I Saw It, 89-90; Oral History X, 23, Dean Rusk Collection.

which Britain and France acquiesced to Hitler's demands for Czechoslovakian territory in an unsuccessful attempt to quench the Nazi thirst for expansion, as the ultimate symbol of the dire consequences devolving from the "appeasement" of an aggressor state.⁹

Rusk's speech to a 1940 Mills College "Peace Day" gathering reflects his frustration with the international situation as well as the duality of lofty ideals and reliance on armed force inherent in his Southern moralism. While arguing that the United States was obligated to assume an internationalist outlook in global affairs, even if a propitious end to the war negated the need for armed American intervention, he posited that any action not undergirded with sincerely conceived and genuinely treasured morality was illegitimate and futile:

It is a serious thing to warn people of possible tragedy. I cannot predict whether we shall take up arms or remain at peace. But that is not my chief concern today. Until we begin to make our choices between better and worse, valuable and valueless, neither peace nor war has any meaning.... Last time we slaughtered twenty million men and didn't really want the things we said we shot them for. Even the academician feels justified in saying that we dare not be such brutes again.

There are many things for one person to do. What are your values? How much do you wish to bring them about? How much are you willing to do toward curbing the madness of our mutual destruction? How much can you give for things that really matter?¹⁰

As the Nazi military juggernaut occupied parts of Scandinavia and devoured the Low Countries and France in the spring and summer of 1940, the United States lurched toward mobilization for war. Amidst such tension and excitement, Dean and Virginia's first child, David, was born on October 10, 1940. Dean was summoned for active duty in

⁹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 89-90.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

the United States Army in December, propelling the couple along "a roller coaster ride of emotion."¹¹

The American military Rusk entered in 1940 was not the vaunted and powerful instrument of victory that would later emerge from the throes of world conflict. The nation's abhorrence of the carnage and militarism of World War I and the priority given to combatting the Great Depression had left few funds allotted for military spending. The United States Army was undersized and ill-equipped, lacking the essential foundational support of a large and active munitions industry.

Rusk was mustered in with the rank of captain, stationed near San Francisco, and made a company commander in the Third Infantry Division, which later saw heavy combat action during campaigns in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and France. At the time, the Third was one of two divisions rated combat ready by the Army, but Rusk quickly realized that such an assessment was "sheer fantasy;" his company was woefully understaffed, trained with cardboard tubes as a substitute for mortars, and possessed only one antitank gun.¹²

By his own admission, Rusk was a "rather green" commander, but he took to his task and spent most of 1941 training and participating in maneuvers in California and Washington. In October, 1941, he was ordered to report to Washington, D.C. for service in the G-2 intelligence section of the Army's General Staff. Although he and his division commander vigorously protested the assignment, the War Department was intransigent,

¹¹ Ibid., 90.

¹² Ibid., 99-100.

and Rusk moved his young family eastward to the capital.¹³

When Rusk arrived in Washington, he was put in charge of a new G-2 section responsible for British colonial possessions in Asia and the Pacific. Although interested in Asia, his knowledge of the area was not broad, and he was baffled by his assignment to such a position. To his amazement, he soon learned that in making his appointment, the Army reasoned that anyone who spent three years studying in Britain must have gleaned some knowledge of British Asia.¹⁴

Rusk was also nonplussed by the War Department's lack of hard intelligence data on Asia. It seemed that cuts in military funding had hurt G-2 as badly as they affected the infantry; Rusk discovered that the only information in War Department intelligence files regarding British Asia was a Murray's Tourist Handbook, a 1925 report on the British Army in India, and several articles about Asia dating back to World War I. In an attempt to build a credible, substantive intelligence file, Rusk and his staff interviewed missionaries and sailors who had spent time in Asia and sought to locate Americans born in Burma. At times, their desperate need for proficient linguists led them to extraordinary measures; they once had a Burmese released from a mental institution and used him as a language instructor.¹⁵

While in G-2, Rusk worked with and befriended future State Department official and Nobel Peace prize winner Ralph Bunche, who worked in the Office of Strategic

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 100-101.

¹⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 100-101; Oral History O, 15, Dean Rusk Collection.

Services. Rusk once invited Bunche, an African American, to have dinner in the War Department officers' mess, where they ate amidst what doubtless were bemused looks and angry glares from other patrons. Rusk claimed then and later that neither he nor Bunche realized that the mess was off limits to blacks, but this is doubtful given a conflicting account of the incident and the racial discrimination pervasive in Washington at the time. Significantly, although Rusk later received notes and phone calls from fellow white officers complaining about his action, he refused to apologize.¹⁶

In late 1941, Rusk's section of G-2 was expecting an attack on British, Dutch, or American possessions in the Southwest Pacific and focused on attempting to track Japanese fleet movements in the area. Rusk reported to work early on Sunday, December 7th, seeking to ascertain the movement and intentions of the Japanese Navy in anticipation of an attack, possibly in Indonesia or Malaya. When the news of Japan's surprise assault on the American naval installation at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii arrived, his reaction was "a mixture of horror and disbelief." Japan attacked Malaya soon thereafter, and Rusk's stature in G-2 rose as his superiors realized that he had successfully predicted the invasion routes used by the Japanese.¹⁷

The attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into World War II, shattering America's attachment to traditional isolationist sentiment and its attending illusory guarantees of security so disdained by Rusk. He dutifully manned his G-2 post throughout 1942, enduring the dark days of winter and spring when Axis power

¹⁶ Rusk, As I Saw It, 580; Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War, 78.

¹⁷ Rusk, As I Saw It, 102; Oral History GGGG, 1, 5-6, Dean Rusk Collection.

approached its apex in Europe and the Pacific, but longed for an assignment that would allow him to make what he believed would be a more direct contribution to the war effort. Accordingly, late in the year he requested a position near the front lines and was sent to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas for intensive command and staff training. He was then promoted to major and assigned to the command of General Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell in the China-Burma-India theater (CBI) during the summer of 1943. As he prepared to leave his wife and baby, Rusk was steadied by his moralism and the knowledge that he was not the only young American sacrificing family ties and obligations to duty and the exigencies of global war.¹⁸

The China-Burma-India Theater

Conceived during the Arcadia conference of late 1941 as a joint command under the direction of China, Britain, and the United States, the China-Burma-India theater harbored inherent challenges for General Stilwell and his deputy chief of war plans, Dean Rusk. Its geographic expanse was immense and encompassed a wide variety of challenging terrain, including jungle and infamously formidable mountain ranges. Such geographic difficulties were compounded by the fact that the theater was given the lowest Allied priority. Additionally, the lines of jurisdictional responsibility and command were ill-defined and at times indistinguishable.

Stilwell's position is illustrative of such bureaucratic confusion. He was at once chief of staff to Nationalist leader Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) in China, deputy

¹⁸ Rusk, As I Saw It, 103.

commander to British Lord Louis Mountbatten in the Southeast Asia Command for India and Burma, and commander-in-chief of all American troops, of which there were few, within CBI. An experienced soldier, Stilwell served in the Philippines and World War I and was an American officer and military attaché in China during the two decades preceding World War II. The general was widely respected for his integrity and ability as a field commander, but he was also an anxious, fiery, and dour leader whose temperament had earned him the moniker "Vinegar Joe." In spite of his reputation as a hard bitten, no nonsense officer, Stilwell's famously gruff personality did have a softer side; he was fond of the Walt Disney 1941 animated feature, Dumbo, and sat through the film twice, nearly falling out of his chair in fits of laughter "when the elephant pyramid toppled over." Stilwell despised pretension and was contemptuous of those he considered lazy, ineffective, egotistical, or verbose, and he enjoyed combat and the company of troops in the field over the tedium of office life with his several staffs.¹⁹

To Rusk, Stilwell seemed a "laconic New Englander" with an acerbic sense of humor who "looked angry all the time." He was initially "mortified" upon learning of his assignment to Stilwell's command, because as an officer in the Third Division in 1941, he had the unpleasant duty of serving as master of ceremonies at a banquet honoring the visiting general. During the dinner a striptease dancer performed, and although Rusk had had no knowledge of the woman's inclusion in the program, he nonetheless was obliged to introduce her to the guests. Stilwell clearly considered the entertainment inappropriate

¹⁹ Barbara Tuchman, Stilwell and the American Experience in China (New York, 1970), xi-5; Oral History O, 21, Dean Rusk Collection; Joseph Stilwell, The Stilwell Papers (New York, 1948), 12.

but fortunately forgot the incident, and the pair came to regard each other with respect and affection.²⁰

Traveling with Stilwell to CBI in June of 1943, Rusk quickly settled into his quarters in New Delhi, India. Realizing that he would be far too busy with staff work to ever have to battle boredom, he surmised that his main foes would probably be the insects and oppressive Indian heat that reigned supreme throughout much of the year. Indeed, Rusk began losing weight almost immediately and after a month had sweated away nearly twenty pounds, dropping from his prewar weight of two hundred to around one hundred eighty. He informed his wife that he "looked ludicrous" in his new tropical worsted suit, speculating that their young son could "crawl up through the waist of my coat, fully buttoned and with me in it as well." During his initial period of weight loss, Rusk was afflicted and hospitalized with a severe bout of dysentery, which left him weakened and behind in his work but afforded access to highly prized American hospital food during recovery.²¹

While plagued by physical ailments, Rusk was also occasionally stricken with the emotional distress of homesickness, writing that "once in a while I feel deeply this loss of time from a life which should be concerned with other things than war." Work, tennis, swimming, playing cards, intermittent picnics in the countryside, and a trip to the Taj Mahal, whose beauty so affected Rusk he termed it "spiritually painful, literally," served

²⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 114, 103.

²¹ Dean Rusk to Virginia Rusk, 7-21-43, 7-22-43, 7-25-43, 9-15-43, Folder 2, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

as distractions from thoughts of home and family.²²

From his post in India, Rusk monitored the war as closely as possible and throughout the conflict was supremely confident of Allied victory. Although he had speculated that capitalism needed modification in order to survive the Great Depression, he had an unshakable faith in the value, integrity, and effectiveness of United States institutions--especially democracy and the military--that was redolent of notions of American exceptionalism prevalent during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While working in G-2, Rusk had opposed the theory, put forth by certain War Department officers, of German military invincibility relative to American capability. In CBI, he continued to defend United States military prowess, praising American victories in Sicily and Italy and chiding critics of the armed forces, whom he labeled "grand stand quarterbacks," for "sniping behind the lines." Concerned that Soviet propaganda was diminishing perceptions of American contributions to Allied progress, he urged his family not to give the Red Army undue credit, writing:

Don't underrate what the US and British forces have done in the Mediterranean by overrating the Russians. From press accounts it would appear that the past 12 months have cost the Axis about 600,000 troops in the Mediterranean alone. That, plus the effect of the air offensive against Germany compares favorably with Russia's effort (itself backed by US and British supplies and equipment).²³

While certain of the rectitude of the Allies' cause and methods, as well as the inevitability of victory, Rusk found the killing and destruction inherent in warfare

²² Dean Rusk to Virginia Rusk, 8-22-43, 10-11-43, 11-11-43, Folder 2, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

²³ Oral History GGGG, 16, Dean Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Virginia Rusk, 9-29-43, 8-18-43, Folder 2, Box 1, Series I, Dean Rusk Collection.

"obscene," and he was determined to work to eliminate the necessity for such conflict in the future, if possible through the use of international law. Rusk was prone to generalize somewhat naively and project his sentiment onto large aggregate groups, such as American women on the homefront and United States military personnel, and he wrote his wife that "I'm sure the women at home would work their bodies and souls out to get some sort of international law working if they really understood what war does to their menfolk." Further, he attempted to instill his values in his son through a poignant letter written during 1943:

They all [American soldiers in CBI], I believe, hate war and all that it means. They aren't excited about this one and look forward to the day when they get home. But, even so, they do their job quietly and steadily without flinching. We have gone far when civilized men can fight to win and remain civilized at heart. Our next step is to be civilized enough to know how to live to make such wars unnecessary. And that's where you come in, David, beginning at the age of three. Goodnight, Daddy.²⁴

The principal American mission in CBI was to contain, and where possible roll back, Japanese expansion in conjunction with the British and Chinese. At the time of Rusk's arrival, the Japanese controlled large portions of China and practically the whole of Southeast Asia, including Malaya, Singapore, and Burma, and since Allied priorities lay elsewhere, sufficient numbers of troops and supplies were often difficult to obtain. Consequently, success depended on close cooperation and careful coordination between the United States and its British and Chinese partners, an objective Rusk later dubbed

²⁴ Oral History X, 23, Dean Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Virginia Rusk, 8-8-43, 10-11-43, Folder 2, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

"Mission Impossible" that was rarely achieved.²⁵

The Anglo-American relationship was complicated by differing conceptions of Asia's past and future, and the prosecution of Allied military operations, dealings with Asians, and the effectiveness of Allied propaganda were adversely affected. The British had been a major colonial power in the region for centuries, generally considered Asians their cultural and racial inferiors who benefitted from the firm but "benevolent" imperial hand, and planned to retain their Asian empire after the defeat of the Japanese.

Consequently, it often seemed to Rusk and other Americans that the first obligation of British troops in Asia was to defend imperial holdings, especially India, and not to conduct offensive operations against the enemy. In contrast to the British, President Roosevelt tended to view Asian states as sovereign political entities with a right to self-determination, and he frequently impressed upon a recalcitrant Prime Minister Winston Churchill his desire that British colonial possessions receive their independence at war's end.²⁶

Allied cooperation was further hindered by the sometimes strained relations between British South East Asian Command (SEAC) leader Mountbatten and Stilwell. A great-grandson of Britain's Queen Victoria who would later assume the title "Earl of Burma," Mountbatten was patrician and supremely self-confident, and to the American general he embodied British attachment to imperialism and reluctance to engage the Japanese. Although usually polite to Mountbatten in person, in his diary and letters to his

²⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 104.

²⁶ Ibid., 110-112; Philip Ziegler, Mountbatten (New York, 1985), 242.

wife, Stilwell referred to the Briton as a "Glamour Boy" and complained that "Louis is playing the 'Empah' game and won't take chances." On another occasion Stilwell recorded, "I went down to Columbo to welcome Mountbatten on his return. I went to the zoo first to look at the monkeys just to get in the mood." For his part, Mountbatten tried hard to maintain a cordial relationship with Stilwell but was continually wary of the American's famed irascibility and independence. In early 1944, Mountbatten became convinced that Stilwell had sabotaged British attempts to obtain consensus support for a plan to assault Japanese held Sumatra, and he demanded the general's recall, relenting only after Stilwell apologized in person.²⁷

It was within such a politically charged atmosphere that Rusk was forced to operate. His leadership experiences at Boys High, Davidson, Oxford, and Mills had left him resourceful and adept at working effectively under pressure with diverse groups of people, and these were skills that served him well in CBI. Stilwell preferred life in the field and delegated heavily to his staff, which was headquartered in New Delhi.

As deputy chief of war plans, Rusk participated in the formulation of military operations and aided in coordinating logistical support, and he sometimes yearned to participate in civilians' discussions of classified topics of which he had knowledge. In writing home, he stated, "I had dinner last night with [journalists] Eric Severaid and Preston Glover -quite interesting, but it's hard to sit still 'under wraps' without joining in such conversation. The tape over my lips gets awfully sticky sometimes." Such

²⁷ Stilwell, The Stilwell Papers, 290, 239, 313; Ziegler, Mountbatten, 241-249, 266.

difficulties notwithstanding, Stilwell trusted Rusk implicitly and expected him to handle delicate political negotiations with the British, authorizing him to write and send cables in the general's name. It was Stilwell who taught Rusk to come quickly to the heart of a problem when providing analysis, insisting that cables be concise and admonishing Rusk by remarking, "If you've got something to say, say it succinctly and then shut up. Don't smother your message in a sea of words." Rusk wrote his wife that his was a "fascinating job" providing "no reason to complain," and he added that he was constantly busy and was "learning some of the reason for the remark that in any successful campaign the first casualties are the staff officers who are driven crazy!"²⁸

In addition, Rusk assumed responsibility for maintaining correct American relations with Indian nationalists, an important assignment given the Indians' position as the manual labor foundation of Allied logistical support, and he was aware from his student days at Oxford of Gandhi's strategy of non-cooperation with the British. Before transferring from Washington, Rusk aided in the design of a special theater shoulder patch, worn exclusively by American troops in CBI, which seemed to have a salutary effect on Indo-American affairs. The emblem contained national symbols of India, China, and the United States, and was intended to demonstrate to Asians that America was in the region to fight Japan and not to perpetuate the traditions of European colonialism.²⁹

²⁸ Dean Rusk to Virginia Rusk, 10-26-43, Folder 2, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 105-106, 114; Dean Rusk to Virginia Rusk, 11-4-1943, 11-7-1943, Folder 2, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

²⁹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 111.

Understandably hesitant in their dealings with the British, Indian nationalists were generally more cooperative with Americans. Disputes did occur however, most notably over the American slaughter of cattle, an animal sacred to Hindus. After some wrangling, it was agreed that Americans would only kill cattle older than twelve years and would do so out of sight of the indigenous population.³⁰

While attempting to smooth dealings with the subjects of the British Empire, Rusk became concerned and dismayed when he began to receive requests from the French government to parachute its intelligence officers into Indochina in an obvious attempt to lay the groundwork for postwar reacquisition of a French colony. In one of the great moments of irony in American history, Rusk supervised the dropping of Allied supplies to Ho Chi Minh and his Vietminh guerrillas fighting the Japanese in Indochina.³¹

Observing firsthand the racism, oppression, and human degradation, as well as the financial costs and political difficulties, inherent in British imperialism in Asia fortified Rusk's disdain for colonialism. He was appalled by the poverty, hunger, and disease he observed on a massive scale, and wrote that "the vast majority of these 400,000,000 live on the brink of starvation... the slightest shock to the balance between life and death makes a big difference. It seems to me that of all the peoples of the world these are the most wretched." In an effort to help alleviate the plight of suffering Indians, Rusk occasionally gave alms to beggars and paid his native bearer more than British officers paid their servants. Although appreciative of British efforts to impart knowledge of

³⁰ Ibid., 116; Oral History O, 19-20.

³¹ Ibid., 112-113.

democratic institutions to Indian civil servants, to Rusk the average Indian appeared to have benefited little from contact with the West. He wrote that the British colony's myriad public health problems were a "horrible state of affairs," and his depiction of a British home on a tea plantation as the "master's house" suggests that he believed that the Indian agricultural laborers toiled in slave-like conditions. Indeed, Rusk described the tea estates as "very similar" to the cotton plantations of the antebellum American South.³²

Rusk considered the continued existence of the inherently discriminatory Indian caste system an adverse effect of British rule, and the prejudice undergirding British colonial institutions reinforced his acceptance of racial equality and heightened his awareness of the legacy of discrimination in the United States. In a letter home, he commented on the hypocrisy of Americans who chided the British over racial prejudice and marveled at African Americans' willingness to sacrifice for the war effort in the face of continued abuse:

You'd be surprised to know how often I have to argue the negro question with Yankee friends of mine who seem much more deeply prejudiced against the negroes than I ever thought possible. It is a particularly sensitive bit of American life out here where there is also a colored problem and where we love to take the British to task for this skeleton in their closet. I must say I'm as far away from sympathizing with discrimination as I ever was. The army has many subtle and some not-so-subtle ways of trying to meet the problem, but it's pretty obvious that 15% of our people have no particular reason to feel a deep personal stake in the war. The remarkable thing is that they don't give us more trouble than they do under the circumstances.³³

³² Dean Rusk to Parents, 8-20-43, Folder 2, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Virginia Rusk, 8-26-43, *ibid.*; Dean Rusk to Parents, 6-11-43, *ibid.*; Oral History X, 10-11, Dean Rusk Collection.

³³ Dean Rusk to Virginia Rusk, 9-26-43, Folder 2, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

Although Rusk undertook bold acts of protest regarding racial discrimination while visiting Germany as an Oxford student, as well as during his service in G-2, in New Delhi he retained his membership in the British "Gymkana Club," which did not allow Indian members. The reasons for Rusk's passivity in the face of such prejudice are not readily apparent. Perhaps he simply enjoyed the social opportunities and recreational luxuries the club offered, such as tennis and swimming, too much to part with them. Or, since important British and American officers were members of the club, Rusk might have thought resigning would hinder his career advancement. Most likely, he realized that protest against prevailing racial policies probably would have insulted the British, thus jeopardizing the harmonious Allied relationship he was charged with maintaining.³⁴

Nowhere was the Allied cooperation that Rusk was constantly striving to sustain more essential for the successful conduct of offensive operations than in Burma. The Japanese military engulfed Pacific islands and much of mainland Southeast Asia in the early months of 1942, eventually forcing British, American, and Chinese troops to relinquish Burma in May. As Stilwell later intoned, the Allies suffered a "hell of a beating," but their retreat was perhaps worse; the American general and a small group his soldiers fled, trekking mostly on foot, from Burma to India in a hazardous and numbingly arduous two hundred mile overland journey.³⁵

While Stilwell considered northern Burma a vital supply conduit to China and was determined to retake it, the British viewed offensive action in the area as futile and

³⁴ Oral History X, 11, Dean Rusk Collection.

³⁵ Tuchman, Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 286-300.

needlessly debilitating and usually proved unwilling to mount an assault. According to Rusk, "the lethargy at British headquarters in New Delhi was deadening." Moreover, in the spring of 1943 President Roosevelt became convinced that Stilwell needed to forego ground offensives and focus his efforts on supplying American general Claire Chennault's China Air Task Force by plane from India. Chennault maintained that if properly supplied, he could subdue Japan's Imperial Army in China, as well as wreak havoc on the enemy's home islands, with air power. Chinese leader Jiang Jieshi supported this policy because it meant that he could preserve his ground forces for the tasks of disciplining rebellious Chinese commanders and subduing the rivals of his Guomindang (Kuomintang) political party. Although ultimately overruled by Roosevelt, Stilwell countered Chennault's arguments with the assertion that without effective Allied ground control of key areas of China, air power would have only marginal success against the Japanese, whose troops would simply seize the airfields from which Chennault's operations were based. Indeed, the Imperial Army fulfilled Stilwell's prediction during its Ichigo offensive of 1944.³⁶

Undeterred, Stilwell began training Chinese troops, and the scant number of American soldiers allocated to him, for offensive ground operations designed to reroute and secure the "Burma Road" overland supply artery into China. Rusk's role was in planning and attempting to facilitate the flow of supplies, including efforts to secure the

³⁶ Rusk, As I Saw It, 111; Memorandum of Conversation, 1-1-43, U.S. Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943: China (Washington, D.C., 1957), 593-594 (hereafter cited as FRUS); Tuchman, Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 286-300.

replacement of American carrier pigeons devoured by Chinese soldiers. He also wrestled with the War Department over its insistence on sending one thousand tanks to CBI. Rusk argued that such heavy weapons were out of place in the dense jungles of Burma and would take up shipping space, but Washington was unrelenting, and the tanks were simply unloaded, parked, and left to rust upon their arrival. Rusk's duties occasionally took him into Burma, and he once found himself under sniper attack while riding in a jeep through the jungle with Stilwell and a group of staff. The jeep stopped, and the general quickly evaluated the service backgrounds of the officers present. His gaze finally settled on Rusk, and to the nervous staffer's complete surprise, Stilwell said, "Rusk, you're infantry. Let's go out there and get him." As Rusk later stated, the pair "beat around in the bushes in Burma looking for snipers. We didn't find any, and fortunately we didn't get any more shots."³⁷

During the spring of 1944, a Japanese foray into India was thwarted by fierce 14th British-Indian Army resistance at the cities of Imphal and Kohima. Having gained Allied permission for renewed offensive operations in Burma during late 1943, Stilwell paralleled the British defensive victory in India by launching a concurrent and successful campaign to seize the airfield at the key rail and air juncture of Myitkyina, Burma, facilitating the eventual reopening of the Burma Road. Stilwell's main American ground force in Burma was a three thousand man, largely volunteer, brigade known as Merrill's Marauders. The appointment of Frank Merrill to command the group left vacant the post of Stilwell's deputy chief of staff, and Rusk filled the position, receiving a promotion to

³⁷ Rusk, As I Saw It, 110, 117.

the rank of colonel. The exhausted Marauders battled extreme heat, insects, and typhus, as well as the Japanese, on their way to Myitkyina, and Stilwell pushed them to the limits of human endurance in pursuit of his objective. Rusk admired Stilwell but believed that the general overstepped his bounds as a leader, driving his beleaguered soldiers "unmercifully" and using them "more than commanders are entitled to use such men." Ultimately, the Myitkyina operation proved somewhat of an empty victory because Japanese offensives in China, American progress in the Pacific, and the advent of large, long range C-54 cargo planes rendered the Burma Road supply route obsolete even as it was finally being reopened in the spring of 1945.³⁸

It was during the American drive toward Myitkyina that Rusk received news of his father's death. By his own account he was initially "crying internally" and unable to "find release" but eventually gave expression to his grief, as well as his admiration for his father, in a letter to his mother:

Father and you have taught us all our lives that the death of a fine Christian gentleman is no calamity but an episode in the life of the spirit. I'm sure that that is true, but I was not prepared for the keen sense of personal loss that seized me today. I know so much better now than ever before how much I loved him, even if it did seem to be against the tradition of our family to confess it aloud to each other. I still have in front of me that span of my life comparable to that part of Father's in which I knew him. My deepest prayer is that I shall spend mine with the same cleanness of heart, integrity of soul and kindness of spirit which marked my Father.³⁹

Dean's sorrow and angst were exacerbated by the knowledge that the two men had never developed the close relationship he desired and by the unfortunate fact that his

³⁸ Rusk, As I Saw It, 113, 108.

