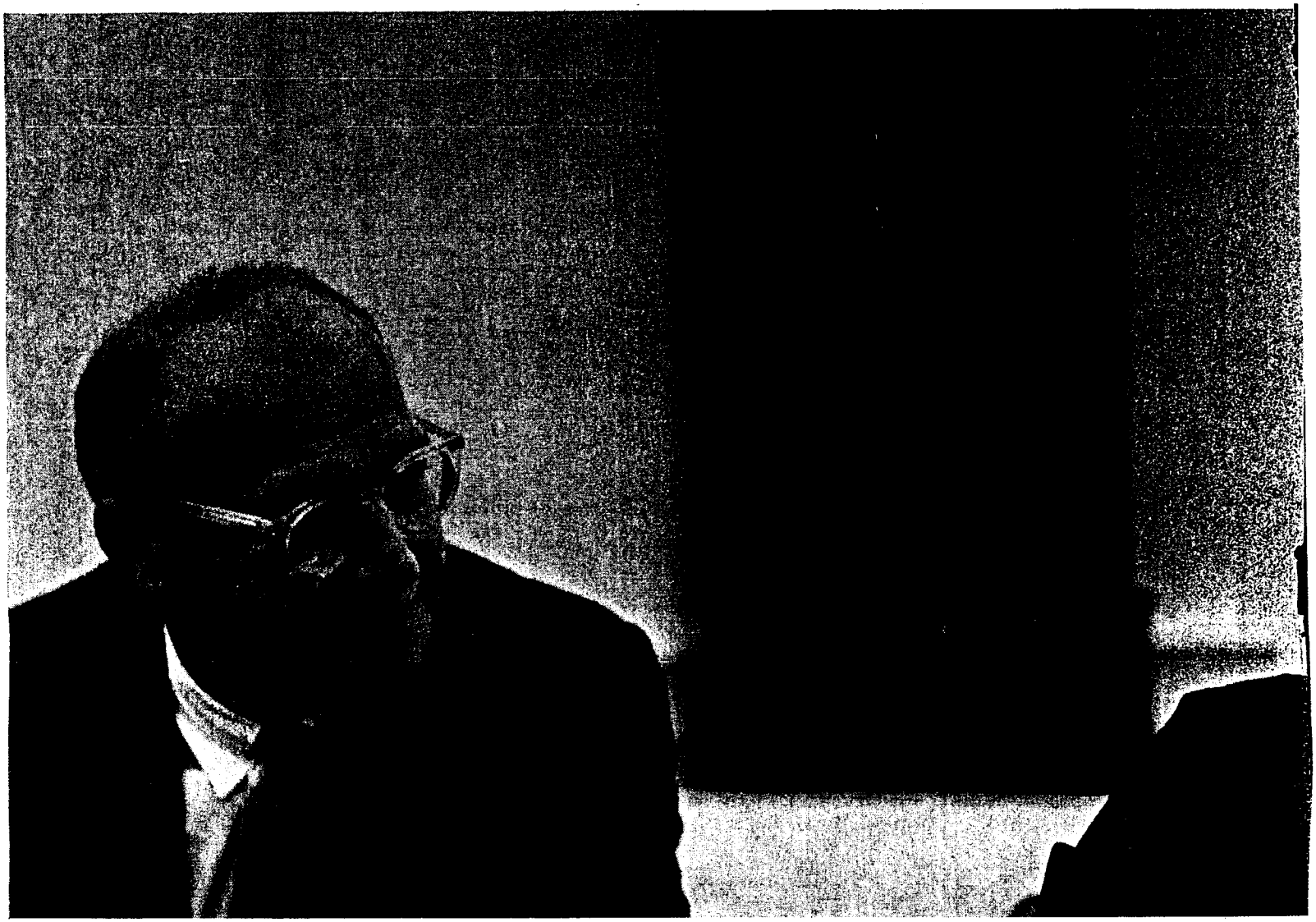
Adviser Walt Rostow is a busy exponent of Vietnam

The Most Happy Fella

policy—and is still enthusiastic about it

in the White House