³⁹ Ibid., 114; Oral History X, 30, Dean Rusk Collection; Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, 3-9-44, Folder 2, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

father died before a misunderstanding between them was resolved. While reading a letter from Dean, Robert Rusk had misinterpreted a reference to a Confederate ancestor as disrespectful and dashed off a stinging rebuke, instructing his son to respect those who sacrificed for their ideals. The admonition was Dean's final communication with his father, and although he was emotionally wounded by the letter, he missed the elder Rusk "acutely." Amidst such despair came the realization that he would be unable to return to Georgia for the funeral, and he wrote his mother that he "should be there to join hands with my own family in times of grief and not across the earth piling up similar grief for others." Rusk was needed in CBI to help with the Myitkyina campaign, an offensive that General Stilwell forlornly hoped would bolster China's stance against Japan and improve American dealings with Jiang Jieshi.⁴⁰

United States relations with China were centered on President Roosevelt's desire to transform the nation into an independent and democratic power that could be relied upon as an American ally to wage war against Japan and promote stability in postwar Asia. Accordingly, the United States hoped to maintain China's military viability during the war, thus enhancing that nation's prospects for survival and influence while curtailing Japanese expansion on the Asian mainland.

Accomplishing these objectives proved exceedingly difficult, and in some respects impossible, because of several seemingly insurmountable obstacles, not the least of which was the nature and success of the Japanese conquest of China. The Japanese

⁴⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 114; Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, 3-9-44, Folder 2, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection; Oral History X, 30, Dean Rusk Collection.

invasion began in earnest during 1937 and progressed rapidly. Within two years the Imperial Army had rapidly expanded its control over key portions of eastern China, forcing Jiang's Nationalist government to flee deep into the western interior until it reached one of several wartime destinations at Chongqing (Chungking).

Although relatively safe in its new capital, the Chinese government and its dependents faced problems of famine and high inflation, leading Jiang to rely on exorbitant taxation and other extreme measures in attempting to rectify the economic situation. Jiang once requested that Rusk's office secure and deliver large amounts of Chinese currency to Chongqing, but Rusk refused knowing that such an infusion of cash would only exacerbate inflation. Along with inflation, Chinese government corruption was rampant, extending its tentacles systemically into the bureaucracy, police, and military and further eroding Guomindang credibility and effectiveness. As stated earlier, because Allied strategy gave priority to operations in Europe and the Pacific, the aid available to help China overcome its economic and military problems was relatively limited.⁴¹

Jiang's struggle with the Japanese was not the only conflict that occupied his attention and threatened the stability of his government; he was also faced with an intense and incessant rivalry with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for control of the nation. Fearing defeat by Jiang's forces in the mid 1930s, Mao Zedong led his Communists to the remote hideaway of Yanan (Yenan) where they continued their revolutionary struggle. But the Japanese invasion of 1937 necessitated a limited Nationalist-Communist

⁴¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 108.

rapprochement, and both sides agreed to work toward cooperation in fighting their common enemy. However, such a union was at best a tenuous marriage of convenience, and both Jiang and Mao diligently employed propaganda, subterfuge, and violence during World War II in order to further their respective interests and influence relative to dominance in China. Jiang's wariness regarding potential Communist ascendancy hampered the effectiveness and control of his government by contributing to his willingness to use repressive methods against political opponents, his reluctance to institute sorely needed political, economic, and military reforms, and his belief that employing Guomindang forces against the Japanese in an aggressive and widespread manner would reduce resources available for preventing a CCP takeover.

In evaluating America's position vis-a-vis the Nationalist-Communist conflict, some of the State Department's foreign service officers in China, including John Paton Davies, argued that while the United States needed to support Jiang, effective maintenance of America's long term interests dictated that policymakers face the reality of eventual Communist triumph in China and make concentrated efforts to cultivate relations with Mao Zedong. Davies postulated that the Communist leader was pragmatic and eager to demonstrate ideological independence from Moscow and that if the United States reacted positively to Mao's gestures of good will it could co-opt Chinese Communist nationalism, using it to "draw them [Communists] away from future reliance on the Soviet Union and into dependence upon the United States." He reasoned that American economic and military aid to the Communists, along with joint military efforts

against the Japanese, would provide the initial basis of improved friendship.⁴²

Rusk authorized shipments of supplies to the Communists in limited amounts and later suggested that he believed the United States might have benefited if the CCP had taken power by the end of the war and presented the Soviet Union with a "fait accompli" when its Red Army entered the conflict in the Pacific. However, he was convinced that Mao was more ideologically rigid than Davies hoped and was not prepared to seek significant improvement in relations with the United States during or immediately after World War II. It now appears that Rusk was correct in his assessment of Mao's intentions. Recent research by scholars of Sino-American affairs, much of which relies heavily upon Chinese sources, suggests that there were probably few, if any, "missed opportunities" for improved CCP-American relations during the Truman administration.⁴³

⁴² Russell D. Buhite, Patrick J. Hurley and American Foreign Policy (Ithaca, 1973), 182-209; John Paton Davies, Dragon by the Tail (New York, 1972), 351.

⁴³ Oral History GGGG, 26, Dean Rusk Collection; Oral History X, 35, Dean Rusk Collection. The opinions of John Paton Davies and like minded Foreign Service officers contributed to the development of a historiographical school of thought maintaining that the Truman administration did not perceive, neglected, or otherwise bungled various chances to improve relations with the CCP during the 1945-1949 period, thereby sabotaging the possibility of a CCP-U.S. modus vivendi that might have significantly altered the nature and course of the Cold War in Asia. This "missed opportunities" thesis, articulated by Joseph Esherick in his edited collection of John Service's communiques, Lost Chance in China (New York, 1974), has engendered vigorous debate. For a sampling of scholarship questioning the likelihood of a CCP-U.S. rapprochement during the 1940s, see He Di, "The Most Respected Enemy: Mao Zedong's Perception of the United States," China Quarterly 137 (March 1994):144-158; Gordan H. Chang, Friends and Enemies The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972 (Stanford, 1990), 34-35; Chen Jian, "The Myth of America's 'Lost Chance' in China: A Chinese Perspective in Light of New Evidence," Diplomatic History Vol.21, No.1 (Winter 1997): 77-86; and Odd Arne Westad, "Losses, Chances, and Myths: The United States and the Creation of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1950," *ibid.*: 105-115.

John Paton Davies hoped to spark a new CCP-American understanding through closely coordinated military efforts, but even if Mao had sincerely desired better relations, Jiang's cooperation, which was not forthcoming, was still needed for combined operations. When Mao proposed joint Communist-American military endeavors in 1944, Davies, who was one of Stilwell's political advisors and a friend and admirer of Rusk's, recommended them to the general, who pushed Jiang to cooperate. Jiang's reluctance to employ the Communists had long been a point of contention with Stilwell, who considered Jiang's position on the issue further evidence of the generalissimo's military ineptness. The Nationalist leader was convinced of imminent Allied victory in World War II and believed that the CCP was the real threat to his power. He was confident that defeat of the Japanese would lead to eventual Guomindang dominance over Mao, but prudence dictated that he oppose any plan that would forge a closer bond between his Chinese nemesis and his American benefactors. Moreover, officials in Washington were coming to the conclusion that for domestic and international political reasons, the Communists would not be the chief recipients of American confidence and beneficence.⁴⁴

Although American policy makers generally preferred long term support of Jiang to Mao, most desired Nationalist-Communist unity, however tenuous, believing it would promote prosecution of military efforts against Japan and perhaps lessen Soviet influence in Asia after the war. To that end, the United States sent former secretary of war Patrick J. Hurley in 1944 and Army Chief of Staff George Marshall in 1945 to mediate

⁴⁴ Davies, Dragon by the Tail, 310, 353-364.

differences between the two factions. Both envoys were sincere and assiduous in their efforts, were willing to accept a Nationalist-Communist coalition government and pressure Jiang to institute substantive political reform, and were ultimately unsuccessful largely because of the weaknesses endemic to Jiang and his government and the power and leverage the Communists accrued after the Soviet occupation of Manchuria in 1945.⁴⁵

Beyond attempts to decrease CCP-Guomindang antipathy, the United States was compelled to mediate the disputatious relationship between Jiang Jieshi and General Stilwell, a conflict born of policy disagreements and clashing personalities that was perceived in Washington as detrimental to American China policy. Stilwell's attitudes reflect traditional American paternalism and sentimentality toward China. He was deeply enamored of the Asian nation, confident that the "benefits" of American training and equipment would shape the Chinese into competent soldiers, and certain that responsibility for the nation's myriad woes rested squarely with the Goumindang leadership and not the Chinese people.⁴⁶

Rusk shared Stilwell's conceptions to a point. Although dismayed by Guomindang corruption, which he witnessed first hand, he believed that Stilwell "underestimated the erosion that had taken place in Chinese society and political institutions" because of war with Japan and thus was at times too quick to blame Jiang for China's inability to overcome its problems. And while he did not harbor typical mid-

⁴⁵ Russell D. Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia 1945-1954, (Norman, 1981), 5-66.

⁴⁶ Rusk, As I Saw It, 115-116.

twentieth century American racial stereotypes of Asians as irrational or fanatical, Rusk was chagrined by what he believed were ominous strains of treachery and capricious brutality in the Chinese national character. He considered the Chinese "expert" at corruption and thievery and was appalled by their seeming occasional indifference toward human life. Rusk once watched in amazement as restless Guomintang troops amused themselves by pushing one of their comrades out of an airborne plane and then laughing as the soldier tumbled to his death, and when a taxi cab in which he was riding through Chongqing struck and killed a peasant, he was shocked by the cab driver's apathy.⁴⁷

Whatever differences of opinion Rusk had regarding Stilwell's conceptions of the Guomintang leadership and the Chinese people he kept to himself as the general's relations with Jiang began to suffer severe strain. Stilwell was incredulous over Jiang's refusal to implement suggested American reforms designed to revitalize the ill-led and poorly trained Guomintang military and was incensed over his reluctance to commit troops for Allied offensives in Burma. Describing American efforts to convince Jiang to participate in Allied operations, the general stated in his diary, "What corruption, intrigue, obstruction, delay, double-crossing, hate, jealousy and skulduggery we have had to wade through. What a cesspool.... What bigotry and ignorance and black ingratitude...." Under pressure from Washington, Jiang finally released troops for action in Burma, but they occasionally proved ineffective and apathetic, and Stilwell held Jiang responsible. Stilwell sometimes went to great lengths to prod the Chinese into action. Rusk recalled an

⁴⁷ Ibid.; Oral History O, 22, Dean Rusk Collection; Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War, 106.

instance when a Goumindang unit the general ordered to move forward delayed, and Stilwell advanced into the Burmese jungle alone, prompting the Chinese to decamp and follow him "as a matter of face."⁴⁸

Stilwell's contempt for Jiang was often publicly expressed in colorful invective, a practice encouraged by many on his American staff, and the general frequently referred to the Chinese leader as "Peanut." Jiang considered Stilwell threatening, disrespectful, annoying, and a possible impediment to smooth relations with Washington, and in 1944 he suggested the general's recall. President Roosevelt responded by assigning Patrick Hurley the task of bridging the chasm separating the two men. Hurley proved unsuccessful at this extremely difficult job, and Roosevelt proposed a compromise that mandated Stilwell's removal as Jiang's chief of staff but left the general in charge of Chinese forces in Burma and key sectors of southern China. When Jiang rejected this and Hurley wrote the president that he was convinced Stilwell's lack of tact and bent toward coercion rather than persuasion were obstacles to the fulfillment of American objectives in China, Roosevelt relented and the general was relieved of his command in October, 1944. Stilwell's departure resulted in the separation of CBI into two theaters: China, headed by General Albert Wedemeyer, and India-Burma, commanded by General Daniel Sultan. During the deterioration of the Jiang-Stilwell relationship, Rusk remained loyal to the general and worked to smooth the belligerent edges from his messages to Washington in an effort to salvage the American commander's position. Rusk was

⁴⁸ Rusk, As I Saw It, 115-116; Stilwell, The Stilwell Papers, 212; Oral History O, 21-22; Dean Rusk Collection.

disappointed at Stilwell's recall but quickly adapted to the new leadership and got along well with Wedemeyer and Sultan.⁴⁹

Rusk's duties regarding American efforts in China were concerned mainly with coordinating war plans with supply and logistics, and he spent more time in New Delhi than Chongqing. He was heavily involved in unsuccessful attempts to ascertain a suitable land based supply route from India into western China, which often required flying reconnaissance missions over Afghanistan and the Himalayas. When Allied strategy began to emphasize fortifying China by air rather than the ground, Rusk concentrated on facilitating such traffic over the treacherous and rugged mountains separating India and China, known to soldiers in CBI as the "Hump."⁵⁰

Flying over the Hump was always fraught with danger; treacherous mountain peaks, poor visibility, extreme cold, violent turbulence, monsoon force winds, and enemy planes combined to render the average pilot's survival rate a dismal forty percent. Older C-47 planes were particularly vulnerable and sometimes had to jettison cargo in order to gain enough altitude to clear mountain tops. Rusk was convinced that if larger, more powerful C-54 planes had been available earlier in the war, the amount of aid Jiang received would have been substantially greater, perhaps providing a significant, if not decisive, contribution to the Guomindang's wartime efforts against Japan as well as its

⁴⁹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 115; Oral History GGGG, 24-25, Dean Rusk Collection, Oral History X, 20, Dean Rusk Collection; Buhite, Patrick J. Hurley and American Foreign Policy, 152-161.

⁵⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 106.

subsequent attempts to subjugate the CCP.⁵¹

Rusk flew the Hump several times, once to install navigational boxes, which were critical to the success of Allied flights, in an area of western China inhabited by isolated groups of people with no previous experience with Westerners. Rusk and his crew were not proficient in the local tongue, but after a period of frustrated negotiation conducted mostly through sign language they gained permission to install the boxes. Opium was the chief currency in that area of China, and Rusk exchanged small bags of the drug for assurances of protection of the Allied military equipment. Once this practice was discovered by the State Department, it was promptly discontinued on orders from Washington. The Allies supplied China with American currency, and corruption was a strong temptation for many of those flying the Hump. Rusk was once told by a fellow soldier serving in CBI that to return to the United States "without a million dollars" was "crazy."⁵²

Rusk saw no genuine combat action while in CBI and was keenly aware of the comfort and safety of his existence relative to combat infantrymen. After approximately a year overseas, he reassured his mother, stating, "I have been more fortunate than I deserve in this war and have not had my share of danger by any means." Most of Rusk's brushes with death came from flying the Hump, but he did have a significant encounter with enemy aircraft. When an airfield he was visiting in western China was raided by

⁵¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 107-109; Oral History O, 25, Dean Rusk Collection; Oral History N, 5, Dean Rusk Collection.

⁵² Rusk, As I Saw It, 107-109; Oral History X, 14; Dean Rusk Collection.

Japanese Zero fighter planes, Rusk and his pilot followed standard procedure and took their C-47 plane aloft in order to decrease the possibility of destruction on the ground. Once airborne, they were chased by a Zero, but were spared when the enemy plane inexplicably ended its pursuit and preyed on another Allied aircraft, allowing Rusk's plane to escape. Such experiences left Rusk with the feeling that he was living "on borrowed time, " and he maintained his ten thousand dollar wartime GI life insurance policy until his death in 1994.⁵³

Notions of mortality kept Rusk anxious to return to the United States, and in June, 1945, he took advantage of a rare offer of leave and journeyed home to visit his wife and son in Oakland, California, where they had resided during the war. Rusk was overjoyed to spend time with his family, whom he had not seen for two years. Virginia Rusk had borne the burden of raising their son David alone, and in order to enhance the boy's memory of his father and give him a sense of the world situation, she sewed a CBI patch onto his blue blazer and took him to view newsreels in movie theaters. Virginia also kept up correspondence with Dean's family in Georgia, dutifully copying and forwarding his many letters. While enjoying reunion with his family, Rusk received orders transferring him to Washington for duty in the Operations Division of the War Department General Staff (OPD). Rusk ended his tenure in CBI a recipient of the Legion of Merit and Oak Leaf Cluster in recognition of his service, and his diplomatic efforts regarding Allied relations were particularly valuable. Contemplating a military career, he

⁵³ Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, 4-30-1943, Folder 2, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 117; Oral History X, 27, Dean Rusk Collection.

was gratified by the knowledge that before Stilwell's recall the commander had designated him for promotion to brigadier general.⁵⁴

A Job In The Pentagon

Headed by General George Lincoln and known affectionately as the "Abe Lincoln Brigade," OPD was responsible for postwar policy planning and providing staff support for the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC). Upon beginning his new job, Rusk inquired as to the reason for his transfer to Washington and was told that the War Department had been impressed with the analytical clarity of Stilwell's cables from CBI and had written the general requesting the identity of the author. Stilwell provided Rusk's name, and the young staffer was duly reassigned.⁵⁵

Rusk was pleased to find himself in familiar company at OPD; his superior George Lincoln and fellow staffers Charles Bonesteel and James McCormack were former Rhodes scholars whom he knew from Oxford. Rusk and his colleagues were young (the average age was thirty-six), intelligent, and enthusiastic officers wrestling with issues of immense global significance. According to Rusk, "there was never a dull moment, " and "we were forced by events to act as statesmen beyond our years." ⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Oral History X, 26-27, 23, Dean Rusk Collection; Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War, 113.

⁵⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 119.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 119-120; Oral History GGGG, 10-11.

Rusk was not long at OPD when the United States became the first nation to use nuclear weapons in warfare with the dropping of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945. Rusk had no prior knowledge of the bomb and reacted with surprise, but he always remembered one colleague's profound response: "This means that war has turned upon itself and is devouring its own tail. From this time forward, there will be no sense for governments to try to settle their disputes by war." Rusk had worked on plans for the invasion of Japan, and although he agreed with Truman's decision to use atomic power, believing that the president employed it primarily to end the war and in so doing saved countless Allied and Japanese lives, he later stated that a task force examining all possible political ramifications of the new weaponry should have been established as the bomb was developed.⁵⁷

The staffers at OPD immediately busied themselves with preparing documents for Japan's surrender and attempting to secure Allied agreement regarding the impending American occupation. They also argued in favor of retaining Japan's emperor on the Chrysanthemum throne, primarily because they believed he was a crucial catalyst for Japanese submission and a peaceful occupation.⁵⁸

Like many United States policymakers, OPD planners advocated denying the Soviet Union a zone of occupation in Japan, a feat accomplished with relative ease since there were no Red Army troops in the Japanese home islands at the end of the war. OPD

⁵⁷ Rusk, As I Saw It, 120-122; Oral History GGGG, 16-17, Dean Rusk Collection.

⁵⁸ Rusk, As I Saw It, 123.

maintained that substantive Soviet involvement in occupation would impede the Truman administration's objective of creating a stable, democratic, and capitalist Japan friendly to the United States and that the Soviets had not earned the right to participation because they had not contributed significantly to Allied victory in the Pacific. Rusk wanted the United States to "control every wave in the Pacific." His attitude was a function of his wartime suspicions of Soviet propaganda and his increasing wariness regarding Stalin's motives and actions as OPD wrangled with the Kremlin over the administration of Germany and Austria during the summer of 1945.⁵⁹

OPD desire to limit perceived Soviet hegemony also shaped the occupation of the Asian mainland. At the conclusion of hostilities in the Pacific theater in August 1945, Red Army troops occupied northern portions of the former Japanese suzerainty of Korea and stood poised to solidify their control southward. Concerned that the Soviet Union might replicate its East European posture--perceived as obstinate if not aggressive-- in Asia, American policy planners moved quickly in order to deny Stalin domination of the entire Korean peninsula.

During a SWNCC meeting at the Pentagon the night of the Japanese surrender, Rusk and fellow OPD staffer Charles Bonesteel were assigned the task of selecting zones of occupation on the Korean peninsula for proposal to the Soviets. Working alone in a nearby room, the two colonels used a National Geographic map to analyze the political and natural landscape of Korea. Aware of the military's desire to limit its responsibilities

⁵⁹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 123-125; Oral History GGGG, 12-15, 18-19, Dean Rusk Collection.

on the Asian mainland and unable to find a geographic division of the peninsula that would leave the capital city of Seoul under United States control, they selected the thirty-eighth parallel as the proposed boundary between Soviet and American zones. To Rusk's surprise, the Soviets accepted. But he later lamented SWNCC's ignorance of late nineteenth century Russo-Japanese discussions of spheres of influence in Korea based on division at the thirty-eighth parallel, worrying that Stalin interpreted the American proposal as *realpolitik*. American troops arrived in Korea in September, thus solidifying the creation of an artificial and increasingly militarized frontier that would achieve significance as both the literal and figurative frontline of the Cold War in Asia.⁶⁰

In early 1946, Rusk was discharged from the Army and in February accepted a position in the State Department's Special Political Affairs (SPA), later known as United Nations Affairs, office. Directed by Alger Hiss, SPA dealt mainly with United Nations matters, and Rusk was pleased to have a job that afforded full expression of his interests in collective security and international law. He was also delighted by a new addition to his family; his second child, Richard, was born in March.⁶¹

Rusk joined SPA in the midst of a Soviet-American crisis over the withdrawal of Red Army troops from Iran, a conflict that held the potential for armed hostilities, interjected Cold War rivalries into the Middle East, and confirmed Rusk's apprehension regarding Soviet geopolitical intentions. In 1941, in order to prevent Iran from falling

⁶⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 123-125; Buhite, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 139-144.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

under German influence, the Soviet Union occupied northern Iran, devoting particular focus to concentrating troops in the province of Azerbaijan, while Britain consolidated control over the southern half of the nation. The United States used Iran as a corridor for aid shipments to the Soviet Union and established a small American military presence to facilitate the movement of supplies. At the Tehran Conference in late 1943, the powers occupying Iran agreed to evacuate their forces soon after the conclusion of World War II.

After Germany's surrender, seeking to forestall British and/ or Soviet attempts at imperialism in Iran, the Truman administration removed its troops and convinced the British to do the same, hoping that the Soviets would follow suit. Instead, the best that America could secure was a Soviet promise to leave Iran by March 2, 1946. The Soviets then stalled their withdrawal and began fomenting a communist separatist movement in Azerbaijan as early as the fall of 1945.

The Truman administration surmised that Stalin was attempting to obtain a friendly government on his southern border, as well as access to oil and the Persian Gulf, and it viewed the developing crisis apprehensively. Having removed its troops from Iran, the United States could not easily apply unilateral military leverage in the situation. Feeling compelled to rely on the British regional military presence to support its diplomatic objectives, in March 1946 the United States protested, via written message to Stalin, Soviet actions in Iran. Faced with the prospect of an increasingly complicated and undesirable crisis, Stalin responded by beginning negotiations with the Iranian government and began withdrawing his forces. The Truman administration also decided to pressure the Soviet Union through the United Nations by supporting Iran's complaint to

the Security Council regarding Soviet interference in its affairs.⁶²

Rusk worked closely with Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson in preparing American positions and tactics during the United Nations debate, and he served as Secretary of State James Byrnes's principal advisor as the secretary presented the Truman administration's case to the Security Council. The Soviets, and eventually the Iranians, protested continued American diplomatic pressure once troop withdrawals were under way, but the United States kept the matter in front of the Security Council until evacuations were complete in April by employing Rusk's legal argument that since Iran was victimized by the Soviets, its case merited sustained attention. To Rusk, Soviet actions in Iran represented an attempt at "another land grab," but he was gratified by the successful resolution of the conflict, which confirmed his faith in the utility of the United Nations. Additionally, the Iranian crisis, as well as the subsequent 1948 struggle with Stalin over access to Berlin, convinced Rusk that the Soviets would usually acquiesce in the face of sustained American resolve.⁶³

While Rusk helped achieve success in the United Nations regarding Iran, he was frustrated by what he perceived as Soviet responsibility for failed American initiatives regarding the creation of a credible Security Council military force and crippled efforts to reform the process of referring deadlocked Security Council issues to the more fluid General Assembly. In the summer of 1946, Rusk was wooed back to the Pentagon to

⁶² Bruce Kuniholm, The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East (Princeton, 1980), 303-350; Oral History G, 3-4, Dean Rusk Collection.

⁶³ Rusk, As I Saw It, 125-126; Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War, 140-141.

serve as Secretary of War Robert Patterson's personal assistant, and he worked on a variety of issues, including assisting the Far East Commission in its duties regarding the occupation of Japan, securing food supplies for occupied Germany and Japan, desegregating the Army, and laying the groundwork for creation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). When George Marshall was appointed secretary of state in 1947, he offered Rusk the position of Assistant Secretary for Special Political Affairs. Secretary of War Patterson promised Rusk a military commission and stated that the Army would make him its "expert" on international law if he would remain in the Pentagon, but Rusk's fondness for Marshall and the opportunity to wield substantial influence over America's United Nations policy led him to accept the post at the State Department.⁶⁴

The monumental struggle that was the Second World War shaped Dean Rusk in several important ways. Service in CBI provided his first genuine contact with the cultural and political dynamics of Asia, and his indirect exposure to the horrors of combat strengthened his resolve to work to make future wars unnecessary. Living in the midst of colonialism and working closely with the British increased his distaste for imperialism and racism, taught the difficulties inherent in maintaining alliances, and honed his diplomatic and analytic skills.

Witnessing the march of events in CBI also rendered Rusk somewhat apprehensive regarding future United States relations with the largely unindustrialized

⁶⁴ Rusk, As I Saw It, 127-130; Oral History G, 3, Dean Rusk Collection.

and historically colonized region of East Asia. The tide of Japanese and European imperialism was ebbing but threatened to leave a state of temporary and possibly injurious political flux in its wake. Mao's forces appeared to possess the potential for effecting ascendancy, and the inadequacies of Jiang's regime in China highlighted the problems of supporting emerging non-communist governments wedded to seemingly antiquated policies and lacking in substantial, genuine popular support. Additionally, the initial success of Japan's imperialism in East Asia and the threat it posed to American interests left him wary of permitting the reoccurrence of unilateral political/ military dominance of the region by a rival power, informing his subsequent fears of Chinese expansion.

Just as the changing nature of Asian politics fostered trepidation regarding American policy, the limited success of Claire Chennault's strategies in China and the apparently negligible effects of conventional bombing on the diminution of Japan's political will engendered skepticism about the efficacy of the future use of air power for accomplishing objectives in Asia. Indeed, Rusk later commented that he spent his entire professional life "dealing with the differences between the promise and the performance of air power."⁶⁵

However, despite such misgivings, Rusk was heartened that America and its allies had triumphed over their totalitarian, expansionist Axis opponents. Victory increased his reverence for democracy and the military and led him to believe that determined effort and the intrinsic exceptionalism of American institutions would enable the United States

⁶⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 418.

to transcend the difficulties of circumstance and successfully endure future challenges, which his immediate postwar experience indicated would emanate from the Soviet Union. He was delighted that a collective security organization, the United Nations, had risen from the ashes of conflict to serve as beacon illuminating the path to postwar peace, and he hoped that it would encourage international cooperation and mitigate emerging Cold War tensions.

Moreover, Rusk's conception of World War II represents a near perfect expression of his Southern moralism. To Rusk, the decade of the 1930s highlighted the dangers of unchecked aggression and impaired Western democratic credibility but did not substantially weaken his faith in the potential for collective security, and the war itself represented an effort, necessitated by circumstance, to defend and propagate ideals of peace, order, justice, and freedom through the application of force. As he indicated in his letter describing American soldiers in CBI, Rusk was gratified that the United States had not merely participated in the conflict but had demonstrated its military prowess and fought "to win" while striving to remain "civilized at heart." Rusk believed it imperative that the United States oppose aggressor nations threatening its interests, but he was also convinced that the furtherance of principles served to enhance national objectives, and for him and millions of other Americans, the Second World War was a struggle in which the need to protect vital interests and the desire to promote democratic and humanitarian values meshed in a bold, clear, and decisive harmony. Indeed, this perceived confluence helped build consensus support for the conflict, rendering it a "good war" in the eyes of the American public, and the lack of such an enduringly compelling intersection of

interests and ideals would impede Rusk's attempts to sustain backing for future American endeavors in Vietnam.⁶⁶

World War II transported Rusk from the classrooms of academia to the corridors of power in Washington, baptizing him in the often turbulent waters of the policy making process and embarking him on an exciting, important, and controversial new life in the American foreign policy establishment. As Rusk's career as an influential official unfolded, the American experience in the war became for him both a touchstone, by which other challenges and conflicts were measured, and a talisman, unsheathed and employed to cast a seemingly magical--but at times deceptive--cogency over his arguments during critically important policy meetings. George Marshall's ascension to secretary of state significantly altered the trajectory of Rusk's rise through the foreign policy making apparatus, placing him firmly in the State Department, the bureaucracy that would remain his home throughout the remainder of his career in government service.

⁶⁶ Dean Rusk to Virginia Rusk, 10-11-43, Folder 2, Box 1, Series I, Parks Rusk Collection.

CHAPTER FIVE

"TROUBLED TIMES:" DEAN RUSK IN THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION

A Home In The State Department

Rusk's move to the State Department proved extremely satisfying; his new position provided entre to the stimulating center of American diplomacy, allowing him eventually to form professional relationships with some of the pillars of the foreign policy establishment such as Dean Acheson, Robert Lovett, Phillip Jessup, George Kennan, Charles Bohlen, and Paul Nitze. Further, he was working for Secretary of State George Marshall, whom he had come to admire greatly during his tenure in the War Department. Appointed army chief of staff in 1939 near the end of a distinguished military career, Marshall was an internationalist who played a pivotal role in engineering Allied victory during World War II and served as both secretary of state and defense during the Truman administration. He was widely respected among the general public and revered by many who worked with him in the upper echelons of government, including President Harry Truman.

Rusk considered Marshall "the most extraordinary man" he ever knew, and the statesman's influence on him as a mentor and role model in terms of personal values and comportment, ideals of public service, and the conceptualization and administration of the office of secretary of state should not be underestimated. Rusk would idolize

Marshall the remainder of his life, actively supporting the George C. Marshall Foundation and nominating the citizens of Leesburg, Virginia for recognition in the George H. Bush administration's "Points of Light" program because of their efforts to promote awareness of Marshall's life and legacy. Marshall's accomplishments alone were sufficient to elicit Rusk's admiration, but his affection for the secretary of state also rested on a tightly woven web of connections linking common points of cultural heritage and background.¹

Marshall's principal biographer, Forrest Pogue, argues persuasively that although born in Pennsylvania, where his parents had moved from Kentucky, Marshall was "by residence, by taste, and even by manner, a species of Virginian." Like Rusk, he was reared on the exploits of illustrious ancestors, one of which was Virginia statesman, John Marshall. His pedigree also included Confederate soldiers, and Marshall was inculcated with the Southern perspective on the Civil War and Reconstruction during formative years spent as a student at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) at the dawn of the twentieth century. VMI was steeped in Confederate lore and the mythology of the "Lost Cause;" General "Stonewall" Jackson was an instructor there before the Civil War, a number of the institution's cadets fought in the conflict, and General Robert E. Lee lay buried at nearby Washington and Lee University.²

¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 130; Oral History G, 7, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk to Kircher, August 29, 1990, Folder: George C. Marshall, Box 28, Series IV, Dean Rusk Collection, Richard Russell Library, University of Georgia, Athens.

² Forrest Pogue, George C. Marshall: Education of a General (New York, 1963), 5, 44-46.

Rusk's Southern moralism was strengthened by his association with Marshall. Like many of the wealthy planters the poor whites of Rusk's Southern socioeconomic class had traditionally admired, Marshall possessed a hint of patrician bearing and, according to Dean Acheson, a "presence" that "compelled respect" and "spread a sense of authority and calm." Marshall's military achievements, sense of honor, devotion to duty, integrity, and what George Kennan described as "consistent courtesy and gentlemanliness of conduct" led Rusk to identify the secretary of state with his great hero, Confederate general Robert E. Lee. The pair would remain closely linked in Rusk's mind the rest of his life, prompting the remark during his twilight years that the two men "have so many things in common." Moreover, Rusk conceptualized Lee and Marshall as moral leaders who embodied what he believed were the essential characteristics of the ideal soldier/statesman: adherence to principles and a pragmatic willingness to defend and promote them, if necessary through the judicious and skillful use of armed might. Rusk characterized Lee as a general who "did not seek war" but who "fought nobly and well when required by circumstances to do so" and Marshall as an accomplished "military man" who also "served as the nation's conscience, asking the difficult questions that challenged us to fulfill our moral responsibility around the globe." Significantly, the virtues that Rusk attributed to Lee and Marshall formed the core of his own ideology.³

³ Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation, My Years in the State Department (New York, 1969), 140-141; George Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950 (New York, 1967), 345; Oral History F, 26, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 134; Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War, 34; copy of Dean Rusk, "Remembering George Marshall," Atlanta Constitution, May 14, 1993, Folder: George C. Marshall, Box 28, Series IV, Dean Rusk Collection.

Beyond a connection made through Southern culture, Rusk and Marshall shared other similarities of background. While in college, both were members of Kappa Alpha fraternity and exhibited natural qualities of leadership as well as rigidly ordered work habits. They harbored deep respect and affection for the American military, and at different points in their respective careers as soldiers, each had been an instructor, earned a reputation as an efficient and resourceful staff officer, and served in Asia.

But there were also important differences between the secretary and his admiring subordinate. Although both cultivated a wry sense of humor, Rusk seems to have employed his more frequently--and perhaps more effectively. Of the two, Marshall was more austere in professional relationships, invariably calling everyone by their surname and insisting that they refer to him as "General Marshall," "Secretary Marshall," or "Mr. Secretary," and he was more inclined to reprimand underlings. Marshall had been at best a mediocre student--his intellect was of a practical nature--but Rusk had excelled in school, and his experiences at Davidson, Oxford, and Mills College left him well acquainted with, as well as adept in, the world of theory and debate. Additionally, whereas Rusk's sense of discipline and work ethic sprang from a poverty stricken upbringing in the culture of the rural and urban South, Marshall's was gleaned from a military education. The VMI experience during Marshall's days as a student was designed to instill discipline, self-sacrifice, and sense of duty. Hazing was common, occasionally brutal, and at times directed at Marshall. Doubtless he bore such intermittent tribulation without complaint.⁴

⁴ Pogue, Education of a General, 44-46.

Rusk adapted quickly to Marshall's administrative system, which centered on a line of delegated authority extending from President Truman through the secretary of state to the assistant secretaries and emphasized precise communication as well as concise analysis. In fact, it was Marshall himself who had initiated Rusk's wartime transfer from CBI to Washington, D.C. because he had been impressed with the quality of the young staff officer's cables. Marshall expected his subordinates to take initiative in the formulation of policy, admonishing them, "Gentlemen, don't sit around waiting for me to tell you what to do. Tell me what you think I ought to be doing!" When examining an important problem, Marshall would sit silently as his assistants discussed the nuances of proposed solutions, never indicating his thinking or providing direction until he later announced his decision. Rusk thrived under Marshall's tutelage, and his agile mind, insightful dissection of complicated issues, budding adroitness at Congressional relations, resourcefulness, flexibility, loyalty, and pleasant manner made him a valuable asset to the State Department. His star rose rapidly, and when Dean Acheson began his tenure as secretary of state in 1949, Rusk was promoted from head of United Nations Affairs to the influential position of deputy undersecretary at the age of forty.⁵

Driven by ambition, patriotism, habit, and the necessities of his job, Rusk gradually allowed his professional life to take precedence over family concerns, a pattern that would intensify when he later became secretary of state. Long accustomed to hard work, he was indefatigable in his vocational pursuits. Rusk typically worked twelve to

⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 130-135; Oral History G, 6-9, Oral History LLLL, 25-26, Dean Rusk Collection.

fourteen hour days, seven days a week, and when he was hospitalized during the spring of 1951, Secretary of State Dean Acheson scolded him gently, writing, "I told you to slow down! From now on you have got to take things a bit more easily around the office. This I intend to see to!" Rusk's increasingly hectic schedule meant that his devoted and unflagging wife was left to rear the children, of which there were now three with the birth of daughter Peggy in 1949, in their apartment located in the Parkfairfax area of Virginia. At one point during the Truman years, Rusk's prolonged absences from home prompted his son David to ask, "Is Daddy dead?" Demands on Rusk's time seemed to grow exponentially the more deeply he became involved in the Truman administration's struggles to master what he later called the "troubled times" created by the rapidly shifting contours in the landscape of postwar international relations.⁶

As colonial empires crumbled and independent states, as well as new power blocs, began to emerge after World War II, Rusk looked to international law and the United Nations to make sense of the changing world scene. In his native South, the cultural construct of honor had helped order society by clarifying and governing human relationships, and in the postwar global arena Rusk believed that international law would serve the same function, providing stability through a legal infrastructure designed to establish standards of interstate behavior and act as an emollient to the often abrasive dynamic of relations between countries. Rusk thought that some in the State Department were often too quick to consign international law to the realm of ephemeral abstraction,

⁶ Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War*, 147; Acheson to Rusk, April 18, 1951, Box 40, Papers of Dean Acheson, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri; Rusk, *As I Saw It*, 96-97, 180.

but he considered it a very real foundation of peace and a "practical part of the workings of relationships among the governments of the world." In a revealing exchange, Secretary Acheson once blurted, "Damn it Dean! The survival of nations is not a matter of international law." Rusk replied, "On the contrary, in a nuclear age, the survival of nations may well depend upon international law."⁷

Rusk saw the United Nations as the primary instrument for the formulation and administration of international law, and although aware that it was an imperfect institution not always in sync with American objectives, he believed that there existed a fundamental "congeniality between the long-term interests and policies of the United States and what appeared in the [United Nations] Charter...." Rusk thought that the survival and success of the United Nations were vital to maintenance of a peaceful, moral world order and that if the organization failed to promote peace through collective security, then the great sacrifices of World War II had been in vain: "The human race had paid fifty million lives to draft that [United Nations] Charter. Our hearts and minds had been purged in the fires of a great war, and the UN Charter represented the best that was in us at the time." During his tenure in the State Department, Rusk often attempted to route United States foreign policy through the United Nations, using the organization to test and sustain the moral authority of national objectives and to provide a pragmatic tool with which to legitimize American actions, particularly those related to policy toward the

⁷ Oral History RRRR, 1-7, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It 98.

Soviet Union.⁸

Soviet Policy

Perceiving Joseph Stalin's post-war occupation of Eastern Europe and machinations in the Middle East and Asia as evidence of perfidy and expansionist design, by 1946 the Truman administration had begun to question the efficacy of Franklin Roosevelt's wartime conciliatory approach toward the Soviet Union. This sentiment found articulation in American foreign service officer George Kennan's "Long Telegram" and "X Article" analyses of Soviet history, motivation, and intentions, in which he proposed that the United States eschew efforts to extricate the Stalin from Eastern Europe and undertake measures to implement the containment of Soviet expansion and influence. Implicit in the notion of containment was the belief that the inherent structural flaws of a Marxist economy and /or the nature of totalitarianism would engender the eventual implosion of the Soviet Union. As Truman stated in the early 1950s: "My contention has always been that in Soviet Russia when the people get to the point where they can stand it no longer, we'll find it will break up as the others [dictatorships] have done, and we may come out with a decent government in a free country." Although Kennan later protested the militarization and global application of containment, it became the blueprint for waging the Cold War, and his status and influence within the Truman administration increased dramatically, placing him at the

⁸ Oral History G, 16-17; Oral History RRRR, 1-7, 21, Dean Rusk Collection; Rusk, As I Saw It, 136.

head of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff.⁹

Rusk's and Kennan's divergent perspectives occasionally led to conflict within the context of policy debate. Kennan's, and to a large extent Acheson's, focus was typically Euro-centered, while Rusk's view was, in his phrase, "more catholic;" he was much more interested and involved in issues related to the developing world, partly because of his position as head of United Nations, and later Far Eastern, Affairs. And while Kennan's analysis was often grounded upon calculations of the perceived tactical and strategic actualities of a situation, Rusk's policy positions were infused with a heavy dose of moralism. Rusk later recalled, "He [Kennan] was a so-called realist in his own mind, like Hans Morgenthau and some others...." Rusk referred to Kennan as a "naive realist" because he believed that Kennan often mistakenly failed to consider morality as a powerful motivating force in human behavior. He summarized his differences with Kennan in the context of their ramifications for Soviet policy in a 1978 letter to Eugene Rostow:

George took the view that any Soviet demand, however outrageous, was a fact of life with which we had to deal. This caused him to look for compromises with whatever the demand was. My view was that there were certain demands which simply could not be discussed because they were out of bounds. It seemed to me that George's approach would mean that the Soviet Union could nibble us to death by a series of outrageous demands with each of which would affect [sic] some compromise. Needless to say, when I suggested to George that we use the same technique and throw some outrageous demands at the Russians, he was resolutely opposed.¹⁰

⁹ Harris interview with Truman, Post-Presidential Files, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library.

¹⁰ Oral History RRRR, 21-26, Dean Rusk Collection, Rusk to Rostow, June 28, 1978, Folder: "Rostow, Eugene," Box 37, Dean Rusk Collection.

Differences in temperament also colored the dynamic of Rusk's and Kennan's relationship. Kennan's complaints and occasional sullenness irked his superiors, particularly Acheson, and he left fulltime service with the State Department of his own accord during 1949, Acheson's first year as secretary of state. In contrast, Rusk's affability, optimism, and Southern manner--with its emphasis on respect for authority, politeness, and indirect methods of confrontation--served as a foil to Acheson's abrasiveness and helped Rusk accept the State Department on its own terms, easing his ascension to prominence in the organization during Acheson's tenure as secretary.¹¹

As the State Department wrestled with Soviet policy, it seemed to Rusk that Soviet actions in Europe and Asia were the beginnings of a "mudslide" of postwar communist expansion. He did not subscribe to the increasingly popular view that communists were inherently amoral or suffered from complete ideological bankruptcy but did believe that the Soviet Union was dedicated to aggression under the guise of "world revolution." In a 1949 speech, Rusk declared: "If we are concerned about the Soviet Union, it is not because they wish to organize themselves along Communist lines.... But we are concerned because the Soviet Union is pursuing a course of Russian imperialism incompatible with the minimum conduct required by the international community of nations." He believed that while the West had demobilized after World War II, the Soviets reverted to former patterns of Tsarist imperialism, and they bore the majority of responsibility for the origins of the Cold War. In a statement indicative of the high

¹¹ Examine Robert Beisner's, "The Secretary, the Spy, and the Sage: Dean Acheson, Alger Hiss, and George Kennan" *Diplomatic History* Vol. 27, No. 1 (January 2003): 1-14, for an enlightening exposition on the Acheson-Kennan relationship.

importance Rusk placed on the role of prestige and reputation in the conduct of international affairs, he posited that American complicity in the origins of the Cold War lay in "self-imposed weakness rather than in belligerency.... With our precipitous, unilateral disarmament, we in the West tempted Joseph Stalin to intolerable temptations through our own weakness." A supporter of liberal initiatives in domestic politics, Rusk was also a internationalist who occasionally advocated American intervention to counter communist moves. He was certain that the price of inaction was global conflagration, and if the United States allowed its credibility to erode by failing to confront communist expansion, "the world would once again witness the sorry experience of the 1930s, when one unmet act of aggression led to another and eventually to world war."¹²

But the exigencies of World War II and the early Cold War period did not lead Rusk to the conclusion that it was necessary to weaken his commitment to morality in a "neo-Wilsonian" compromise, as Thomas Zeiler has argued. As previously stated, within Rusk's worldview ideals and pragmatism had always coexisted and bolstered each other. A successfully implemented containment doctrine would ensure the credibility of United States policy, thus maintaining the nation's security and fulfilling its interests while affirming the value and vitality of democratic ideals and American institutions relative to communism.¹³

¹² Rusk, As I Saw It, 128-129, 363; "United States Policy and the U.S.S.R. A Digest of Pertinent Data Appearing in the Department of State Publications Issued During October 1949,"³, President's Secretary's Files, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library.

¹³ Zeiler, Dean Rusk, 14-16.

Rusk backed the Truman administration's various efforts to implement containment, including the Baruch Plan for international nuclear disarmament, the Marshall Plan European recovery package, and the Truman Doctrine's pledge of American support to nations attempting to resist internal or external aggression. His suggestions to bring the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine under United Nations auspices experienced relatively quick deaths within the halls of the State Department, but he argued "long and hard for the Baruch Plan," believing that "moral and political reasons" compelled adoption of the plan's proposals for United Nations control of fissionable material and the concomitant destruction of atomic weaponry. As the Baruch Plan withered under opposition from the Soviet Union and elements of the United States government in the spring of 1948, Rusk continued his unsuccessful efforts to engender American and international support of the proposal in the United Nations. In a meeting chaired by Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett, Rusk argued that "stopping [American support of Baruch plan] and accepting an arms race puts us under an unnecessary political handicap" and continued doggedly to press his opinion that "we never want to close and lock the door" even after Lovett stated bluntly that "we have reached the end of the road" and that attempts to sustain the Baruch Plan must "stop." Rusk came to believe that failure of the Baruch Plan was probably inevitable, but he regretted that the United States had missed an opportunity to "keep the nuclear beast in its cage before it began to growl."¹⁴

¹⁴ Rusk, As I Saw It, 137-140; Minutes of Meeting at the Department of State, April 2, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Volume I, 318-322.

Rusk continued to approach Soviet policy through the United Nations during the Berlin Crisis of 1948. Located deep within Soviet occupied eastern Germany, Berlin was divided into Soviet, French, British, and American administrative zones, with the Soviet Union's covering the eastern portion of the city that was quickly becoming the frontline of the Cold War in Europe. When Stalin cut off Western railway and road access to Berlin in June, 1948, the Truman administration thought Soviet moves a test of American resolve and implemented an airlift that supplied West Berlin until the Soviets relented and ended their blockade in 1949. As head of United Nations Affairs, Rusk managed efforts to initiate and sustain secret talks between Soviet and American delegates during United Nations meetings in New York and Paris. Soviet acquiesce in the Berlin drama led many in the Truman administration to conclude that future crises would end similarly if Soviet provocations were met with a firm American response.¹⁵

The means for meeting communist initiated tests of will would come through Truman's adoption of National Security Document 68 (NSC 68) in 1950. The minutes of a National Security Council meeting record Truman as stating he had learned that "the Soviets respected nothing but force, and would talk and negotiate only in the face of force." Reflective of such thinking, NSC 68 was predicated on the assumption that the 1950s would be a decade of continued competition and probable armed conflict with the Soviet Union. The document mandated a monumental increase in United States conventional military forces, thus committing America to supporting a militarized

¹⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 143-144. A cogent discussion of the effects of the Berlin crisis on American policymakers is found in Russell D. Buhite's, Soviet-American Relations in Asia, 1945-1954 (Norman, 1981), 219-235.

national security apparatus and foreign policy during peacetime. Ominously, NSC 68 also helped broaden the conceptualization of American interests, providing the wherewithal for a more global application of the containment doctrine into areas of the developing world.¹⁶

Decolonization

In addition to the use of the United Nations in dealing with the Soviet Union, Rusk also found it logical and propitious to employ the organization relative to decolonization. Rusk remained firmly opposed to colonialism, believing that just as individuals required the freedom to choose and follow their own dictates, nations needed and deserved the liberty to determine their respective political and economic systems. Although certain of the exceptionalism of American institutions--a democratic uniqueness rooted in the British heritage but cleansed of monarchical notions and formal traditions of empire--a coercive imposition of values was wrong and often impractical. However, in the Cold War struggle for ideological and political influence, it was important for democratic ideals to be seen as credible and compelling. Rusk was possessed of a reformist optimism, emanating from his religious background in the South, that persuaded him that although the use of military power was occasionally necessary, nations could lead by example and force of argument; the virtues of democracy could be a powerful agent for change in the world.

¹⁶ Summary of NSC Meeting 104, October 11, 1951, Folder: Memoranda for the President, Box 220, President's Secretary's Files, Truman Library.

Implementing such change proved particularly frustrating for the Truman administration, which was eager to support anticolonial, nationalist movements but preferred them to be non-communist and nonthreatening to America's relationship with its European allies, some of which were established imperial powers in the developing world. Rusk articulated the asymmetry inherent in America's objectives regarding decolonization in a 1948 telegram addressing Dutch efforts to retain possession of Indonesia:

Dutch action Indonesia brings into sharp conflict number important US national interests. On one hand we are deeply interested in political and economic stability West European countries and solidarity Western Europe as whole. On other hand we have long established policy favoring rapid development non-self-governing people toward self-govt and independence and estab [sic] in so-called colonial areas of govts [sic] based upon consent and agreement peoples concerned.¹⁷

Rusk heartily endorsed America's 1946 dissolution of its protectorate relationship with the Philippines and also supported British withdrawal from India, the cornerstone of its empire. Arguing that Dutch attempts to retain Indonesia were a "direct encouragement to spread of Communism in Southern Asia..." and a "serious blow to prospect of development self-govt [sic] in that area under moderate national elements," he used his influence as head of the State Department's United Nations Affairs to help broker agreements initiating Dutch withdrawal during 1947 and 1948, with the Netherlands granting full independence in 1949. By the early 1950s, Rusk's attention was increasingly occupied by Indochina, a nation that became, in the words of historian John Lewis Gaddis, "a kind of laboratory " in which the Truman administration endeavored in vain to

¹⁷Rusk to Jessup, 12-23-1945, FRUS, 1948, Volume VI, 597.

manipulate two volatile elements: nationalism and communism.¹⁸

Subjugated by a host of Asian and European nations throughout much of its long history, after liberation from the Japanese at the conclusion of World War II, Indochina was quickly returned to its prewar colonial master, France. Rusk later referred to himself as a "midwife" in the birth of Indonesian independence, but this term is also applicable to the American role in the rebirth of French colonialism in Asia. Sympathetic to nationalism but reluctant to jeopardize French participation in the West European anti-Soviet alliance and cognizant of the potential French domestic political disruptions caused by Indochinese independence movements, the United States chose to place aggressive efforts to move France towards decolonization, in Rusk's words, "on the back burner." Instead, America developed a policy of assisting the French in opposing certain mutually detested Indochinese nationalist endeavors, especially those of the communist variety practiced by Ho Chi Minh and his Viet Minh forces, while moving France toward a series of minor political and economic reforms designed collectively to undermine colonialism in the long term. To this end, the Truman administration persuaded France to separate Indochina into the "Associated States" of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam and urged the French to do "everything possible" to ensure their "future success," but it also granted recognition and military aid in 1950 to the French puppet regime in Vietnam, headed by Bao Dai.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., 598; John Lewis Gaddis, We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History (Oxford, 1997), 156.

¹⁹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 422-423; Memorandum of Conversation, February 16, 1950, Folder: February 1950, Box 66, Papers of Dean Acheson.

With the success of the communist revolution in China in 1949 and the advent of the Korean War in 1950, Rusk perceived French possessions in Indochina as an increasingly crucial element in the successful containment of communism in Asia, an issue that would remain an abiding concern throughout the rest of his career. To Rusk, who was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs in March, 1950, Chinese communist influence posed a major threat to the political stability and territorial integrity of Indochina. Writing to Acheson in September 1950--two months before full-scale Chinese intervention in Korea--Rusk argued that a Viet Minh offensive assisted, if not "directed," by China was imminent, and he labeled such efforts as "aggression." He also predicted that continued American military aid to the Associated States, which would continue to increase during the remainder of the Truman administration, would have a "salutary effect upon the morale of the three State Governments, with a concurrent increase in their abilities to withstand aggression from either internal or external sources." Under the circumstances, asking the French to withdraw from Indochina was out of the question. The French presence "represented the only effective bulwark against communist expansion," and moreover, the French had a "responsibility" to stay in Asia and defend their colonial possessions. However, despite the seeming necessity and benefits of American support of France in Asia, Rusk averred that it fed the "dilemma which has always faced American policy in Indochina:" how to contain communism without violating traditional American anti-colonial principles and/ or feeding the perception that the United States itself had imperial designs on the region. In August, 1950, George Kennan had chillingly and accurately predicted that "in Indo-China we are getting

ourselves into the position of guaranteeing the French in an undertaking which neither they nor we, nor both of us together, can win." Rusk's assessment was not as dire, but he ended his September memo to Acheson with an insightful and prescient observation that American objectives in Indochina could not be achieved without the underlying support and political will of Asians themselves:

By continuing our present policy of assisting the forces in Indochina which are opposed to communist aggression, we will assist in the preservation of the area from communist domination. We note, however, that American assistance alone cannot ensure the area against communist aggression if the desires and capabilities of the peoples and governments do not provide the main effort against it.²⁰

Although the United Nations did not factor directly in the formulation of America's Indochina policy, the organization played a prominent role in the Truman administration's attempts to solve one of its most intractable problems, Arab-Jewish relations in Palestine, an issue that Rusk approached "on my knees in prayer." During World War I, Great Britain, the dominant colonial nation in the Middle East, was designated the "mandatory power" in charge of administering Palestine in the name of the League of Nations. The 1917 "Balfour Declaration," which indicated British intention to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine, gave momentum to such efforts, and by the mid-1940s, several international attempts to achieve Arab-Jewish accord on the subject had failed. Faced with postwar decolonization pressures, increased Jewish immigration to Palestine, mounting frustration over Arab-Jewish friction, and acts of anti-British violence, in 1947 Britain transferred responsibility for Palestine to the United Nations and

²⁰ Rusk to Acheson, September 11, 1950, FRUS 1950, Volume VI, 878-880; Kennan to Acheson, August 23, 1950, Folder: August 1950, Box 67, Papers of Dean Acheson.

announced plans to terminate its mandate during 1948.²¹

Fraught with contradiction, bitter disagreement, and charges of anti-Semitic State Department machinations, policy toward Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel were perhaps the most contentious and exasperating foreign policy issues within the Truman administration during its tenure. Concerned over future American relations with the populous, strategically important, and Arab dominated Middle East and determined to avoid United States military intervention in the region, the State Department initially backed a federal Arab-Jewish nation but eventually supported a plan to effect United Nations partition of Palestine into two separate Jewish and Arab states. In an interesting anomalous alignment with the United States, the Soviet Union also supported partition. Eager to diminish British regional influence and mindful of the incongruities between Islam and Marxism, the Soviets perhaps saw support of a Jewish state as their best chance for effective leverage in the Middle East. As head of United Nations Affairs, Rusk worked closely with the head of the American United Nations delegation, Warren Austin—who once implored Arabs and Jews to "settle their differences in a Christian spirit—" to steer partition to passage in November, 1947.²²

²¹ For balanced coverage of Truman's Middle Eastern policy see Michael J. Cohen, Truman and Israel (Berkeley, 1990); Robert Ferrell, Harry S. Truman: A Life (Columbia, 1994); and Alonzo Hamby, Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman (New York, 1995). In Truman, (New York, 1992), David McCullough provides a sympathetic portrait of the president, and Arnold Offner, Another Such Victory (Stanford, 2002), offers a revisionist critique of the Truman administration's foreign policy.

²² Offner, Another Such Victory, 284-285; Rusk, As I Saw It, 151.

President Truman approached Palestine policy with a mixture of uncertainty and caution. Although appreciative of State Department worries over damage to Arab-American relations and potential Soviet manipulation of regional tension, he was personally sympathetic to the notion of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, aware of the domestic political advantages of a pro-Jewish posture, and under considerable pressure from Zionist organizations and White House staff members--including his increasingly influential counsel, Clark Clifford--to maintain firm support of partition and grant American recognition to an emergent Jewish state.

Convinced that Arab-Jewish support for partition was dissolving during the winter of 1947-1948, many in the State Department began to urge that the Truman administration support the establishment of a United Nations trusteeship for Palestine. In a series of memoranda affirming the need for trusteeship, Rusk asserted the inevitability of the participation plan's collapse, the certainty of subsequent violence, and the likelihood of pressure for American military involvement. He also stressed the potential for Soviet intervention, however subtle, and erosion of America's economic/ national security position if full-scale Arab-Jewish hostilities erupted. Importantly, influenced by Southern notions of honor and prestige, Rusk implied that the United States had a moral obligation to aid in developing a "Palestine solution" and warned that the nation could suffer a damaging loss of credibility if it did not:

If we shirk our responsibility as a member of the [United Nations Security] Council, having declined to take an active part in the settlement of the Palestine question, we would be subject to a loss of prestige from which we could not readily recover. Unless the present partition plan is reconsidered, the United States already has substantial obligations under it. If an alternative plan is considered, it would be

frivolous not to suppose that the United States must play a leading role in the execution of such an alternative.²³

Persuaded by Rusk and others of the need for trusteeship, on March 8, 1948, Secretary Marshall obtained Truman's approval for the proposal of such a plan to the United Nations. Unfortunately, there was apparent confusion over the timing of the plan's release, and when Warren Austin proposed trusteeship at the United Nations on March 19, it caught the White House unaware and politically embarrassed, since Truman had yet to lay the groundwork for what appeared to be an abrupt shift in policy. In New York for Austin's speech, Rusk represented the administration in what he considered the most "emotionally charged press conference" of his entire career. In addition to an intense public reaction, Rusk had to face an enraged Clark Clifford, who later that day summoned State Department Counselor and Soviet "expert," Charles Bohlen, head of Near Eastern Affairs, Loy Henderson, and Rusk to a hastily called and "contentious" White House meeting that, according to Clifford, "left us barely on speaking terms." The meeting would not be the last occasion evincing antipathy between Rusk and Clifford during the course of their respective careers.²⁴

Rusk worked assiduously to develop the framework for implementation of trusteeship, meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff in order to convince them that large numbers of United States troops could be required as part of a United Nations-- or

²³ Rusk to Lovett, February 3, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Volume V, 587-589; Rusk to Lovett, February 11, 1948, *ibid.*, 617-618; Rusk to Lovett, January 26, 1948, *ibid.*, 556-561.

²⁴ Offner, Another Such Victory, 292; Rusk, As I Saw It, 147, Clark Clifford, Counsel to the President (New York, 1991), 9.

perhaps unilateral American--peace keeping force, especially if the Soviets attempted "infiltration" of Palestine or if "widespread, violent civil war" produced significant casualties. Employing his increasingly effective powers of persuasion, Rusk enticed the military with the observation that "the presence of our forces in Palestine might be advantageous from a strategic standpoint, and would give us the opportunity to construct bomber fields in the Middle East." The Joint Chiefs reasoned that enforcing the peace in Palestine would require a minimum of 104,000 American troops, and they agreed with Rusk "that the United States might be faced with a worse situation in the Middle East if it failed to support the trusteeship proposal" and that more troops would be required if peace "should break down."²⁵

The "break down" of peace that Rusk feared appeared to materialize in mid-April, 1948, as Jews occupied territory allotted to them under the original partition plan. Rusk obtained Truman's permission to begin secret Arab-Jewish negotiations and was told by the president to "go and get a truce" that would keep the peace in Palestine after the termination of the British mandate on May 15. Talks were held in New York's Savoy-Plaza Hotel, with Rusk's suite located between the Arab and Jewish delegations. Not surprisingly, both sides were obstinate, with only limited progress achieved, and negotiations eventually stalled over the rate of Jewish immigration into Palestine. Rusk recalled that a Saudi Arabian member of the Arab delegation refused a proposal to allow twenty-five hundred Jews a month into Palestine with the statement, "Impossible! Impossible! If we agree to twenty-five hundred, the Jews will simply bring in twenty-five

²⁵ Forrestal Diary Entry, April 4, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Volume V, 797-798.

hundred pregnant women, and that will mean five thousand!"²⁶

On May 12, with no truce in sight and leaning towards recognition of an emergent Jewish state, Truman convened a dramatic and emotionally intense Oval Office meeting intended to reconcile divergent White House and State Department opinions on Palestine policy. The principal participants were Truman, Marshall, Undersecretary of State Lovett, and Clifford, whom many in the State Department--including Rusk-- regarded as an overly ambitious, interloping, domestic political advisor. According to Clifford, Rusk and Loy Henderson were represented by their deputies because their presence had been judged by Lovett to be "too inflammatory." Marshall and Lovett argued that the United States should continue its efforts to obtain a truce, relying on a modified cease-fire proposal and a request for the appointment of a special Palestine mediator. Clifford countered that hopes for trusteeship were "unrealistic;" a Jewish state was inevitable and the president should grant it immediate recognition. An angry and uncharacteristically emotional Marshall decried Clifford's presence at a foreign policy meeting and continued to press the State Department's arguments, expressing his concern that the White House advisors were motivated purely by domestic political considerations. He concluded with a warning to Truman: "If you follow Clifford's advice and if I were to vote in the [November presidential] election, I would vote against you." Shocked, Truman indicated his approval of the State Department's position and abruptly ended the meeting.²⁷

²⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, April 30, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Volume V, 877-879; Rusk to Lovett, April 29, 1948, *ibid.*, 873-874; Rusk, As I Saw It, 149-150.

²⁷ Clifford, Counsel to the President, 9-14.

Shaken by Marshall's outburst and appreciative of the prestige that the secretary brought to his administration, Truman nevertheless instructed Clifford to resume efforts at moving the State Department toward recognition, cautioning, "But be careful. I can't afford to lose General Marshall." After some behind the scenes negotiations between Lovett and Clifford, the United States granted de facto recognition to the state of Israel at 6:00pm on May 14. Although he sensed the inevitability of a Jewish state, Rusk was not informed of the Truman's decision until Clifford called at 5:45pm, May 14 ordering him to notify the American delegation at the United Nations. According to Clifford, Rusk replied "testily" and "as if he had been stung:" "This cuts directly across what our delegation has been trying to accomplish in the General Assembly--and we have a large majority for it." Clifford simply repeated his instructions, and it was left to Rusk to inform the confused delegates of recognition and assuage their anger.²⁸

Attendant with American recognition of Israel came accusations by Zionists, White House personnel, and subsequently, scholars, that the State Department-- particularly the Office of Near Eastern Affairs-- was rife with anti-Semitism, had been strongly opposed to the creation of a Jewish state, and practiced, in Clifford's words, calculated "delay and circumvention of the President's policy objectives." President Truman echoed such sentiments in 1953, stating, "There were people in the State Department who were anti-Semitic and who were doing everything they could to hamper a reasonable settlement. Had it not been for those people in the State Department, there

²⁸ Ibid., 15-22; Rusk, As I Saw It, 150-151.

would have been no shooting in Israeli [sic]."²⁹

As far as Rusk is concerned, such criticisms appear unfounded. Any erstwhile strains of anti-Semitic thought had evaporated from his worldview by the time he began government service. Rusk was a strong advocate of his position during policy debates who might occasionally protest a decision--and he later admitted that the State Department's "last minute [United Nations trusteeship] negotiations were simply a desperate and futile effort to buy time [for a peaceful settlement]--" but he had far too much respect for the office of the presidency and established hierarchical lines of authority to circumvent or sabotage a presidential decision or objective *once it had been clearly established*. In fact, Truman's handling of Palestine policy was marked by a certain degree of confusion and vacillation, leading Rusk to conclude that the president was "a little schizophrenic about Israel" and that "contradictions in American policy stemmed from the conflicting objectives in Truman's own mind, not through any deviousness by the State Department."³⁰

Further, Rusk was not biased in favor of Arab interests. Although occasionally sympathetic regarding the Arab desire for violence against Jews in the face of Jewish moves he considered provocative, Rusk was quick to label potential Arab intervention in Palestine as "aggression," possibly "similar" in form to the methods of the communist guerrillas the Truman administration was striving to suppress in Greece, and he posited

²⁹ Clifford, Counsel to the President, 17; Harris interview with Truman, October 28, 1953, Post-Presidential Files, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library. For further criticism of the State Department, see Offner, Another Such Victory, 283-299.

³⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 147-152.

that the United States had an obligation to attempt peaceful resolution of Arab-Jewish strife. Consequently, Rusk incurred the disapproval of George Kennan, who protested to Lovett that adoption of such a characterization of Arab behavior could lead to a disproportionately large American commitment to involvement in Palestine issues that would "cut at right angles across our entire policy with regard to the Middle East, and our world-wide strategy as well." Kennan warned that Rusk's recommendations might "gain for us some relief from the difficulties of our present situation, but to do this at the expense of our relations with the British and Arabs at the cost of further involvement in commitments leading toward international enforcement of the Palestine decision [United Nations partition resolution]." Ironically, Rusk's conceptualization and language regarding Arab actions were at times more closely aligned with White House advisor Clifford's than his State Department colleague Kennan's. Arguing in favor of American recognition of a Jewish state, Clifford averred that "the United States appears in the ridiculous role of trembling before threats of a few nomadic tribes.... Why should Russia or Yugoslavia, or any other nation treat us with anything but contempt in light of our shilly-shallying appeasement of the Arabs."³¹

Finally, in his policy memoranda and truce negotiations regarding Palestine, Rusk remained reasonably flexible, frequently stressing the necessity of establishing some form of Arab-Jewish "modus vivendi" that did not necessarily preclude the formation of a Jewish state and would grant each side a measure of its objectives while providing a

³¹ Rusk to Lovett, January 26, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Volume V, 558; Kennan to Lovett, January 29, 1948, *ibid.*, 573-577; Clifford to Truman, March 8, 1948, 10-11, Box 15, Papers of Clark Clifford, Truman Library.

foundational structure for peace. Even after the state of Israel had been established, Rusk continued his attempts at conciliation within the framework of American recognition, exploring the possibility of a practical and mutually agreeable division of Jerusalem. Although perhaps naive in his persistent hope for Arab-Jewish compromise, it seems clear that Rusk's efforts in the formulation and implementation of Palestine policy were directed at effecting a peaceful solution to regional tension--not at undermining Jewish interests or presidential directives.³²

China Policy

If the course of events in Palestine proved exasperating, developments in China were alarming. The success of the communist revolution in China in 1949 "disappointed and dismayed" Rusk. He later recalled his state of mind: "If you combined this great Chinese people, both in mass and in capabilities, with the communist ideology, and if they were to go on the rampage, there would be major problems ahead. There was also the possibility of close working relationships between them and the Soviet Union." Rusk's concern was such that as the Truman administration debated its initial responses to communist ascendancy in China in October, 1949, his World War II CBI experience of relying on diverse means to achieve objectives and the pragmatic elements of his Southern moralism moved him to suggest to Acheson that the United States use supplies

³² Memorandum of Conversation, January 6, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Volume V, 537-539; Rusk to Lovett, February 3, 1948, *ibid.*, 587-589; Rusk to Lovett, February 11, 1948, *ibid.*, 617-618; Rusk to Marshall, March 22, 1948, *ibid.*, 750-751; Rusk to Lovett, May 4, 1948, *ibid.*, 894-895; Memorandum of Conversation, September 30, 1948, *ibid.*, 1440-1442.

of arms and opium, as well as bribery, to encourage harassment of Mao Zedong's regime inside China. However, eager as he was to weaken the communist government, Rusk's wartime service witnessing the venality, brutality, and increasing ineffectiveness of the Guomindang forces compelled him to oppose major military efforts against mainland China by Jiang Jieshi's government, which had recently fled to Taiwan. To Rusk, the futility of employing the Goumindang was self-evident; the "mandate of heaven" no longer rested with the Nationalist Chinese.³³

Although Rusk was against military adventurism by Jiang and in 1949 had questioned the wisdom of American protection of the Nationalists, he ultimately decided it was important to have Taiwan's territorial and political integrity maintained in the face of potential communist Chinese invasion. In this sense, his thinking ran counter to many in the State Department who had been perfectly content to let fate take its course with Taiwan. A memorandum, perhaps drafted by Republican foreign policy guru and State Department Asian policy advisor, John Foster Dulles, arguing for the necessity of an American role in the defense of Taiwan was sent to Acheson under Rusk's name and reflects the assistant secretary's persistent concern with the maintenance of American credibility and its linkage to world order: "Admittedly, a strong stand at Formosa [Taiwan] would involve a slightly increased risk of early war. But sometimes such a risk has to be taken in order to preserve peace in the world and to keep the national prestige

³³ Oral History HH, 24, Dean Rusk Collection; Chang, Friends and Enemies, 58; Oral History J, 4-5, Dean Rusk Collection.

required if we are to play our indispensable part in sustaining a free world."³⁴

In late 1949, Rusk "toyed" with the possibility of using American recognition of the People's Republic of China as a means to both protect and restrict the Chinese Nationalists on Taiwan while allowing the United States to frame its policy upon the acknowledged reality of communist ascendancy in China. By spring, 1950, he was working with Dulles on an innovative proposal "packaging" the recognition and subsequent seating in the United Nations of the People's Republic with a United Nations sponsored--and American enforced-- neutralizing trusteeship of Taiwan. It was assumed that if Mao accepted the proposal, the communist threat to Taiwan would end, as well as Nationalist attempts to return forcibly to the mainland, thus removing Taiwan as a sensitive political and military burden for the Truman administration. Jiang would be compelled to go along with the plan after learning that American assistance in defending Taiwan was available only within the parameters of a United Nations trusteeship.³⁵

Acheson's thinking regarding Rusk's "package" proposal is not entirely evident, but the plan was, at any rate, shelved upon the beginning of the Korean War in June, 1950. However, in August of that year, with the tide of battle not yet turned in America's favor subsequent to its September amphibious assault behind enemy lines at Inchon, South Korea, Rusk floated the idea of recognition of mainland China in a meeting with British ambassador Oliver Franks. Perhaps Rusk wanted to use recognition as a means of

³⁴ Rusk to Acheson, May 30, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Volume VI, 349-351.

³⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 284; Howe to W. Park Armstrong, May 31, 1950, FRUS, 1950, Volume VI, 347-349;

forestalling Chinese involvement in Korea. He indicated he remained open toward improving relations with communist China but stressed that "our own attitude would be very greatly affected by Peiping's behavior," that is, if China supported or engaged in "aggression" anywhere in Asia, the United States would not be able to consider recognition. Franks replied with the prediction that if China involved itself in Korea militarily, Britain would " 'derecognize' Peiping," thus complimenting attempted American enticement of the People's Republic with British coercion. Full-scale Chinese intervention in Korea a month later, in Rusk's words, "deferred" his bureau's efforts at recognition, ultimately rendering them extremely difficult to pursue.³⁶

State Department anxiety over China was magnified and reflected by elements in and out of government. Many Americans assumed that Soviet acquisition of the atomic bomb and communist victory in China could not have occurred unless communists had infiltrated the highest levels of the government, especially the State Department. The "China Lobby"-- an amalgam of anti-communist, pro-Jiang individuals and groups advocating that the United States fulfill its historic role as "protector" of China --specifically Taiwan, conservative Republican ideologues in Congress, and those Americans marching fervently to the music piped by the self-serving communist hunter, Joseph McCarthy, unleashed a firestorm of domestic political unrest laying blame for the "loss" of China at the Truman administration's doorstep.

³⁶ Rusk to American Embassy in United Kingdom, August 13, 1950, FRUS 1950, Volume VI, 431-432; Oral History II, 6, Dean Rusk Collection.

Critics of the Truman administration aimed their withering fire at anyone associated with China policy, and some experts on Asia, such as John Stewart Service and John Paton Davies, found their careers ruined. When Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Walton Butterworth, came under attack and was appointed Ambassador to Sweden, Rusk applied for a "voluntary demotion" from his post as deputy secretary and assumed Butterworth's position at Far Eastern Affairs in March, 1950. Rusk's selfless act earned him Acheson's "high respect and gratitude," in part because the secretary knew that Rusk's carefully cultivated ties to Republicans in Congress would deflect criticism from the closely scrutinized and very important State Department bureau. Rusk had for years worked assiduously with John Foster Dulles to promote a bipartisan approach to American diplomacy, and they developed a close professional relationship. The pair had negotiated a deal to keep Palestine policy out of the 1948 presidential campaign, and Rusk suspected that Dulles acted as a surreptitious aegis, protecting him from Joseph McCarthy's attacks. In a continued effort to engender bipartisanship, in the spring of 1950 Rusk used his influence to have Dulles appointed a special advisor on Asian policy, and he would later provide support to Dulles's efforts in procuring a peace treaty with Japan.³⁷

Many critics of the Truman administration believed that communism was a threat monolithic in nature, and for years historians of the Cold War assumed that, given their official rhetoric, American policymakers of the Truman, Eisenhower, and

³⁷ Rusk, As I Saw It, 160-161; Acheson, Present at the Creation, 431; Rusk to Lovett, October 2, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Volume V, 1448-1449.

Kennedy/Johnson governments thought so as well. In the early 1990s, groundbreaking research by Gordan Chang demonstrated that far from viewing the Sino-Soviet relationship as monolithic, as early as the 1940s American policy makers began to discern differences both subtle and profound between the world's two major communist powers. Debate within successive administrations centered largely on how best to construct and conduct a triangular diplomacy designed to exploit Sino-Soviet tension to the benefit of the United States, and an accurate assessment of Rusk must consider his role in shaping America's Cold War China policy in this context.³⁸

In November 1949, Acheson recorded for State Department files that a group of his principal advisors on Asia, which included Rusk, was "unanimous" in favoring a policy of detaching communist China "from subservience to Moscow and over a period of time encourage those vigorous influences which might modify it." Josip Tito had asserted communist Yugoslavia's independence from Moscow in 1948, and the State Department hoped that Mao would follow Tito's example.³⁹

In speeches and talks with reporters during the late 1940s and early 1950s, Rusk sought publicly to wean China from the Soviet Union by encouraging Titoism through appeals to Chinese nationalism and pride. Speaking in to the Boston Conference on

³⁸ See Chang, Friends and Enemies, as well as David Mayers, Cracking the Monolith: U.S. Policy Against the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949-1955 (Baton Rouge, 1986). For an internal view of the Sino-Soviet relationship, examine Odd Arne Westad, ed., Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963 (Washington, 1998).

³⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, November 17, 1950, Folder: October-November, 1949, Box 65, Papers of Dean Acheson.

Distribution in October, 1949, he stated:

In Yugoslavia we have, if ever needed, a clear demonstration that being Communist is not enough for the Kremlin. Communists in other lands are expected to yoke themselves to the national interests of the Russian state. While western Communists are stirring with resentment at this compulsion, we can wonder how long it will take those Chinese who have fallen under Communist domination to begin to feel the impact of the same bitter truth.⁴⁰

Although his Boston speech went largely unnoticed, Rusk's address to the China Institute at New York's Waldorf-Astoria on May 18, 1951 precipitated an uproar. In an extremely controversial move, the Truman administration had recently relieved General Douglas MacArthur of command in Korea, partially because of his insubordinate public statements advocating American military action against mainland China. To many, Rusk's speech seemed to signal a more belligerent administration posture toward Mao's regime, and it also left a false but indelible imprint of Rusk as a hardline ideologue, firm in his belief in a monolithic Sino-Soviet bloc and unbending in his opposition to the existence of communist China.

While Rusk referred to the "evil purposes " of "those in power in Peiping and Moscow" and spewed forth additional inflammatory vitriol--most famously his characterization of the communist Chinese government as a "Slavic Manchukuo on a larger scale," his themes, purpose, and methods were the same as in Boston two years earlier. His analysis was not intended as accusatory evidence of Sino-Soviet solidarity but was designed to prompt the Chinese to reexamine their relationship with Moscow.

⁴⁰ "United States Policy and the U.S.S.R. A Digest of Pertinent Data Appearing in the Department of State Publications Issued During October 1949," 3, President's Secretary's Files, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library.

Rusk began his speech by noting the historic "warm friendship which has marked the relations between the Chinese and American people throughout the last two centuries" and declared that the United States desired to work in the best interests of China. He then began to expound his main theme that continued alignment between Peiping and Moscow would only bring irreparable harm to China. China's political autonomy was threatened by "foreign masters," and its territorial integrity was being eroded by "the European empire [Russia] which has stretched out its greedy hands...for at least a century."

Moreover, the Soviets had dragged the Chinese into dangerous and wasteful interventionism in the Korean War:

Hundreds of thousands of Chinese youth are being sacrificed in a fiery furnace, pitting their waves of human flesh against the fire power of modern weapons--and without heavy equipment, adequate supply or the most elementary medical attention. Apart from Korea, the Chinese are being pressed to aggressive action in other areas--all calculated to divert the attention and energies away from the encroachments of Soviet imperialism upon China itself.

Rusk concluded, "I find it hard to believe that the Chinese people will acquiesce in the kind of future which their masters are now preparing for them."⁴¹

The controversy surrounding Rusk's speech was sufficient to prompt Acheson to assure Truman that Rusk "had not suggested or in any way made any change in policy" and that his speech was reflective of similar statements made by himself and the president. However, Rusk was ordered by Truman's political staff to clear future speeches with the White House. Indignant, Rusk temporarily ended his speech making, refusing to

⁴¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 173; Rusk Speech to China Institute Dinner, May 18, 1950, Folder: China, Box 173, President's Secretary's Files, Truman Library; Oral History KK, 27-28, Dean Rusk Collection.

have his "drafts edited by some White house staffer who didn't know anything about Asia."⁴²

Although Rusk was in step with administration policy, Acheson revealed to Winston Churchill in early 1952 that while he had formerly considered the splitting of China and the Soviet Union "a real possibility... the Chinese intervention in Korea had made this hope seem very distant and impossible of attainment at the present." Rusk had viewed things differently, arguing that solid American military resistance to the Chinese incursion in Korea would "produce strains on... relations between Peiping and Moscow." In any case, by the time that Acheson chose to abandon temporarily the State Department's "wean strategy," its purpose had probably already been perceived by the Chinese. Evidence suggests that the Truman administration's efforts--in which Rusk was most certainly engaged--to split the world's foremost communist powers, had become, in the words of one historian, "obvious." In 1949, the head of Chinese intelligence noted perceptively that the United States was attempting to convince China to "echo the Tito clique" in an effort to "undermine Sino-Soviet friendship." While Mao's reaction to such observations is not easily discerned, it is certain that Chinese-American attitudes toward one another were immeasurably hardened by the Korean War.⁴³

⁴² Memorandum of Conversation, May 21, 1950, Folder: May, 1951, Box 68, Papers of Dean Acheson, Truman Library; Rusk, As I Saw It, 173-174.

⁴³ Memorandum of Conversation, January 7, 1952, Folder: January, 1952, Box 70, Papers of Dean Acheson, Truman Library; Rusk memorandum, FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 1574; Chang, Friends and Enemies, 79; Westad, ed., Brothers in Arms, 170-171.

Korea: "Neither Peace nor War"

On Saturday evening, June 24, 1950, Dean and Virginia Rusk were having dinner at the home of journalist Joseph Alsop when Rusk received a phone call informing him that North Korean forces were invading South Korea "on a broad front." At the conclusion of World War II, Rusk had been instrumental in selecting the 38th parallel as a temporary line dividing Soviet forces in the northern part of the peninsula from American troops in the south. By 1950, the division had solidified, separating Korea between the communist governed north, led by Kim Il Sung, and a non-communist, nominally democratic regime headed by Syngman Rhee in the south. Now Rusk's attention was once more focused on the peninsula as he and fellow dinner guest, Secretary of the Army Frank Pace, excused themselves and rushed to their respective offices, leaving the remaining Alsop visitors to speculate on the nature of the crisis resulting in the pair's hurried departure.⁴⁴

Rusk spent the next three days in a flurry of meetings at the State Department and Blair House (presidential residence during White House renovation). Certain of the necessity of opposing and deterring perceived communist aggression, concerned for the security of Japan, and mindful of the domestic political furor over the success of the communist revolution in China, President Truman and his advisors decided to intervene in defense of South Korea with American ground and air forces. Many in the Truman government assumed that the North Korean attack had been ordered by Moscow and/ or Beijing, but it is now clear that the plan for invasion originated with Kim Il Sung and was

⁴⁴ Oral History M, 3-4, Dean Rusk Collection.

approved by Stalin and Mao, who, it is likely, were reluctant to support a venture that might prompt American intervention on the Asian mainland but were compelled by ideological reasons to aid a fellow communist power in the attempted unification of the Korean peninsula. Worried that the invasion of South Korea might constitute merely the opening phase of a regional communist offensive in Asia, Washington ordered its Seventh Fleet to interpose between Taiwan and mainland China and increased aid to the Philippines and Indochina. At Rusk's urging, the United States also sought and obtained a United Nations Security Council resolution authorizing the use of military force in Korea, thus providing the Truman administration with international legal legitimacy for its actions. Rusk was elated at the decision of the United Nations, and he believed that it would enhance the organization's credibility.⁴⁵

Initially the military situation in Korea was precarious, with United Nations coalition forces routed and increasingly isolated in the southeastern tip of the peninsula near the coastal city of Pusan. However, the reversal of military fortune that ensued with the success of General Douglas MacArthur's brilliantly conceived amphibious landing at Inchon on September 15, 1950 and the subsequent United Nations counteroffensive gave increased emphasis to a plan that the State Department had considered since July: the pursuit of North Korean forces beyond the 38th parallel. Rusk and John Foster Dulles

⁴⁵ FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 227; Oral History M, 1-10, Dean Rusk Collection; Westad, ed., Brothers In Arms, 12-15; Sergei Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War (Stanford, 1993), 130-167. For analysis of the American decision to intervene in Korea, see Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War, Volumes I & II (Princeton, 1981 & 1990); William Stueck, The Road to Confrontation (Chapel Hill, 1981) and The Korean War: An International History (Princeton, 1995); as well as Charles Dobbs, The Unwanted Symbol (Kent, 1981).

were major proponents of crossing into North Korea, an action that they argued would strike a punitive and deterring blow against communist aggression while uniting the peninsula under non-communist government and enhancing the credibility of the containment doctrine. Militarily, it also represented the logical extension of the offensive momentum newly acquired by United Nations forces.⁴⁶

As early as July 5, 1950, Rusk began urging Acheson to "press the Korean issue through to a successful conclusion." During August, Rusk and Dulles had managed to muster considerable support within the State Department for crossing into North Korea, in spite of prescient dissent offered by George Kennan and China policy hand, Edmund Clubb, who averred that United Nations operations above the 38th parallel were not in America's interest and held the promise of calamity. Rusk continued to advocate his position throughout September, emphasizing that if North Korean forces were left viable above the 38th parallel, it would constitute a "most indecisive conclusion in Korea." By the end of the month, the Defense Department and President Truman had given their blessings, and MacArthur was ordered to proceed northward, despite misgivings concerning Chinese intervention. The Truman government was concerned about communist response to sustained military operations along the Chinese and Soviet borders and had received warnings, such as those from Indian Ambassador to China, K.M. Pannikar, of Chinese military action if United States forces operated in North Korea. Such messages were considered either unreliable or diplomatic posturing on the

⁴⁶ Rusk, As I Saw It, 166-167; Memorandum of Conversation, September 23, 1950, FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 759-761.

part of the Chinese. Truman's advisors were aware of Chinese logistical support of North Korea, but the administration was contemptuous of Chinese military effectiveness and assured itself that the prospect of full-scale intervention seemed improbable. For his part, Rusk believed that Mao was too preoccupied with consolidating his hold on China to risk major forays into North Korea.⁴⁷

The possibility of Chinese involvement in the conflict was on the minds of Truman and his advisors in October as they journeyed across the Pacific to Wake Island in order to consult with MacArthur in a meeting designed to allow the president to discuss strategy and reap political benefit from association with the hugely popular American general. For a portion of the flight, Rusk and others wore the outlandish Hawaiian shirts that Truman had given them in Oahu and declared *de rigueur*. In the general meeting between Truman and MacArthur, the commander declared that the war in Korea would soon be over and dismissed concerns regarding Chinese intervention, predicting that if it did occur, American forces would inflict "the greatest slaughter." In a subsequent private meeting with Rusk, MacArthur again indicated his skepticism regarding the chances of Chinese involvement, stating that the Chinese "must be greatly embarrassed by the predicament in which they now find themselves." Any lingering fears of Chinese intervention having been assuaged by MacArthur, the Truman entourage

⁴⁷ Rusk to Acheson, July 5, 1950, FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 303; Memorandum of Conversation, August 25, 1950, *ibid.*, 646-648; Memorandum of Conversation, September 23, 1950, *ibid.*, 759-761; Rusk, As I Saw It, 167-168. For discussion of the American decision to enter North Korea, see James Matray, "Truman's Plan for Victory," Journal of American History, September, 1979, 314-333; Rosemary Foot, The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950-1953 (Ithaca, 1985); and Offner, Another Such Victory.

departed Wake Island, the president deeming the meeting "a most satisfactory conference."⁴⁸

Although misjudged by the Truman administration, the threat of Chinese intervention was real and imminent. Mao apparently considered some form of direct Chinese military involvement in Korea inevitable and had begun contingency planning at least as early as August, 1950. After the success of the United Nations counteroffensive, Stalin judged major Chinese effort on the peninsula a necessity, but Mao was hesitant. Although cognizant of the potential threat to China posed by large numbers of American troops in North Korea, he was wary of major military confrontation with the United States and probably concerned that such conflict might increase Chinese dependence on the Soviets. As late as October 2, Mao was offering excuses for Chinese inaction, explaining to Stalin that Chinese intervention would not take place because "our entire plan for peaceful reconstruction will be completely ruined, and many people in the country will be dissatisfied." Direct appeals from Stalin--backed by the promise of Soviet air support immediately and ground troops later if China suffered prolonged defeat--led Mao to acquiesce to intervention, which began in earnest in late November.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Rusk, As I Saw It, 168; Rusk's Addendum to Notes On Wake Conference, FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 961; Memorandum of Conversation, Wake Island Meeting, October 14, 1950, *ibid.*, 960.

⁴⁹ Westad, ed., Brothers In Arms, 12-15; Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, Uncertain Partners, 168-175. See also Chen Jian, China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-Soviet Confrontation (New York, 1994); and Allen Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War (Stanford, 1960).

With the entry of hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops into the conflict, it was painfully apparent to the Truman administration that it faced, in General MacArthur's phrase, "a new war." Rusk did not fault MacArthur for failing to predict Chinese intervention, but he joined other critics of the general in reasoning that the communist offensive might have been blunted if MacArthur had not separated his Eighth Army and X Corps forces along a wide front as he advanced northward toward the Yalu river boundary separating China and Korea. He also rationalized to himself and America's European allies that "the military disaster in Korea should not be on our conscience since these events are merely the results of well laid plans and were not provoked by our actions." Additionally, according to Rusk, the Truman administration's misjudgement regarding Chinese intentions resulted not from flawed reasoning but from its restraint; the administration had deprived itself of valuable intelligence regarding the build up of Chinese forces in Manchuria because of concern that reconnaissance overflights might incite Chinese/ Soviet hostility.⁵⁰

United Nations forces were in full retreat southward down the Korean peninsula by early December, and Rusk performed a function of singular significance: rallying a dejected Truman administration to resist the strong temptation to withdraw from Korea. Although he admitted the wisdom of considering contingency plans for withdrawal and agreed that the United States should attempt to achieve a cease-fire agreement, Rusk believed that United Nations forces must "find a place to hold in Korea--and hold it," thus

⁵⁰ FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 1242-1249; Memorandum For File, Undersecretary's Meeting, November 29, 1950, 2, Folder: 4 Undersecretary Meetings, Box 13, Schoenbaum Files, Dean Rusk Collection; Oral History J, 21, Dean Rusk Collection.

stabilizing the military situation and denying "a success to communist aggression" without widening the conflagration to general war with China and the Soviet Union. With many of Truman's military and civilian advisors demoralized and considering immediate withdrawal from Korea, Rusk spent the last month of 1950 in a dogged and successful effort to change their minds.⁵¹

One of Rusk's first tasks was to calm America's nervous allies, some of which had begun to question the wisdom of United States policy. This he did on November 30, explaining to a large group of ambassadors from various nations that United Nations forces were offering firm resistance to the Chinese advance. Although MacArthur had divided his forces "as a series of fingers" after crossing the 38th parallel, "when the Chinese offensive started the fingers were withdrawn from the western part [of North Korea] to form a fist." He also assured the group that the American government was doing everything in its power "to prevent the entrance of the Chinese Army into the Korean War from touching off World War III." He later offered a warning, most likely intended for NATO allies, to the Swedish ambassador that if the United States found itself "alone in the Pacific and forced to withdraw," a "large segment" of the American public might be tempted to forego commitments in Europe.⁵²

In a meeting with the military at the Pentagon on December 3, Rusk continued to state his arguments against withdrawal. Concerned about the possibility of Chinese

⁵¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 169-171; Notes Prepared for the Secretary of State, December 1, 1950, FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 1281-1282.

⁵² Memorandum of Conversation, November 30, 1950, FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 1262-1265; Memorandum of Conversation, December 4, 1950, *ibid.*, 1359-1360.

expansion beyond Korea, Rusk averred that lack of resolve in the present crisis could lead to French abandonment of Indochina. In a statement reflective of the duality of his ideology, he declared that the United States stood in danger of sacrificing both its ideals and the pragmatic means of applying them--"our principles and our troops"--and he warned that the solidarity of the United Nations alliance was linked to the "integrity of our foreign policy." "There must be no reward for aggression in Korea;" if the United States achieved a cease fire it should agree formally only to a line at the 38th parallel, thus returning the political boundaries on the peninsula to the status quo ante bellum.⁵³

The next day, Acheson opened a State Department meeting of his key advisors with his opinion that the administration was "infected...by a spirit of defeatism emanating from headquarters in Tokyo," meaning MacArthur. Rusk enjoined that in his recent talks with the military, they had seemed "extremely dejected," and that he had been thinking how to best muster "our best effort and spirit together to put up the best possible fight in Korea." "Great issues" of American prestige and credibility were at stake, and the United States must stand firm. Rusk invoked the Allied experience in World War II, reminding the group that the coalition had persevered against seemingly overwhelming odds. The same innate optimism and unswerving belief in the exceptionalism of American institutions--in this case the military--that were in part responsible for Rusk's earlier advocacy of crossing into North Korea now convinced him that the United States military could consolidate its forces, deny the communists access to South Korea, and inflict

⁵³ Memorandum of Conversation, December 3, 1950, FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 1327.

"great cost" upon the Chinese if it could regain its confidence and sense of perspective.

He even proposed that General MacArthur be removed from command in Korea, a suggestion that Acheson considered "radical" at the time but one that Rusk would continue to advocate, especially after he judged the general's public comments about the need for widening the war to China as rank insubordination and intolerable military meddling in domestic politics. Regarding firm resolve in Korea, Rusk was in rare alignment with George Kennan, although they had differed previously over the wisdom of United Nations forces moving beyond the 38th parallel.⁵⁴

Acheson enthusiastically endorsed the reasoning of his two subordinates and sent them to share their thoughts with Secretary of Defense Marshall, who proved sympathetic to their ideas. Rusk later reinforced his position with Acheson by writing that it was important that any future American moves toward cease-fire and withdrawal be made "honorably." Normally unfazed by Rusk's moralistic homilies regarding the sanctity of international law and national honor, Acheson seemed genuinely moved by Rusk's arguments and used them to help convince Truman of the need to prevent forced withdrawal from Korea, at one point stating, "Mr. President, they [the Chinese] must not do that to the United States."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Acheson, Present At The Creation, 476-477; Rusk, As I Saw It, 170; Memorandum by Lucius Battle, December 4, 1950, FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 1345.

⁵⁵ Acheson, Present At The Creation, 476-477; Rusk to Acheson, December 21, 1950, FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 1589; Memorandum of Conversation, December 27, 1950, *ibid.*, 1601; Oral History J, 21, Dean Rusk Collection.

Rusk favored making a stand in Korea, but he was opposed to following MacArthur's prescriptions for doing so, which called for the bombing of Chinese cities, along with airfields in Manchuria, and the blockading of Chinese ports. Rusk thought that such actions would do little to change the military situation in Korea itself and might bring war not just with China but the Soviet Union as well. Further, he considered the use of Jiang's Nationalist troops in Korea militarily impractical and politically unwise. Although he wondered if nuclear weapons would be available to "play any role" in Asia "in the event of World War III," ultimately he was against their use in Korea. Accordingly, Rusk spent much of 1951 working to stabilize the fighting along the 38th parallel and attempting to move toward a cease-fire arrangement based on that boundary, all the while serving as an important voice of restraint determined to prevent further military involvement on the part of China and/ or the Soviet Union. The Chinese intervention had been a grave mistake that led Rusk to favor waging a war of limited political and military objectives, rendering him wary of China's intentions and respectful of its potential for future regional expansion.⁵⁶

Indeed, although the Korean War had broad ramifications for American society, such as the militarization of the containment doctrine and its application to Asia as well as the solidification of the national security state at home, it had specific implications for Rusk that prefigured his approach to the conflict in Vietnam during the 1960s. Rusk's Southern moralism, with its emphasis on the importance of honor and reputation, led him

⁵⁶ Rusk, As I Saw It, 167-177; Rusk memorandum, FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 1574-1576.

to conceptualize the war in Korea (and later in Vietnam) as instigated by acts of state sponsored aggression that posed a grave threat to the credibility--and thus effectiveness--of American foreign policy. Rusk posited to Acheson that "to turn away from the issue of [Korean and Chinese] aggression would almost certainly start a chain of defeatism and disillusionment both nationally and internationally which would be difficult to halt." The United States had an important commitment to South Korea, and if it were abandoned "many other present and potential allies will get a lasting [negative] impression of our reliability." It was important for the United States to retain military viability, remain steadfast, and not "act like a defeated nation," for to do so would only enhance Chinese prestige, giving "great impetus to Chinese aggression elsewhere and to the consolidation of communism in China itself."⁵⁷

Moreover, and significantly, Rusk's conception and advocacy of limited warfare after the Chinese intervention resonated deeply in the substance and form of his counsel during Vietnam, in which he advised President Lyndon Johnson that the United States needed to maintain the viability of South Vietnam as well as demonstrate to North Vietnam the futility of its efforts while avoiding conflict with its communist allies. To Rusk, the military and political realities of Chinese involvement in Korea left the United States with little room for maneuver. America had to decide between total victory, complete withdrawal from Korea, or his preferred choice and the only option he deemed feasible: "a middle way between appeasement and full war," in which the United States worked to "make it in the interest of the Chinese Communists to accept some stabilization

⁵⁷ Rusk memorandum, FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 1574.

by making it so costly for them that they could not afford not to accept." Rusk would later frame Johnson's options in Vietnam in much the same manner, choosing the "middle way" as he had in Korea, but as he noted to his mother in a January, 1951 letter, such a path led to an ambiguous destination that was "neither peace nor war" and was fraught with difficulty:

We are in a very complicated period just now. It's neither peace nor war; which makes it hard for people to understand. If we can get a little more time we'll have more strength and, we devoutly hope, strength enough to convince Joe Stalin and his cronies that they might just as well change their plans. It's the big chance for peace--and peace continues to be our main purpose. Each month of 1951 which passes without either a major war or a major defeat will be cause for thanksgiving, and January is almost gone. Don't worry too much. Things are not as bad as they have been sometimes, nor as bad as they could be, even though they're not as good as we'd like to see them....I never dreamed when I was sitting in a cotton basket in Cherokee County that the world could be as full of trouble and that I could ever have the job of trying to straighten some of it out. Sometimes, growing chickens in Cherokee with a Packard in the barn, seems like a very good idea!

As Rusk struggled with the Korean War, he also made plans to leave the Truman administration and begin a new job as head of the Rockefeller Foundation.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, December 27, 1950, FRUS 1950, Volume VII, 1603; Memorandum of Conversation, December 3, 1950, *ibid.*, 1327; Dean Rusk to Elizabeth Rusk, January 27, 1951, Folder 2: Dean to Parents, Box 1, Parks Rusk Collection, Richard Russell Library.

CHAPTER SIX

SECRETARY RUSK

The Rockefeller Foundation: "An Ideal Job"

The Rockefeller Foundation was a major philanthropic organization with yearly income of \$26.7 million, and Rusk had been selected a Rockefeller trustee in 1948. Rusk later recalled that the "hardest thing about being a Rockefeller trustee was learning not to blink whenever someone mentioned a million dollars." Fellow trustee John Foster Dulles pushed for his selection as president in 1951, and surmising that Truman would not stand for reelection as well as seeking to improve his family's financial situation, Rusk accepted the position, beginning his duties in 1952.¹

Dean Rusk considered his appointment as president of the Rockefeller Foundation a welcome change from government service. His salary increased dramatically, and his office was located in prestigious Rockefeller Center in Manhattan. In addition, he was able to move to an affluent suburb in Scarsdale, New York and now had more time to spend with his family. And although the pace of his life was much more relaxed, the nature of Rusk's work remained stimulating, allowing him to make new contacts in the financial community while maintaining his ties to the American foreign policy establishment. Although Rusk at times found it difficult to reject grant applications--his standard method was to reply "We have nothing but praise for your proposal"--he later

¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 178; Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War, 240.

described his foundation position as "an ideal job" that "brought fresh adventure" on a daily basis.²

Rusk tended to delegate authority relating to administrative matters, freeing him to spend most of his time dealing with the broader outlines of foundation policy. One of Rusk's first initiatives was to alter the nature of Rockefeller trustees' responsibilities, giving them a greater hand in decisions. Previously, the trustees' role had been relatively minuscule, and the group usually met only to decide on requests for grants valued at over \$500,000. But Rusk insisted that the trustees function as "working trustees," and he required them to approve every grant over \$10,000 and met with each trustee annually to discuss foundation policy.³

Rusk also charted a new course for the direction of the Rockefeller Foundation's philanthropic work, directing much of the institution's effort towards improving health, education, and agriculture in the Developing World. Specifically, Rusk focused on providing funding for leadership training, family planning education, and research regarding the production of low cost, high yield crops. He later was pleased to note that the foundation's programs contributed to the onset of the "Green Revolution," an influential increase in agricultural research and productivity in the Developing World during the 1960s and 1970s.⁴

² Rusk, As I Saw It, 186, 189-190.

³ Ibid., 187-190.

⁴ Ibid., 182-185.

The Rockefeller Foundation provided the ideal vantage point from which to observe and influence American foreign policy. Recruited by George Ball and David Rockefeller to join the "Bilderburg Group" in 1955, he was also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Both influential organizations met regularly to study and discuss major economic and foreign policy issues, and their membership consisted of some of the most important figures shaping American and international diplomacy. Along with studies designed to benefit the Developing World, Rusk funded and participated in seminars and written projects devoted to United States foreign policy.⁵

Mr. Secretary

As John Kennedy began the process of selecting his secretary of state, Dean Rusk's name kept popping up as the president elect asked pillars of the foreign policy establishment, such as Dean Acheson and Robert Lovett, for their recommendations. Kennedy associates had pressed him to be "his own secretary of state," and Rusk was described as the "perfect number two"-- experienced and resourceful yet loyal and properly deferential. Although not Kennedy's first choice, Rusk became ascendant as others were eliminated for various reasons. Rusk was shocked at his selection, but he readily accepted, and his wife made plans to move the family from Scarsdale to Washington.

⁵ James Bill, George Ball: Behind the Scenes in U.S. Foreign Policy (New Haven, 1997), 61.

The sense of normal familial relations the Rusks had enjoyed in New York evaporated when they moved to the nation's capital. Rusk resumed the long work days he had kept during the Truman years, but now protocol demanded that Virginia Rusk take on a variety of semi-official and official duties. Rusk estimated that "Virginia and I ate at home with the family about once a month during my eight years as secretary of state, and the children essentially grew up on their own."⁶

Once settled in at the State Department, Rusk adopted a management style based on George Marshall's. Like his mentor, he delegated heavily and expected initiative and deference from subordinates. As an administrator, Rusk was a minimalist disinclined toward sweeping change. To avoid press leaks and unwanted debate, Rusk preferred to discuss policy alone with the presidents he served, a practice that made him appear uninformed, reticent, and apathetic. In fact, as this study demonstrates, Rusk was not a passive advisor, he had often been a strong advocate for his positions in the Truman years, and he continued to be so as secretary of state, despite his preferred venue. However, Rusk's old fashioned, conservative style fed false but increasingly popular perceptions of the secretary as rigid regarding the substance of policy. Rusk's moniker on the Washington cocktail circuit was "the Old Dino," and he was the subject of almost constant speculation regarding his dismissal by Kennedy in favor of a more activist, assertive secretary. Such rumors followed him constantly, even during the Cuban missile crisis, prompting Rusk to exclaim when confronted by a reporter with such a story, "What a time for someone to come out with this scurrilous gossip." According to McGeorge

⁶ Rusk, As I Saw It, 206.

Bundy, such thinking about Rusk was misguided; "This reticence thing is worth five cents of complaint compared to the ninety-five percent fact of absolute loyalty and disinterestedness."⁷

Although Kennedy seems to have been initially perplexed by Rusk's modus operandi, as their relationship matured, he came to value his secretary of state's judgement, discretion, and commitment to his administration. Rusk "liked Kennedy immensely," and the day after the president's assassination, Rusk's daughter, Peggy, found her guarded and undemonstrative father weeping alone in the living room of their home.⁸

Rusk's influence increased dramatically under Lyndon Johnson. The pair shared a background rooted in Southern poverty, and both had been cast as outsiders in court life at Kennedy's Camelot. Johnson was portrayed as a hucksterish "Uncle Corn Pone" figure given to crude aphorisms, while Rusk seemed an island of staid ineptitude surrounded by brilliant, energetic New Frontier dynamos.

Unlike Kennedy, Johnson went out of his way to cultivate strong ties to Rusk. In March, 1964, Johnson encouraged Rusk regarding rumors of his resignation or dismissal: "...speculation has been that you're more stronger [sic], and have more responsibility than ever before. That's the speculation that I've heard and what I've tried to contribute to." As the Johnson administration progressed, the president came to rely on Rusk more heavily as other officials resigned and as the pair faced the many difficult challenges of

⁷ Ibid., 201-228; Transcript of Telephone Conversation, Rusk to Childs, October 23, 1962, Rusk Phone Log, Russell Library; Oral History CCC, 12, Dean Rusk Collection.

⁸ Rusk, As I Saw It, 199.

international relations during the 1960s.⁹

Europe

Much of Rusk's efforts at European diplomacy were directed at forging a closer bond between the United States and NATO members. Kennedy and Rusk conceived of a "Grand Design" for Europe based upon enhanced economic unity effected by the establishment of a European Common Market free trade collaboration. It was hoped that political cohesion would flow from closer economic ties, and Rusk traveled extensively through Europe during his tenure in an attempt to engender a feeling of unity within the Atlantic community. Unfortunately for the Kennedy administration, its Grand Design was hindered by its inherently contradictory objectives of fostering greater economic prosperity while building a European community of allied nations moving forward with common purpose; affluence tended to breed assertiveness and independence--not unity. The European alliance was also hindered by French leader Charles de Gaulle, whose imperious attitude and attempts to assert French leadership of postwar Europe strained Franco-American relations greatly. De Gaulle insisted on developing a French nuclear arsenal independent of American/ NATO control, and his opposition to the Kennedy administration's Multilateral Nuclear Force (MLF) proposal for the establishment of a joint NATO nuclear capability effectively killed the initiative. Finally, the French leader pulled his nation out of NATO in 1966 with the demand that all American forces be withdrawn from France as soon as possible, prompting Rusk to inquire whether de

⁹ Beschloss, Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 292.

Gaulle's directive included the removal of American cemeteries.¹⁰

To Rusk, the main impediment to a more unified Europe was the Soviet Union, and he found Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's posturing regarding Berlin particularly unsettling and irksome. The divided city of Berlin's status as a flashpoint symbol of American resolve against perceived Soviet expansion had only increased since the crisis of 1948. In 1958, Khrushchev had demanded that the United States vacate West Berlin or face the prospect of the Soviets signing a separate treaty with East Germany, which was then expected to restrict Western access to the city. Khrushchev belligerently renewed his demands in a Vienna summit meeting with Kennedy in June, 1961, shocking the Kennedy administration toward a massive conventional military build-up. In August, the Soviets began erecting a wall along the East-West boundary in Berlin, which after initial trepidation regarding Khrushchev's motives, Rusk came to regard as a powerful Western propaganda device.

Rusk's approach to the Berlin issue was to emphasize American determination to remain in the city but also "talk the problem to death" in a seemingly endless series of negotiations. The longer the United States and the Soviet Union discussed the problem, the lesser the likelihood of hostilities. Discussion regarding Berlin became dangerously acrimonious when Rusk visited the Soviet Union in 1963. Khrushchev asked Rusk, "Why should I believe that you Americans would fight a nuclear war over Berlin?" Rusk replied, "Mr. Chairman you will have to take into account the possibility that we Americans are just goddamn fools." Rusk's fondest hope regarding the Berlin issue was

¹⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 271.

to be able to hand the problem over to his successor, having avoided violent conflict, which he did in 1969.¹¹

Festering Berlin issues illuminated the need for fresh initiatives toward the Soviet Union, and beginning in 1963, the Kennedy administration began to pursue detente with Khrushchev's regime. Hoping to manipulate Sino-Soviet tension to America's benefit, Kennedy attempted to use mutual antipathy of China as a means of engendering a more positive Soviet-American relationship. Initial thawing took place with the signing of the 1963 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty barring atmospheric nuclear tests. And when the Johnson administration began to lean toward better relations with China as a means of gaining leverage with the Soviet Union, the Russians proved amenable, signing ground breaking disarmament agreements, such as the Weapons in Outer Space Treaty in 1966 and the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968, and they also examined issues related to anti-ballistic missile defense systems. Although Rusk issued a stern warning to the Soviets to withdraw when they crushed a Czechoslovakian independence movement in 1968, the intervention did not seriously mar the emerging detente. Unfortunately, improved Washington-Moscow relations were not underway when the Soviets placed missiles in Latin America in 1962.

Latin America

The Kennedy and Johnson administrations' policy toward Latin America--a region where the relatively effortless exertion of United States influence had become second

¹¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 228.

nature--combined traditional patterns of interventionism with new approaches designed to build political trust and foster socioeconomic development through programs such as the Alliance for Progress. Much of Rusk's focus was on Cuba, a nation perceived as a communist toehold in the region as well as the epicenter of erupting crises.

Almost immediately after taking office, Rusk was briefed on an Eisenhower administration plan to overthrow the communist government of Fidel Castro, ascendant in Cuba since 1959, through the covert use of a fourteen hundred man brigade of anti-Castro Cuban forces trained and supplied by the CIA. The plan called for insertion of the force at the Bahia de Cochinos, or Bay of Pigs, and it was assumed that once landed, the brigade would proceed inland, its presence prompting anti-Castro resistance that would gain momentum until the regime was toppled. If the brigade encountered heavy difficulty, it would disperse into the nearby Escambray mountains and conduct guerrilla harassment of the Castro government. The removal of Castro seemed to offer the chance to preempt the spread of communism throughout Latin America and carried the added attraction of accruing domestic political capital for the Kennedy administration.¹²

Rusk was immediately skeptical because he believed that the operation had no justification under international law. Additionally, his World War II experience as chief of war plans in CBI caused him to conclude that the brigade's cover would be violated almost immediately and that its size was too small to accomplish its "large objectives;" the operation "did not stand a snowball's chance in hell of success." Rusk later recalled

¹² For analysis of the Bay of Pigs operation, see Haynes Johnson, The Bay of Pigs (New York, 1964); Peter Wyden, Bay of Pigs (New York, 1979); and Lawrence Freedman, Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam (New York, 2000).

that, true to form, he expressed his opposition privately to President Kennedy and raised no doubts "explicitly" in discussions with the president's advisors. This conflicts with the recollection of a key CIA planner as well as the documentary record. In an oral history, Marine Colonel Jack Hawkins, a CIA Bay of Pigs operation manager, stated that during briefings he attended, "Mr. Rusk spoke out more than any of the other cabinet members and he was adamantly opposed to this operation and the use of any aircraft whatever." And National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy recorded that Rusk stated the operation could have "grave effects" on United States diplomatic posture in Latin America and the United Nations and that the secretary "made clear...that U.S. policy should not be driven to drastic and irrevocable choice by the urgencies, however real, of a single battalion of men."¹³

The support of the operation by the CIA, Joints Chiefs of Staff, and most of Kennedy's other advisors outweighed the new secretary of state's reservations, and Kennedy approved the plan with the caveat that if the brigade faltered, it would not be given substantial combat support by the American military. On the other hand, if the invasion succeeded, the new government would be "self-legitimizing" and worthy of American recognition by virtue of its victory. The operation began on April 15, 1961, and as Rusk feared, it failed miserably within a few days, greatly embarrassing the Kennedy administration. Castro's military was alerted to the attack almost immediately; some of

¹³ Rusk, *As I Saw It*, 207-211; Peter Kornbluh, ed., *Bay of Pigs Declassified* (New York, 1998), 261-262; Memorandum of Discussion on Cuba, January 28, 1961, Box 35, National Security File, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston; Memorandum of Discussion on Cuba, February 8, 1961, *ibid*.

the operation's ships and planes were sunk before they could be utilized, and most surviving brigade members were ultimately killed or captured by the Cubans. Once the plan had been approved, Rusk closed ranks behind it, at times pointing out the futility of further dissent to those expressing doubts about the operation. He also worked to limit knowledge of American involvement, recommending to President Kennedy the cancellation of supporting airstrikes from CIA planes based in Nicaragua, preferring that air support be conducted from airstrips established by the brigade within Cuba.¹⁴

After the operation, the Kennedy administration publicly took responsibility for the fiasco but privately conducted an investigation into the reasons for its failure that criticized the CIA and resulted in the forced retirement of its director, Allen Dulles. During the post-Bay of Pigs malaise, Rusk worked hard to promote unity and support for the administration among fellow cabinet members, an effort appreciated by Kennedy. Later, at a social event while on a trip to Britain with President Kennedy, Rusk was taken aside by Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, who put his arm around him and said, "Rusk, I have got to know you better. Jack [Kennedy] tells me that you were opposed to the Bay of Pigs, but after it happened, you acted as though you'd planned it yourself."¹⁵

The failure of the Bay of Pigs operation--a "first-class disaster" in Rusk's opinion--precipitated intensified United States effort to isolate Castro's regime diplomatically through the regional collective security body, the Organization of American States (OAS), and it served only to increase the Kennedy administration's

¹⁴ Rusk, As I Saw It, 215; Kornbluh, Bay of Pigs Declassified, 303-307.

¹⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 213.

desire to topple the Cuban government through covert methods. Most covert efforts against Castro fell under the auspices of the CIA's "Operation Mongoose," an elaborate pastiche of clandestine activity, including sabotage, harassment, and propaganda, that ran from 1962 to 1965.¹⁶

The most secret and ultimately controversial aspects of Mongoose were assassination attempts against Castro and other Cuban leaders, some of which involved use of American organized crime and proved as ineffective as they were utterly bizarre. Such activity was revealed during congressional investigations in 1975, and the extent of President Kennedy's and his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy's, complicity in assassination plots remains uncertain. For his part, Rusk denied knowledge of such plans against Castro or other foreign leaders, as did Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. Assuming that the Kennedy brothers did authorize assassination, it seems incredible that they would withhold such information from the secretaries of state and defense, but it is plausible given their adherence to a *modus operandi* that often compartmentalized information and communication within the administration. Further, if Rusk had known of assassination attempts, he likely would have found them illegal, morally repugnant, and perhaps impractical.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., 215.

¹⁷ Ibid., 555. In Robert Kennedy and His Times (New York, 1978), 525-532, Arthur Schlesinger maintains that an aggressive and unmanageable rogue CIA was the sole source of assassination plots; when the Kennedy brothers learned of them, they ordered them stopped. In a more recent study, Kennedy's Wars, 150-152, Lawrence Freedman agrees that the Kennedys rejected the assassination option. While judging evidence of responsibility for attempted assassinations inconclusive in Kennedy's Quest for Victory (New York, 1989), 123-155, Thomas Paterson reasons that at the very least,

While Rusk's awareness of assassination efforts is unclear, it is a certainty that he knew of the sabotage and harassment components of Mongoose. However, evidence suggests that he eventually became skeptical of their effectiveness and wary of their potential for developing their own self-justifying momentum. Early in the Kennedy administration, Rusk sought to reign in the free wheeling CIA, and obtained from the president an executive order placing all United States activities within another country under the authority of the American ambassador assigned there. Later, in June, 1963, CIA Director John McCone met with Rusk to seek the secretary's blessing for a more integrated program of covert operations against Cuba that implied greater CIA latitude and "could not be put on a stop and go basis if it could be expected to achieve its goal." The program would still fall under oversight review, but the administration would need to allow it "to flow forward as planned without requiring each operation to be justified in political and economic terms." In a memorandum analyzing the meeting, McCone stated, "I have the impression that Secretary Rusk is not enthusiastically behind the CIA program.... I insisted on the meeting with Rusk because I sensed his reservations and, although he approved the program, it was obvious he did so reluctantly...." Although many Kennedy administration officials worried that the failure of Bay of Pigs plan made the United States appear weak to the Soviet Union, the operation and subsequent Mongoose activity probably struck Nikita Khrushchev's government as evidence of American aggressiveness toward Cuba, serving as partial motivation for the emplacement

President Kennedy created a climate in which assassination was freely debated, and in President Kennedy (New York, 1993), 263-267, Richard Reeves argues that although assassination plots might not have originated with Kennedy, he knew of them.

of Soviet missiles on the island in 1962.¹⁸

On Tuesday, October 16, 1962, President Kennedy and most of his advisors learned that analysis of CIA reconnaissance overflights of Cuba conducted during the previous two days had determined that the Soviet Union was in the process of placing medium range ballistic missiles on the island, an action that was the main precipitant of the most dangerous crisis of the Cold War. Soviet motivation for such a provocative move has been much debated by historians but seems to have revolved around three main objectives, the first two probably weighing more heavily in Khrushchev's reasoning: 1) use missiles in Cuba to help correct the strategic nuclear imbalance, tipped in America's favor, that led him to shift the focus of Soviet-American rivalry to the Developing World--where the Soviets could compete for influence on a more equal footing--and then engage in an elaborate rhetorical game of bluster and deception in an effort to conceal Soviet nuclear inferiority; 2) manipulate American posture toward Berlin, using the Cuban missiles as leverage, a motivation that was assumed by the Kennedy administration during its missile crisis deliberations; and 3) provide Cuba with an effective deterrent against American invasion.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., 555-556; Memorandum for the Record, June 22, 1963, FRUS 1961-1963, Volume XI, 842-843; Memorandum for the Record, June 24, 1963, Ibid., 844-845; Gaddis, We Now Know, 260-266.

¹⁹ Analysis of Soviet motivation is found in Alexander Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble" Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964 (New York, 1997), 166-215; Gaddis, We Now Know, 260-266; and Robert Divine, ed., The Cuban Missile Crisis (New York, 1988), 101-150.

In initial meetings between President Kennedy and his principal advisors--a group that would later be designated the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm)--Rusk uttered a statement that would set the tone for the administration's handling of the crisis, emphasizing that the United States must achieve the difficult objective of effecting removal of the missiles but do so in a manner that would avoid nuclear conflict: "I think we'll be facing a situation that could well lead to general war. Now with that we have an obligation to do what must be done, but to do it in a way that gives everybody a chance to pull away from it before it gets too hard." To Rusk, as well as the president and most of his advisors, removal of the missiles was imperative. Despite concern regarding any nuclear advantage that the missiles in Cuba might provide the Soviets, the administration conceived of the crisis primarily as a political problem of perception, auguring damaging repercussions that threatened to disrupt America's relations with allies and nonaligned nations as well as imperiling Kennedy's domestic political position. Further, Rusk sounded a theme inherent in his Southern moralism and dominant in his approach to foreign policy: damaged United States credibility would prompt further aggressive and dangerous moves on the part of America's rivals. In a meeting on October 18, he stated:

I think also we have to think of the effect on the Soviets if we were to do nothing. I would suppose that they would consider this a major backdown and that this would free their hands for almost any kind of adventure they might want to try out in other parts of the world. If we are unable to face up to a situation like Cuba against this kind of threat, then I think they would be greatly encouraged to go adventuring and would feel they've had made it as far as intimidation of the United States is concerned.²⁰

²⁰ Transcription of recording of Meeting on Cuban Missile Crisis, 11:50am, October 16, 1962 in Ernest May and Philip Zelikow, The Kennedy Tapes (Cambridge,

Once consensus regarding the necessity of the missiles' removal had been achieved, the next step was consideration of methods. Rusk initially favored a limited, "surgical" American air strike aimed at destroying the missile sites, and he also stressed the importance of using the United Nations to give appropriate legal legitimacy to United States actions in Cuba, providing the American people and their allies in the world a credible "theory of the case" that they could support. However, by October 20, consideration of Soviet responses to United States military action gave Rusk pause, and he joined Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in advocating an American naval quarantine of Cuba as a measured action designed to prevent further arms shipments to the island as well as mitigate escalation of the crisis. Quarantine was a deliberately ambiguous term Rusk suggested because he judged it less inflammatory and easier to manipulate than blockade.²¹

On October 22, President Kennedy gave a televised address in which he announced the presence of missiles in Cuba and the initiation of the quarantine. He also warned that the United States would consider any missile launched from Cuba as an attack on America itself that would result in full nuclear retaliation upon the Soviet

1997), 56; Transcription of recording of Meeting on Cuban Missile Crisis, 11:10am-1:15pm, October 18, 1962 in Naftali et al., eds., John F. Kennedy: The Great Crises, Volume Two, 521-522.

²¹ Transcription of recording of Meeting on Cuban Missile Crisis, 11:10am-1:15pm, October 18, 1962 in Naftali et al., eds., John F. Kennedy: The Great Crises, 521-524; Notes from National Security Council Meeting on Cuba, October 20, 1962, 8-11, Box 13, National Security File, Kennedy Library.

Union. The lines in the sand were now drawn, and the Kennedy administration waited anxiously for Khrushchev's response. Kennedy and his advisors had functioned for almost a week with little sleep in extremely trying circumstances. The night of Kennedy's speech, Rusk worked late at the State Department, returning home at 2:00 am. He later recalled: "I went to sleep and awoke the next morning as daylight broke. With sunlight streaming through the windows, I thought, 'Ah, I am still here. This is very interesting.' Khrushchev had not immediately responded with a nuclear strike. This was serious business, but perhaps it wouldn't be fatal." The next day, Rusk dispatched diplomatic briefing teams to American allies throughout the world in an effort to forge unity behind the United States position. He also addressed the Organization of American States in a successful bid to obtain the institution's support for the quarantine of Cuba as well as any other action the Kennedy government deemed necessary.²²

October 24 was an exciting and tension-filled day. The world watched as the first Soviet ships to approach the American quarantine line slowed, stopped, then dramatically turned and headed back toward their points of origin. Realizing that events had reached a turning point and drawing on a game from his Georgia, Rusk turned to his colleagues and uttered one of the most famous phrases associated with the missile crisis: "We were eyeball to eyeball and the other fellow just blinked." Thus, Rusk conceptualized the crisis as a test of resolve, stamina, and credibility between two adversaries. Significantly, of all the statements "leaked" by government officials to the press during Rusk's time in office, this one troubled him the most because "for some colleague to leak that at a time when

²² Rusk, As I Saw It, 235.

any consideration of face or prestige might have made a difference, I thought was unforgivable."²³

While the arrival of new missiles had been prevented, those remaining in Cuba still had to be removed before they became operational. The administration received a message from Khrushchev on October 26 offering to remove the missiles in exchange for an American pledge not to invade Cuba, which the Kennedy government was not planning to do at the time despite the development of contingency plans and the staging of military maneuvers. However the next day, as the administration formulated a reply to Khrushchev, it was forced to deal with a second message, more formal in tone and probably written by the Soviet foreign office, which demanded that the United States withdraw its Jupiter missiles from NATO ally Turkey in exchange for removal of missiles from Cuba. In a series of ExComm meetings at the White House, Kennedy's advisors debated the merits of accepting the conditions of Khrushchev's first letter while ignoring the second missive, which contained the Cuba for Turkey missile swap that the administration feared would damage American prestige, NATO relations, and its domestic political standing.

As the events of the crisis neared their denouement, President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Rusk, McGeorge Bundy, and Robert McNamara moved from a larger ExComm meeting to the seclusion of the Oval Office to assess the situation. The group quickly decided to have Robert Kennedy meet with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and reply affirmatively to Khrushchev's first letter, pledging not to invade Cuba. Eager to

²³ Oral History S, 6, Dean Rusk Collection.

eliminate the Jupiter missiles as an obstacle to de-escalation of the crisis and aware of the American and Turkish need to avoid the perception of acquiescence to Soviet blackmail, Rusk then suggested that they have the attorney general inform the Soviets that the United States would concede to the removal of its Jupiter missiles from Turkey, but only if the Soviets kept this action secret; if the deal leaked, the United States would disavow any knowledge. The proposal was immediately accepted by the group, and McGeorge Bundy has argued that the fact that such a suggestion came from Rusk was important. According to Bundy, Kennedy and his advisors knew that Rusk was the one person in the room most sensitive to the maintenance of the NATO alliance and least likely to yield to Soviet pressure. "The toughest guy in there was named Dean Rusk. So if he makes that proposal, he gives us all courage enough to agree with him. If he can say this is a good thing to do, we can all say yes." And as Bundy points out, Rusk's suggestion moved the administration forward at a critical moment of the crisis, resolving "a logjam of indecision and frustration." Khrushchev accepted Kennedy's offer and announced on October 28 that Soviet missiles would be withdrawn from Cuba, effectively ending the crisis.²⁴

During a 1987 conference on the Cuban missile crisis, Rusk claimed that after everyone else had left the Oval Office on October 27, he obtained Kennedy's permission to contact a former United Nations employee, Andrew Cordier, and direct him, upon a signal from Washington, to contact United Nations Secretary General U Thant. Cordier

²⁴ Oral History CCC, 8-11, Dean Rusk Collection. See also McGeorge Bundy, Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in its First Fifty Years (New York, 1988), 432-433.

was to ask the secretary general to propose a public trade of Soviet for Jupiter missiles, thus providing Kennedy a face saving "additional option" that would not impair American credibility if the Soviets proved intransigent.²⁵

The so-called "Cordier Ploy" was never activated, but Rusk's revelation regarding it surprised his conference colleagues and prompted skepticism among some scholars. Using evidence from British archives, historian Mark White has speculated that the secretary probably called Cordier earlier in the crisis proposing not a mutual removal of missiles but a deal involving the establishment of United Nations inspection sites in Cuba and Turkey designed to prevent attack against and by either nation. A transcript of a Rusk phone call during the missile crisis recently acquired by the Richard Russell Library in Athens, Georgia supports White's contention. Rusk did indeed call Cordier at 9:40 am on October 24, 1962 and had the following conversation--the only one between the pair recorded in Rusk's phone logs--in which Rusk's secretive *modus operandi* is noteworthy:

Sec [Rusk] said he couldn't say who he is but C [Cordier] said he recognized the voice--Sec read page which C took down!

Sec asked him to get it to his former boss [U Thant] as a personal and urgent thing because it involves 5 countries--US, USSR, Cuba, Turkey, and Italy. C will do. Sec said not to have any official connection here. Tell him you believe this is something that could work and you have confidence the Western side would probably be ready to set up negotiations.

The statement that Rusk dictated and Cordier was to present to U Thant called for the insertion of United Nations inspectors at missile sites "outside the territory of the four nuclear powers to insure that such sites are not operational and that work on such sites has stopped." It also mandated the convening of a United Nations conference to "give

²⁵ Rusk, As I Saw It, 240-241.

urgent attention to the reduction of tension and the compelling necessities of disarmament." At Rusk's urging, Cordier was later called from the White House and told to "hold up for the time being but stand in readiness."²⁶

Such information does not disprove Rusk's assertion regarding an October 27 channel to Cordier, and as White has suggested, no matter the substance of earlier calls, Rusk and Kennedy could very well have contacted Cordier through a variety of means on October 27, changing the emphasis in the message to U Thant from inspection to removal of missiles. Of course, Rusk may simply have been mistaken; perhaps no contacts with Cordier took place beyond October 24. Whatever the exact nature of the Cordier Ploy, it represents a degree of flexibility and subtlety of approach, as well as influence with Kennedy, not usually associated with Rusk.

The Kennedy administration's journey to the edge of the nuclear abyss was harrowing, particularly when viewed in light of recent information detailing that unbeknownst to the United States, the Soviets had placed tens of thousands of their troops on the island as well as tactical nuclear weapons. Both sides drew lessons from the crisis. The United States government stepped up arms control efforts culminating in the 1963 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and initiated the establishment of more effective means of direct

²⁶ Mark White, ed., Kennedy: The New Frontier Revisited (London, 1998), 81-83; Transcript of Phone Conversation and attached United Nations statement, Rusk to Cordier, October 24, 1962, Rusk Phone Log, October, 1962, Dean Rusk Collection. When he left office in 1969, the secretive Rusk destroyed most State Department transcripts of his phone conversations with Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and took transcripts of all his October, 1962 calls with him in an effort probably aimed at preserving the sanctity of the sensitive Cordier contact. The Russell Library acquired the phone log from the Rusk family; transcripts of Rusk's other calls while in office are housed at the National Archives facility in College Park, Maryland.

communication with Moscow. The Soviets signed the Test Ban Treaty but at the same time, determined to overcome their position of nuclear inferiority, drastically stepped up missile production.

For Rusk, the Cuban missile crisis was especially sobering, rendering him more determined to avoid nuclear war. During the crisis, as he "drove through the streets of Washington and saw people walking on sidewalks and riding in their cars, not knowing what was going on," Rusk pondered the meaning of life and became "haunted" by the moral implications embedded in nuclear conflict. He found the unpredictable elements inherent in the process of crisis management--especially dangerous during nuclear confrontation--deeply unsettling. During the missile crisis, an American U-2 spy plane was shot down over Cuba and another U-2 strayed into Soviet airspace; both were highly provocative actions that threatened to send the crisis escalating out of control despite the Kennedy administration's best efforts to manage it.²⁷

The crisis also left Rusk skeptical of the deterrent value of a large nuclear arsenal. In a 1963 National Security Council meeting, Kennedy and his advisors pondered the efficacy of a preemptive nuclear "first strike" against the Soviet Union and concluded that preventive war was unwise because the United States would still suffer "unacceptable" loss of life--an estimated 30 million dead--through Soviet retaliation. When General Leon Johnson stated that war would not happen with rational people in charge of government, Rusk replied that assuming that nuclear war was impossible was risky. Once governments assured themselves that deterrence prevented nuclear war, they might feel

²⁷ Rusk, As I Saw It, 240-245.

free to engage in actions proving so exasperating--presumably the use of tactical atomic weaponry or waging conventional limited wars--that one side might be tempted to launch nuclear conflict out of frustration or perhaps even a suicidal desire to end what Rusk termed "this God Damn poker game" of geopolitical nuclear strategy. In a separate meeting, Rusk stressed to Lyndon Johnson that in seeking to prevent conflict, the United States should "concentrate on those factors which make people pull the nuclear trigger." After leaving office, Rusk wrote that "the idea of preventive war has to be looked upon with great suspicion from the point of view of international law and practice."²⁸

After the Cuban missile crisis, the Kennedy administration remained concerned with Cuba as a source of communist revolution in the Western Hemisphere but also increasingly began to consider ways of moving Castro towards a more neutralist posture. This was certainly true of Rusk, who had promoted such efforts in October, 1962 by seeking to use the Brazilian ambassador to Cuba as a conduit for a message urging Castro to move away from close ties to the Soviet Union. His method of appealing to nationalistic pride was much the same as that employed during his Truman administration attempts to wean China from Soviet influence. He suggested Castro be informed that "time is very short for Cuba and for Castro to decide whether to devote his great leadership abilities to the service of his Cuban peoples or to serving as a Soviet pawn in

²⁸ Summary of the 517th Meeting of the National Security Council, September 12, 1963, 11:00am, FRUS 1961-1963, Volume VIII, 499-503; Summary of the 520th Meeting of the National Security Council, December 5, 1963, 3:00pm, *ibid.*, 543; Rusk to Agnew, January 11, 1989, Folder: General Correspondence, Box 1, Dean Rusk Collection.

their desperately risky struggle for world domination by force and threat of force." ²⁹

Further evidence that Rusk was leaning toward a new approach to Cuba is found in his June, 1963 questioning of CIA Director McCone regarding the "prospects of Castro's reconciliation with the United States and his Latin American neighbors." McCone later noted that the secretary seemed to "feel that there is some opportunity of a rapprochement with Castro...." Finally, Rusk's undated personal notes on Cuba suggest that he was open toward new directions in policy toward the island and willing to support secret administration attempts at backchannel contacts with Castro, initiated in 1963. In the notes, Rusk expresses determination to prevent the Soviets from conducting a 1956 Hungary style military invasion of Cuba and he writes the question "reconciliation between Cuba & hemisphere?" As far as containing the spread of communism to nations such as Haiti, Venezuela, and Guatemala, Rusk noted that "prevention," --presumably through such methods as the economic and cultural programs of the administration's Alliance for Progress, but also military aid to conservative regimes-- "is easier than the cure" of American military intervention after a nation had come under communist influence. Ultimately, Kennedy's assassination by Lee Harvey Oswald, a man alleged to be a Castro supporter, and the need for Lyndon Johnson to appear resolute against communism in the 1964 presidential election ended most American efforts at rapprochement.³⁰

²⁹ Telegram from Rusk to American Embassy in Brazil, October 26, 1962, FRUS 1961-1963, Volume XI, 228-229.

³⁰ Memorandum for the Record, June 22, 1963, *ibid.*, 844; Memorandum for the Record, June 24, 1963, *ibid.*, 845; Rusk Notes on Cuba and Europe, Folder: Dean Rusk

To Rusk, a steady flow of American economic and military aid to nations such as Columbia and Brazil helped prevent the spread of communism, although he was not supportive of oppressive tactics used by right wing governments in power there. When a chaotic civil war erupted in the Dominican Republic in the spring of 1965, Rusk backed Johnson's armed intervention with 23,000 United States troops. For Rusk, American involvement was principally geared toward protecting the lives of United States citizens and restoring order. He also attempted to strike a balance between a government many in the Johnson administration considered too leftist in political orientation and inept administratively, symbolized by the efforts of writer Juan Bosch to gain power, and military juntas reminiscent of the ruthlessly oppressive and hopelessly corrupt Trujillo regime that had governed the nation throughout much of the twentieth century. Ultimately, American troops were augmented by Organization of American States coalition forces, and presidential elections were held in 1966 placing pro-American Joaquin Balaguer in power. For President Johnson, operations in the Dominican Republic were more about applying the "cure" of military intervention to diminish communist influence than imposing order. As he stated in a phone conversation with McGeorge Bundy, he did not want "to wake up...and find that Castro is in charge [of Dominican Republic]...." Problems with American intervention arise, the president stated, "when we don't do enough or when we go in and do too much." The dilemma of deciding between enough or too much involvement also colored the dynamic of United

States policy toward Africa and the Middle East.³¹

Africa and the Middle East

While formulating Latin American policy, Rusk worried over his nation's image in a region undergoing constant change. Did the United States appear to represent progressive policies of economic development and social reform? Or did America seem to be perpetuating problems associated with a past rife with economic dependence and colonial oppression? Such concerns were important considerations as the United States sought Cold War allies in the Developing World, and they were especially applicable to Africa and the Middle East, two poverty ridden areas that were, even as late as the 1960s, still seeking to wrest themselves fully independent from European imperial control.³²

More than any other high level official during the Kennedy-Johnson years, Rusk was uniquely qualified to address policy toward Africa. His poverty stricken youth in the American South gave him an appreciation for the crippling effects of grinding poverty and poor health care as well as demonstrating the injustice, malevolence, and corrosive nature of state sponsored racism. Travels to Oxford in the 1930s and India during World War II bred a distaste for colonialism, and as president of the Rockefeller Foundation he

³¹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 368-377; Telephone conversation with McGeorge Bundy, April 29, 1965, in Beschloss, ed., Reaching for Glory, 290-291.

³² Coverage of policy toward Africa and the Middle East during the Kennedy-Johnson years is found in Richard Mahoney, JFK: Ordeal in Africa (New York, 1983); Paterson, ed., Kennedy's Quest for Victory; H. W. Brands, Into the Labyrinth: The United States and the Middle East, 1945-1993 (New York, 1994); and Warren Cohen and Nancy Tucker, eds., Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World (New York, 1994).

had direct experience as an advocate of innovative, reform minded economic development and social reform policies.

Rusk himself was well aware of the special insights into the problems of the Developing World that his Southern background provided, and he referenced them in a 1962 speech designed in part to inspire hope and confidence by establishing a linkage between America's past economic development and the current struggles of poverty stricken nations:

Perhaps you'll forgive me for a personal recollection. Like millions of present day North Americans I spent my earliest years in what people would now call underdeveloped circumstances. We were pre-scientific and pre-technical; we were without public health or medical care; typhoid pellagra, hookworm, and malaria were all part of the environment in which providence had placed us. Our schools were primitive. Our fathers and mothers earned a meager living with backbreaking toil.

Neighbor helped neighbor to build a house, a barn, or to pass along news about projects and new methods. They joined together to build roads until public funds could take over the burden. They pooled their limited resources to hire a school teacher or a doctor. Bits of capital began to accumulate and this was reinvested in growth and development. More and more young people managed to get to the university and more and more of these brought their learning back to the benefit of their own people.

These changes did not take place without struggle. Years of thought and work and debate were required to prepare America for the necessary steps of self-help and social reform....³³

Beyond the shared experience of poverty, Rusk could also sympathize with Africans regarding racial discrimination. He supported racial equality at home in the United States and abroad, and he testified before the Senate Commerce Committee in July, 1963 on behalf of the Kennedy administration's civil rights legislation, arguing that racism was not only morally wrong but impractical, damaging America's image as defender of freedom in the Cold War.

³³ Schoenbaum, Waging Peace and War, 369-370.

The image of the United States regarding race was particularly important in Africa, given America's history with slavery and oppression of black rights. Rusk worked to weaken South Africa's segregationist and discriminatory "apartheid" policies through integrating State Department social events in the country, labeling apartheid as "repugnant," and by protesting the arrest and imprisonment of South African civil rights activists, including Nelson Mandela. However, he stopped short of advocating a break in diplomatic relations or imposing economic sanctions due to his concern that such steps might lead to internal chaos in South Africa that would create inroads for Soviet influence in the nation.³⁴

Indeed, as during the Truman administration, decolonization and concern over communist expansion colored the dynamic of American policy. Rusk was successful in convincing President Kennedy to support a United Nations resolution calling upon Portugal to grant independence to its African colony, Angola. Although Portugal was a NATO ally, Rusk believed that "the United States had to demonstrate that we opposed colonialism in fact as well as rhetoric...." The American position relative to the Congo however, was murky. Belgium granted the Congo its independence in June, 1960 but then moved in 1961 to support Moise Tshombe's efforts to achieve the secession of his resource laden Katangan province from the larger Congolese state. In the ensuing civil war, Rusk sympathized with the anti-colonial Congolese government's desire to suppress the Katangan rebellion, but feared that such action would alienate a NATO ally and promote political and economic instability easily manipulated by the Soviet Union. He

³⁴ Paterson, ed., Kennedy's Quest for Victory, 253-283.

applauded the United Nations 1961 mediation efforts and introduction of peacekeeping forces, which produced a temporary halt to hostilities. And he was generally pleased in 1964 when President Johnson decided to provide air transport to Belgium paratroopers attempting to rescue American and European hostages held by Simba rebels hostile to the Congolese government. Joseph Mobutu seized power in the Congo in 1965, and although Rusk found his brutal oppression of civil liberties distasteful, the United States supported him because of his strong anticommunist posture.³⁵

Policy toward Ghana is illustrative of Rusk's Southern moralism as well as his willingness to express his positions and take a stand in the face of opposition from his colleagues. Seeking to co-opt African nationalism, in June, 1961, the Kennedy administration pledged monetary aid to the nonaligned government of Kwame Nkrumah for the purpose of building a dam on the Volta river. By December of that year, many of Kennedy's advisors--including his brother Robert--believed that Nkrumah was moving Ghana into a close relationship with the Soviet Union and proposed cancellation of American aid for the dam. Rusk favored continuance of assistance and was able to persuade President Kennedy of his views, positing that American prestige was inextricably tied to its ability to keep its commitments. He later stated in relation to Ghana, "Maybe I'm old-fashioned, but when the United States pledges its word, that's a very important thing. We should avoid situations where our pledged word is not taken seriously."³⁶

³⁵ Ibid.; Rusk, As I Saw It, 278-281.

³⁶ Rusk, As I Saw It, 275.

Formulating African policy was occasionally frustrating, but in the Middle East, Rusk's attempts to balance Arab-Israeli interests while promoting peace and diminishing the potential for Soviet regional manipulation proved a continual source of exasperation. Certain Arab states, such as Syria and Egypt--led by Gamal Nasser--seemed poised to align with the Soviet Union and willing to use violence against neighboring nations, as evinced by Nasser's 1962 military intervention in Yemen's civil war. In an effort to promote stability and closer ties to the United States, Rusk maintained a steady flow of various forms of American aid, including military equipment and training, to more moderate nations such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan. While Israel's status as the region's only democracy rendered it America's natural ally, its insistence on acquiring nuclear weapons in the face of Rusk's ardent efforts at non-proliferation irritated and troubled the secretary of state.

Israel's relations with neighboring Egypt and Syria deteriorated throughout the 1960s. In 1967, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria began to castigate Israel publicly with increasingly bellicose language and pooled their military resources. Additionally, Egypt threatened to limit Israeli access to strategically important waterways. As tensions between the Arab world and Israel mounted in late spring, Rusk believed that he had received assurances from both sides to forgo violence until the United States could initiate substantive mediation, but he was proven wrong on June 5, 1967 when Israel launched a devastating preemptive raid on Egyptian airfields and then repulsed attacks from Syria and Jordan. The Soviet Union had cultivated close ties with Syria and when hostilities began activated the "hotline" teletype direct communication link established

between Washington and Moscow after the Cuban missile crisis, stating that they would intervene if Israel attacked Syria. The United States responded with a stern warning against such action coupled with the dispatching of the American Sixth Fleet to the eastern Mediterranean and a promise to restrain Israel. Ultimately, the Soviets chose not to intervene, despite Israel's forceful acquisition of key disputed territories such as the Golan Heights, the West Bank of the Jordan River, and parts of the Sinai peninsula within six days after the conflict began.³⁷

Although Rusk understood Israel's perception of a rising military threat, he deplored the violence and chaos of the Six Day War and supported United Nations Resolution 242, which was an attempt to broker a cease-fire arrangement based on Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist complemented by Israeli withdrawal from its occupied territory. Apparently, from the outset of the conflict, Rusk had hoped to use the crisis as the genesis of a broader regional peace "on an enduring basis," agreeing with National Security Adviser Walt Rostow that the Six Day War provided "quite an opportunity" for the negotiation of long term peace. Unfortunately, Arab-Israeli attitudes were only hardened by the conflict, and Rusk continued to fret over the Middle East throughout the remainder of his tenure, worrying that lingering friction would drive the Arab world toward the Soviet camp. As the Johnson administration drew to a close, Rusk placed his finger upon an issue that has remained at the nexus of Arab-Israeli disputes since the Six Day War: the seemingly eternal intransigence created by Arab perception of Israel as forever dedicated to territorial expansion and Israel's belief that Arabs are committed to

³⁷ Rusk, As I Saw It, 378-389.

its demise.³⁸

Asia

Just as United States Latin American policy centered largely on efforts to protect the Western hemisphere from communist "subversion" aided or directed from a single nation, Cuba, as the 1960s progressed, Rusk's diplomacy in Asia increasingly revolved around efforts to contain the perceived expansion of communist China. Accordingly, Rusk worked hard to develop and/or maintain strong relations with nations, such as India, Burma, Thailand, and Indonesia, who were thought to be critical bulwarks against Chinese aggression. And he also strove to promote economic development in the region through increased American economic assistance.

In Laos, communist influence had been growing steadily due to indigenous efforts by the Pathet Lao, aid from the Soviet Union, and manipulation by North Vietnam. Laos was a landlocked, militarily impractical location in which to insert American troops and was notoriously unstable politically. Given such realities, neutrality under a coalition government headed by communist Souvanna Phouma was palatable, and the United States sought and achieved neutrality for the nation in 1961 and 1962 through Geneva negotiations with the Soviets. But it was important that the integrity of the agreement be maintained, a matter Rusk stressed with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. Rusk's

³⁸ Transcript of Telephone Conversation, Rostow to Rusk, June 6, 1967, Folder: Transcripts of Telephone Calls 5/25/67-6/7/67, Box 59, RG 5379, Rusk Files, National Archives; Memorandum of Conversation, January 7, 1968, FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XX, 79-87; Notes on Meeting in the Cabinet Room, December 4, 1968, *ibid.*, 665-667.

concern for reputation that was so much a part of his Southern moralism shines through in notes titled, "Points To Be Raised With Mr. Gromyko:"

It is hoped that the Soviet Government understands that as a great power whose prestige is involved, the United States would not be able or, indeed, could not tolerate the complete communist takeover of Laos by armed force supported and maintained from without...

There have been cases in the past where United States responses to certain types of action in which its prestige was engaged were not sufficiently understood in advance. It would be very tragic indeed if any comparable lack of understanding should be present in regard to the present situation in Laos.³⁹

In northern Asia, relations with Japan improved as that nation's economy continued to develop into a major focus of United States trade, but dealings with North Korea moved from bad to worse when it seized the American intelligence gathering ship, USS Pueblo, and its crew on January 23, 1968. Concerned for the lives of the crew but also seeking to avoid American retaliation sparking a more general conflict with North Korea or the Soviet Union, Rusk counseled restraint, although he seems to have briefly considered a rescue operation. The morning the crisis began, Rusk explained to Walt Rostow, "There's a difference between retaliating and rescuing...our main interest is to get that ship out of there safely." The seizure of the Pueblo was concurrent with the communist Tet Offensive in Vietnam, and the Johnson administration deliberated under enormous international and domestic political pressure. On the first day of the Pueblo crisis, Rusk learned that congressional response ranged from, "Has America got any guts left?" to suggestions calling for the use of punishing American military force if the ship and hostages were not returned. 1968 was an election year, and confirming Lyndon

³⁹ Points To Be Raised With Mr. Gromyko, March 18, 1961, Folder: White House Correspondence 1/61-11/61, Box 40, RG 5379, Rusk Files, National Archives.

Johnson's fears, Republicans used the Pueblo incident to attack the administration. Rusk must have bristled at Republican presidential candidate Richard Nixon's connection of the crisis to American prestige: "When respect for the United States has been allowed to fall so low that a little power like North Korea will seize an American naval vessel on the high seas, then it's time for new leadership in the White House." After careful diplomatic effort, some of which conducted through the United Nations, the hostages were released as the Johnson administration drew to an end. Although resolved peacefully, the Pueblo affair served to illustrate the need for new approaches to Asian relations.⁴⁰

Toward A New China Policy

It was an article of faith to many among the American public and official Washington that Dean Rusk was adamantly opposed to changes in United States policy toward communist China during the Kennedy-Johnson administrations; perceptions from his "Slavic Manchukuo" speech and the Korean War still lingered. The assessment of a junior State Department official is emblematic of such thinking: "He [Rusk] was very conservative on China issues. It was very difficult to get any flexibility." However, Rusk

⁴⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 391-397; Transcript of Telephone Conversation, Rusk to Rostow, January 23, 1968, Folder: Transcripts of Telephone Calls 1/18/68-1/20/68, Box 60, RG 5379, Rusk files, National Archives; Transcript of Telephone Conversation, MacComber to Rusk, January 23, 1968, *ibid.*; Nixon/ Agnew Election Committee, Nixon Yearbook 1968, 90. For discussion of the Pueblo affair within the broader historical context of American policy regarding hostages and terrorism, see Russell D. Buhite, Lives at Risk: Hostages and Victims in American Foreign Policy (Wilmington, 1995), 137-159.

sometimes appeared more cautious than he actually was. He was quite willing to feign a position of ignorance and intransigence--an action he termed adopting the "village idiot" persona--if he believed that security concerns or presidential mandate required the masking of his true thoughts or new directions in policy. Indeed, while Rusk was by no means consistently on the forefront of proposed changes in China policy, as was State Department analyst James Thomson, evaluation of the documentary record suggests that he was less rigid than generally assumed.⁴¹

The Korean War left Rusk extremely wary of the expansionist tendencies he attributed to Chinese leaders, prompting him to compare Mao to Hitler in speeches. His concern was heightened by the dynamism he believed the Chinese imparted to communist revolutionary ideology, but the necessity for a China policy that recognized what Rusk described as "Asian realities" and augured progress in regional relations, as well as the opportunity to manipulate the Soviets and Chinese within the framework of American triangular diplomacy, engendered an openness to new approaches regarding Beijing. Rusk entered the Kennedy administration willing to move away from the standards set by Truman and Eisenhower and adopt a "two-Chinas" policy based on American recognition and United Nations seating of both the Taiwanese and mainland governments. He remained opposed to attacks on mainland China by Taiwan, as was his view during his

⁴¹ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, ed., China Confidential: american diplomats and sino-American relations, 1945-1996 (New York, 2001), 163; Rusk, As I Saw It, 284. In "Limited Accommodation, Perpetuated Conflict: Kennedy, China, and the Laos Crisis, 1961-1963" Diplomatic History Volume 26, No. 1 (Winter 2002): 95-135, Noam Kochavi scratches the surface of the issue of Rusk as a secretary of state increasingly flexible in his China policy.

tenure as an assistant secretary. According to Rusk, President Kennedy agreed with the two-Chinas plan but decided to defer such politically sensitive efforts to reshape China policy until after the 1964 election, and similar statements made to other administration officials support Rusk's contention. Besides, both Rusk and Kennedy agreed that it would be very difficult to forge Beijing-Taipei accord regarding their mutual seating in the United Nations. As Rusk later stated, "a more realistic China policy became a future task, not a present one."⁴²

While Kennedy may have been moved to postpone improved relations with Mao's regime for domestic political reasons, his posture was also motivated by geopolitical considerations. Kennedy was well aware of the growing rift in Sino-Soviet relations, which was attributed to ideological, personality, and traditional state territorial differences. Instead of cultivating China--a nation he and his advisors increasingly perceived as having expansionist designs and a desire for nuclear weapons--he preferred to isolate it, in part as a means of promoting detente with China's rival, the Soviet Union. The president valued the 1963 Test Ban Treaty in no small measure because of its non-proliferation aspects, and while reaching out for improved relations with Moscow in 1963, he also suggested joint military operations against Chinese nuclear facilities to the Soviets, an option they rejected but one that continued to be considered by the United States throughout much of the 1960s.⁴³

⁴² Rusk, As I Saw It, 282-284; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, 445-447.

⁴³ Chang, Friends and Enemies, 228-252.

During the Johnson administration, officials concerned about the Soviet arms build-up and perceived Chinese adventurism in Vietnam and Laos began to reason that the most effective method of obtaining leverage with the Soviets and Chinese--but especially the Soviets--was to lean toward China, thus improving Asian relations while fostering a closer Sino-American posture that it was hoped would pressure the Soviet Union into disarmament concessions and assistance in de-escalating the Vietnam conflict. In beginning to reach out to the Chinese, the Johnson administration was foreshadowing and preparing the groundwork for later initiatives by Richard Nixon.

In March 1966, National Security Council staff member Robert Komer sent a memorandum to President Johnson delineating a new approach to China policy that came to be known as "containment without isolation." According to Komer, the United States could "have its cake and eat it too" in Asia by "staying loose on China policy" and informing the Chinese that America would seek peaceful coexistence if they would "only stop their subversion and aggression and live peacefully with their neighbors." Although Komer was doubtless influential in shaping Johnson's thinking, Rusk had been moving in the direction of "containment without isolation" for some time, while concurrently guarding against adverse domestic political reaction⁴⁴

Rusk's notes from a meeting with NATO leaders, which most likely took place in 1964, indicate that although he characterized China as "harsh and implacable," it seemed to be growing "somewhat cautious in action." Rusk went much farther in a November,

⁴⁴ Komer to Johnson, March 14, 1966, FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXX, 273-274.

1964 televised interview with CBS News's Marvin Kalb, sounding the same themes as

Komer's later memorandum:

We feel that they [China] must come to the decision to leave these people alone in Southeast Asia. Now if they don't then there is trouble ahead. If they will then there are not any problems that can't be solved by the ordinary processes of discussion with the nations of Southeast Asia. And of course, we all look forward to the day when those underlying relationships can be restored and we can express once again that century long feeling that we have about the Chinese people.

Moreover, the next month, the secretary approved a speech by Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Roger Hilsman that reinforced the conciliatory aspects of his CBS interview.⁴⁵

Around the fall of 1965, Rusk suggested to Johnson that improved relations with China could initiate a beneficial degree of Sino-American alignment vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. Johnson apparently agreed and in July, 1966 gave a major conciliatory address regarding China. He also relaxed travel restrictions to that nation, began to promote cultural exchange, and stopped referring to China as the fundamental cause of the Vietnam War.⁴⁶

In early 1968, Rusk and Johnson continued to pursue methods of building bridges to China. Desiring to use presidential speech making as a forum for overtures to Beijing, in January, 1968 Rusk drafted a speech touching on Asian economic development for Johnson, perhaps intended for incorporation into the president's State of the Union

⁴⁵ Rusk Notes on NATO Meeting, Folder: Dean Rusk Personal Papers, Box 65, RG 5380, Rusk Files, National Archives; State Department Press Release of Rusk-Kalb interview, November 11, 1964, Folder: Interview by Marvin Kalb, CBS, "The United States and the Two Chinas," Box 21, RG 5376, Rusk Files, National Archives.

⁴⁶ Chang, Friends and Enemies, 274-275.

message. Rusk included a special passage on Sino-American relations that is redolent of Johnson's Great Society rhetoric and significant in tone and substance. Rusk refers to the Chinese capital by the communist term, Peking, dropping his former usage of Peiping, which was preferred by the Nationalist Chinese :

I speak of these tasks [public health and agricultural reforms] as belonging to the human family. They know no national frontiers and reach across ideological barriers. This is why, for example, we have tried to enlist the interest of the leaders in Peking in the exchange of scientists, scholars, weather information, food plant material. In these tasks there are no great powers or satellites, no communists or capitalists, no givers and receivers, none as advanced to be without need, none as backward as to be without hope.

While Rusk sought public venues in which to propose accommodation with China, Johnson sought advice from the academic community, convening a meeting with experts on Asia in February, 1968. During the meeting, he repeatedly emphasized his intention to remain flexible toward Sino-American relations, stating, "We are keeping our options open. We have made a truly major effort to communicate and to keep our policy flexible. We are not hidebound."⁴⁷

By 1968, the Johnson administration's attempts to "keep its options open" and foster a degree of rapprochement with China were beginning to reap benefits with the Soviet Union, which was indicating its willingness to negotiate regarding a nuclear non-proliferation treaty, among other issues. In describing the American attitude toward negotiations and geopolitical strategy to Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, Rusk likened

⁴⁷ Draft Text of Telegram to the President, January 11, 1968, Folder: White House Correspondence, 1/68-1/69, Box 40, RG 5377, Rusk Files, National Archives; Memorandum for the Record, February 4, 1968, National Security File (hereafter NSF), Meeting Notes File, Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas.

the United States approach to " 'an infantry advancing on a broad front.' Where we could move forward we were prepared to do so but if we encountered difficult problems or obstacles it might be necessary to take more time." This phraseology is likewise applicable to American policy toward China during the 1960s. Rusk was not opposed to new initiatives; he had worked to exploit the Sino-Soviet split in the Truman years and had remained flexible regarding recognition of Mao's regime even during the initial phases of the Korean War. In seeking new directions in China policy as secretary of state, Rusk could be cautious, occasionally finding it necessary to "take more time." But he had encountered "obstacles" to progress, such as Kennedy's restraint, domestic political controversy, his own linkage of improved relations with the cessation of perceived Chinese expansion, and Taipei-Beijing intransigence, and had nonetheless continued to move forward where possible "along a broad front" on the path of change.⁴⁸

Vietnam

When Rusk began his tenure as secretary of state, he found the situation in Asia much changed from when he left the Truman administration in 1952. By 1954, the French had suffered a humiliating defeat in Vietnam at the hands of communist forces at Dien Bien Phu and called for international mediation to afford them a means of exiting Southeast Asia. The resulting Geneva accords of 1954 mandated a division of Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel that was intended to be temporary but

⁴⁸ Chang, Friends and Enemies, 274-275; Memorandum of Conversation, November 18, 1964, FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XIV, 180.

rather quickly solidified into permanence, with Ho Chi Minh leading a communist state in the north. The Eisenhower administration had chosen not to intervene militarily on behalf of France, but moved quickly to install and support a fervently non-communist, well educated Vietnamese nationalist, Ngo Dinh Diem, in power south of the seventeenth parallel, advising him to forgo participation in the national elections set for 1956 by the Geneva accords. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles also enrolled Diem's Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), the Eisenhower administration's Asia version of the NATO collective security body. By 1961, Diem faced an indigenous communist insurgency aided by Ho's Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) and was turning toward increasingly corrupt and oppressive means to crush it.⁴⁹

Just as many Southerners from Rusk's background conceptualized the struggle between the Confederacy and the United States as war fought by two independent nations, so too did Rusk view the conflict in Vietnam not as a civil war but the product of state sponsored aggression by North Vietnam. Moreover, South Vietnam's independence was threatened by communist expansion that, if not instigated by China, would benefit Beijing in a potential drive for regional hegemony. During his time as secretary of state, Rusk remained steadfast in his determination to maintain the political viability and territorial integrity of South Vietnam, even if it meant tolerating a host of oppressive

⁴⁹ For Vietnam policy, including speculation on Kennedy's decisions had he lived, see Freedman, Kennedy's Wars, Robert Schulzinger, A Time for War (New York, 1997); George Herring, LBJ and Vietnam (Austin, 1994); David Kaiser, American Tragedy (Cambridge, 2000); Fredrik Logevall, Choosing War (Berkeley, 1999).

leaders who, like Diem, proved ineffective at stemming the advancing communist tide and were often prone to surrender to what Rusk termed the "darker instincts" of corruption, oppression, and brutality. In a 1961 telegram to Kennedy, Rusk emphasized the need for political reform within Diem's regime and declared himself "reluctant to see U.S. make major additional commitment additional American prestige to a losing horse." In the late summer and fall of 1963, Rusk was anxious as the Kennedy administration signalled anti-Diem elements in South Vietnam that it would not oppose a coup, "deeply distressed" at Diem's resulting assassination in November, and hopeful that "his successors would bring greater unity to the country."⁵⁰

Much has been made of Rusk's "losing horse" comment to Kennedy, extrapolating his specific opinion of Diem into the notion that he opposed greater United States involvement in Vietnam, but, like a "good soldier," followed obediently when Lyndon Johnson later Americanized the conflict. Henry Kissinger has echoed such thinking, arguing that Rusk was "less originator than executor" of the "tragedy" of American intervention in Vietnam. Although Rusk certainly harbored reservations about the large scale commitment of United States forces to Vietnam, as the Kennedy years gave way to the Johnson administration, he was a major advocate pushing the president toward escalation of American involvement--not a reluctant participant who dutifully enacted policy once it had been decided. As Rusk himself stated, "[Warren] Cohen made me into too much of a good guy. My doubts were registered only as doubts and not as opposition

⁵⁰ Rusk, As I Saw It, 436-440; Cohen, Dean Rusk, 181.

to policy."⁵¹

A significant portion of the value of recently released recordings from the Johnson presidency is that they illustrate the Texan's deep anxiety and many doubts regarding Vietnam. In a 1964 conversation with National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, Johnson agonized over the decisions he was increasingly forced to ponder:

I'll tell you the more that I stayed awake last night thinking of this thing, the more I think of it, I don't know what in the hell--it looks to me like we're getting into another Korea. It just worries the hell out of me. I don't see what we can ever hope to get out of there with, once we're committed. I believe that the Chinese Communists are coming into it. I don't think that we can fight them ten thousand miles away from home....I don't think it's worth fighting for and I don't think that we can get out. It's just the biggest damned mess that I ever saw.

As this excerpt makes clear, Johnson understood the potential danger inherent in greater involvement in Vietnam. In fact, he was warned by some military and civilian advisors that the war could be a difficult and protracted struggle. Johnson had to be convinced that intervention was necessary, and the fact that he ultimately overcame his concerns and sent United States troops into combat underscores the critical importance of foreign policy advisors such as Rusk.⁵²

Throughout Johnson's first year in office, Rusk, McNamara, and other foreign policy consultants tried their best to defer the need for significant decision making regarding the politically sensitive subject of Vietnam until after the 1964 presidential

⁵¹ Cohen, Dean Rusk, 243; Henry Kissinger, Years of Renewal (New York, 1999); Rusk, As I Saw It, 418.

⁵² Beschloss, ed., Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-1964, 370.

elections. After hostilities between American destroyers and North Vietnam occurred in the Gulf of Tonkin in August, the Johnson administration sought and obtained the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of congressional support for broader military action in Vietnam. Rusk testified in favor of the resolution, which was designed to reassure American voters that the administration was prudently moving in concert with legislative will but yet was resolute in defending American interests. After the president's landslide November victory, Rusk, McGeorge Bundy, and McNamara began to press Johnson for action to stabilize the rapidly deteriorating situation in South Vietnam.

In mid-February, 1965, Johnson's advisors succeeded in convincing him to authorize a sustained bombing campaign of North Vietnam--Operation Rolling Thunder. Rusk had misgivings about the effectiveness of strategic bombing--especially of a society primarily agricultural in nature-- that stretched back to his service in World War II, but he was certain that some form of action was needed to limit communist infiltration of South Vietnam and boost Saigon's sagging morale. As he stated in a February 23 memorandum to Johnson, "everything possible should be done to throw back the Hanoi-Viet Cong aggression...." There was a risk of major escalation, "but the other side, too, must face and worry about the same risk." In a February 26 meeting, Under Secretary of State George Ball warned Johnson that Rolling Thunder and similar operations would lead to deeper American involvement in Vietnam that would have damaging repercussions for United States foreign policy as well as the administration's domestic political position. According to Ball, Rusk countered with "a passionate argument about the dangers of not

going forward," and the under secretary "made no converts." ⁵³

Indeed, the escalation Ball feared was already in motion, propelled in part by the inexorable force of organizational momentum. In March, Rusk backed Johnson's decision to send the first American combat troops--Marines--to Vietnam in order to protect the air bases from which Rolling Thunder sorties were launched. The Marines promptly established defensive perimeters, which they reinforced through "search and destroy" forays against Viet Cong communist guerrillas in the terrain surrounding the bases. As mid-summer approached, and with Rolling Thunder having achieved little noticeable progress, the American commander in Vietnam, General William Westmoreland, began requesting a substantial augmentation to his ground forces.

Rusk later related that the time had come to "fish or cut bait....Our gradual response was not working." In a series of meetings during June and July, the administration weighed its options, with Rusk, McNamara, and Bundy favoring escalation of American troop strength and Ball arguing for withdrawal. In 1793, Thomas Jefferson had maintained that America was honor bound to keep its treaty commitments to France and side with that nation in its war against Britain, and in 1965, at a critical juncture in Vietnam decision making, another Southern secretary of state was reprising the Virginian's themes. Rusk's position on Vietnam was infused with the full range and intensity of his Southern moralism. He argued that United States intervention in Vietnam was largely a matter of national honor and prestige. The United States had signed the

⁵³ Rusk Memorandum, February 23, 1965, FRUS 1964-1968, Volume II, 355; George Ball, The Past Has Another Pattern (New York, 1982), 392.

SEATO treaty in 1954 pledging aid to South Vietnam. A victim of illegal expansionist aggression, South Vietnam was deserving of United States help in its struggle to preserve its sovereignty. This was the moral, just course of action, exemplary of America's national heritage. To Rusk, keeping commitments and stopping aggression were worthy national goals in and of themselves--important for their own sake--and alone compelling reasons for intervention.⁵⁴

But defending South Vietnam was also imperative for crucially important practical reasons of diplomacy. Failure to aid South Vietnam would damage America's international reputation, limiting its ability to achieve foreign policy objectives. The "integrity of the U.S. commitment was the principal pillar of peace in the world," and if the United States neglected its treaty agreements, allies would lose faith in America's willingness and ability to help them and perhaps turn towards neutralism or communism. Further, if the United States acquiesced in the face of aggression in Asia, enemies would judge it weak and apathetic, tempting them toward aggression elsewhere, such as Berlin. In short, international credibility had to be maintained.⁵⁵

As he sounded the tocsin of the necessity for intervention, Rusk also began to delineate the parameters of American involvement. Action was essential, as he stated on July 21, "If the Communist world finds out we will not pursue our commitment to the end, I don't know where they will stay their hand." While America could not afford to sit idly, its conduct must be restrained; there could be no invasion of North Vietnam, no use

⁵⁴ Rusk, As I Saw It, 450-451.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

of nuclear weapons, and no conventional bombing of Hanoi for fear of prompting Chinese or Soviet intervention. Rusk posited that the communist "commitment to preserve another socialist state" was strong, and he estimated that the United States had only "a 1 in 5 chance of Russia's staying out if we make our commitment and if we bomb Hanoi." The United States must chart a limited, middle course between two undesirable extremes, injecting large numbers of American conventional forces into South Vietnam, thus denying victory to the communists and eventually convincing them that they had no other option but to negotiate. Rusk hammered home his case for escalation by arguing that if the Kennedy administration had sent "50,000 men" to South Vietnam in 1961, communist momentum would already have slowed or stopped; America must not miss another crucial opportunity. Johnson's acceptance of Rusk's and other pro-interventionists' advice, coupled with his fear that inaction would bring severe domestic political repercussions to his legislative agenda and 1968 reelection prospects, led him into the Vietnam conflict in 1965. In July, 1965, the United States increased its troop strength in Vietnam to 75,000, with the numbers rising to 165,00 in November and 500,000 by 1968.⁵⁶

The Johnson administration soon discovered that the path of limited war was a difficult course to tread. Although the president's advisors discerned progress in the 1966-1967 period, it was measured by the caliper of attrition and thus difficult to convey to the

⁵⁶ Notes on Meeting in Cabinet Room, 10:40 am, July 21, 1965, 9-10, Folder: Meetings on Vietnam July 21-27, 1965, Box 1, Meeting Notes File, NSF, Johnson Library; Notes on Meeting in Cabinet Room, 3:00pm, July 22, 1965, 22, *ibid.*; Memorandum for the Record, July 21, 1965, Folder: Meetings with Foreign Policy Advisors July 21, 1965: Vietnam, 5, *ibid.*

American public in a compelling and meaningful manner. As Rusk later noted, "We were asking our countrymen to support in cold blood what our men in uniform were having to do in hot blood in Southeast Asia." Further, with American casualties beginning to mount and the frustratingly ambiguous nature of counter insurgency combat efforts related nationally on television, an anti-war movement positioned largely on the left of the political spectrum began to make its voice heard through protests in the streets and on college campuses. Anti-war sentiment hit the Rusks at home; their younger son, Richard, a student at Cornell University, openly disagreed with his father about the war--contributing to a ten year rift in the pair's relationship--and old friendships felt the strain imposed by Rusk's advocacy of the administration's Vietnam policy. With protests mounting, Rusk grew concerned about the potential diminution of America's political will to continue fighting. To him, perseverance was largely a function of character, and drawing on lessons from his Southern upbringing--challenges must be met and hard work enables progress and survival if not success--he attempted to stiffen the public's resolve in 1967 by averring, "Sometimes it gets tough; and sometimes we are tested and we find out what kind of people we are."⁵⁷

For all its increasingly strident intensity, Rusk and Johnson were less worried about the liberal anti-war movement than pressure from the conservative right in American politics, fearing that it would push the administration towards dangerous

⁵⁷ Rusk, *As I Saw It*, 456; Dean Rusk to Richard Rusk, March 15, 1968, Folder: Correspondence "R," Box 43, RG 5378, Rusk Files, National Archives; Rusk to Mrs. Black, January 6, 1967, Folder: Correspondence "B," *ibid.*; "The Central Issue in Vietnam," Folder 7, Box 44, Dean Rusk Collection.

military decisions that might provoke World War III. The following telegram received by President Truman in 1966 illustrates the climate of opinion prompting the administration's concern: "How I wish you were president now. You wouldn't hesitate drop H-bomb on North Vietnam. It scared Japan and I think it would scare Peking China and Russia too" According to Rusk, he and Johnson "made a decision to keep the war as limited as possible and not build up war fever in the United States. We didn't parade military units through big cities or have beautiful movie stars sell war bonds in factories, as we had done in World War II. In a nuclear world it was too dangerous for an entire people to grow too angry." ⁵⁸

With the psychological victory achieved by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese in the January, 1968 Tet Offensive, Rusk realized that he had overestimated America's political will and that "many Americans were losing heart in the war effort and that if we couldn't tell them when the war would be over, we might as well chuck it." Accordingly, Rusk began to work carefully behind the scenes to move Johnson away from escalation and toward intensified peace efforts. He was joined in this effort by Clark Clifford, appointed secretary of defense in early 1968, but he and his former Truman administration rival differed over the substance and pace of peace negotiations conducted in Paris. Clifford was more flexible in approach, while Rusk clung to what was essentially the same negotiating position he had maintained throughout the conflict, declaring, "we shall not surrender people [South Vietnamese] and call it peace," and

⁵⁸ Telegram to Truman, March 22, 1966, Folder: Vietnam Data, Post Presidential Files, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library; Rusk, As I Saw It 456.

insisted on South Vietnam's participation in the Paris talks as well as the withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops. Peace negotiations sputtered along inconclusively, and when Rusk left office in January, 1969, he was frustrated and "bone tired" from eight grueling years of government service. Most likely, he left Washington for Georgia still willing to continue the struggle in Vietnam if not having been constrained by the diminished political will of an American public functioning within the democratic structure he so cherished.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Rusk, As I Saw It, 417, 475-491; Telegram to the President, January 12, 1968, Folder: White House Correspondence, 1/68-1/69, Box 40, RG 5377, Rusk Files, National Archives.

CHAPTER SEVEN

APPRAISING A SOUTHERN STATESMAN

Rusk left the Johnson administration in 1969 and returned home to Georgia, where he accepted a position as professor of international law at the University of Georgia, Athens. Since his days at Oxford, Rusk had dreamed of such a job, and he was fond of stating that "after a thirty year detour, I finally made it." He spent the remaining twenty-five years of his life in an academic environment he loved, becoming a popular circuit lecturer across the state, often speaking on a topic close to his heart: the need for constant vigilance and hope in international affairs. He also served as a quiet, behind the scenes foreign policy consultant to Henry Kissinger and Jimmy Carter.

Rusk's return to the South marked more than a chance to fulfill old ambitions, it signified a connection to his ideological heritage as well. Rusk's Southern background had produced characteristics that served both as virtues and impediments in his conduct of foreign policy. The region's fervent religiosity spurred a concern for justice, democracy, and social welfare, and its bitter poverty led him to embrace economic and agricultural reform in the Developing World. Noting such traits, Thomas Zeiler has cast Rusk as a "Liberal missionary" working to impose his vision of Wilsonian order on the global scene, but a more accurate view of Rusk is that of a diplomat whose worldview, to borrow a phrase from Philip Zelikow, was focused "more on credibility than crusades."

As Rusk stated in 1948, "We must pursue our basic objectives under whatever conditions we can find, shaping such conditions to extent we can. We must avoid putting ourselves in such a position that any wrong committed anywhere in the world and left unpunished constitutes diplomatic defeat and humiliation for US." ¹

Although Rusk was not a crusading interventionist, his excessive concern with credibility constitutes a component of his ideology that was an obstacle to effective diplomacy. The South of Rusk's youth was a region where reputation was extremely important and had to be defended, with violence if necessary. Violence had long played a prominent role in Southern history, from its use to remove Native Americans from the path of encroaching white settlers, employment in defense of Southern "liberty" during the Civil War, and in the coercion of freed blacks and poor whites. Just as concern with credibility led to problems in the South, such as dueling and physical abuse, Rusk's sensitivity to prestige issues engendered a dangerous broadening of his conception of national interests, leading him to perceive challenges to United States reputation that had to be addressed, often through the application of military force. He had been conditioned to view credibility as important for its own sake but also as possessing practical utility. To him, the maintenance of America's fidelity to its commitments was fundamental to world order; it upheld the integrity of alliances and deterred aggression.

Rusk's worldview is primarily reflective of Southern culture, but it is also emblematic of the broader American historical experience stretching backwards from

¹ Zeiler, Dean Rusk, 207-216; Philip Zelikow, "Review," Foreign Affairs October 1999, 172; Memorandum, 1948, FRUS, 1948, Volume VI, 598-599.

1900 to the early national period. Indeed, the nineteenth century, with its reformist moral impulses, notions of American exceptionalism, and concern with enhancing the nation's image in the world, represents Rusk's ideology writ large. While in office during the swirling change of the 1960s, Rusk's homilies concerning the sanctity of America's unique values and institutions must at times have seemed positively quaint to his colleagues working with him to fashion and implement foreign policy. In fact, Rusk's tenure as secretary of state represents the confluence of his ideology, which in so many ways harkened back to America's past, with a modern military and economic structure that placed the United States at the peak of its strength and thus, by extension, greatly enhanced Rusk's power as he sought to shape world affairs.

In evaluating Rusk's performance as a practitioner of foreign policy, judgement and the ability to keep a nation's long term interests in view are useful criteria. However, his substantial influence should first be noted. Rusk was not a weak, passive presidential advisor continually overshadowed by his colleagues. He was a strong, articulate advocate, at times arguing passionately and often persuasively in favor of his policy prescriptions. As a prominent second tier official in the Truman administration, he was a valued counselor to Dean Acheson and George Marshall and fashioned policy related to a wide range of global events, from Arab-Israeli conflicts to the Korean War. Moreover, during the 1960s, the capacity for global nuclear destruction and the intensity of superpower rivalries combined to create one of the most dangerous periods of the Cold War, and Rusk's service at the helm of American foreign policy during that decade ranks him as one of the nation's most important secretaries of state.

Rusk was adept at identifying and focusing on America's long term strategic interests, at times displaying a strong capacity for prescience. He supported economic and social reform in the Developing World, correctly surmising that its success was linked to the future prosperity and stability of the entire globe. In relations between Cold War rivals, he adhered to America's ultimately successful containment doctrine and negotiated the Weapons in Space Treaty in order to prevent space from becoming a future arena of nuclear competition. Exercising flexibility in his determination that traditional policy in Asia was outmoded, he sought new, significant, and far reaching approaches toward China. He predicted that communist China's influence on the world scene would continue to grow, although he would likely be astonished to learn that it has become a major trading partner of the United States.

In terms of judgement, Rusk's moralistic bent, first-rate intelligence, and systematic approach to analysis led him to many sound policy decisions. At the dawn of the Cold War he favored the Baruch plan for international control of nuclear weapons and championed disarmament throughout the remainder of his career, helping to forge the ground breaking 1963 Test Ban and 1968 Non-Proliferation treaties. He also practiced restraint in wielding America's massive military power, opposing preemptive "first strikes" against rivals, opting for quarantine instead of invasion during the Cuban missile crisis, and arguing in favor of the use of conventional over nuclear weapons in Korea and Vietnam. His emphasis on negotiation and "talking a problem to death" in order to diffuse tension, as during the Berlin crises, helped insure that no nuclear exchange occurred during his tenure, and this is perhaps his greatest accomplishment. Outside the

arena of nuclear confrontation, Rusk supported decolonization and an active but impartial role for America in Arab-Israeli disputes.

Rusk was experienced and extremely intelligent, but his judgement sometimes failed him, occasionally betrayed by his Southern moralism's excessive emphasis on credibility. He chose not to apply the full range of available American pressure against South Africa's apartheid policies and was willing to tolerate support of repressive dictators in the Developing World as long as they were non-communist. Although it is important to view Rusk's career with perspective and an eye toward the full range of his foreign policy, his performance related to Asia constitutes an undeniable and indelible dark stain on his otherwise impressive record. Indeed, Rusk was a major force behind two of the worst mistakes in the entire span of American diplomatic history: intervention beyond Korea's thirty-eighth parallel and engagement and escalation in Vietnam. These tragic errors cost tens of thousands of American lives and billions of dollars, increased Cold War tensions, and tore at the social-political fabric of United States society. On balance, Dean Rusk was a central figure in America's Cold War diplomacy whose substantial success and few --but grave-- mistakes were shaped by an ideology rendering him a Southern statesman.

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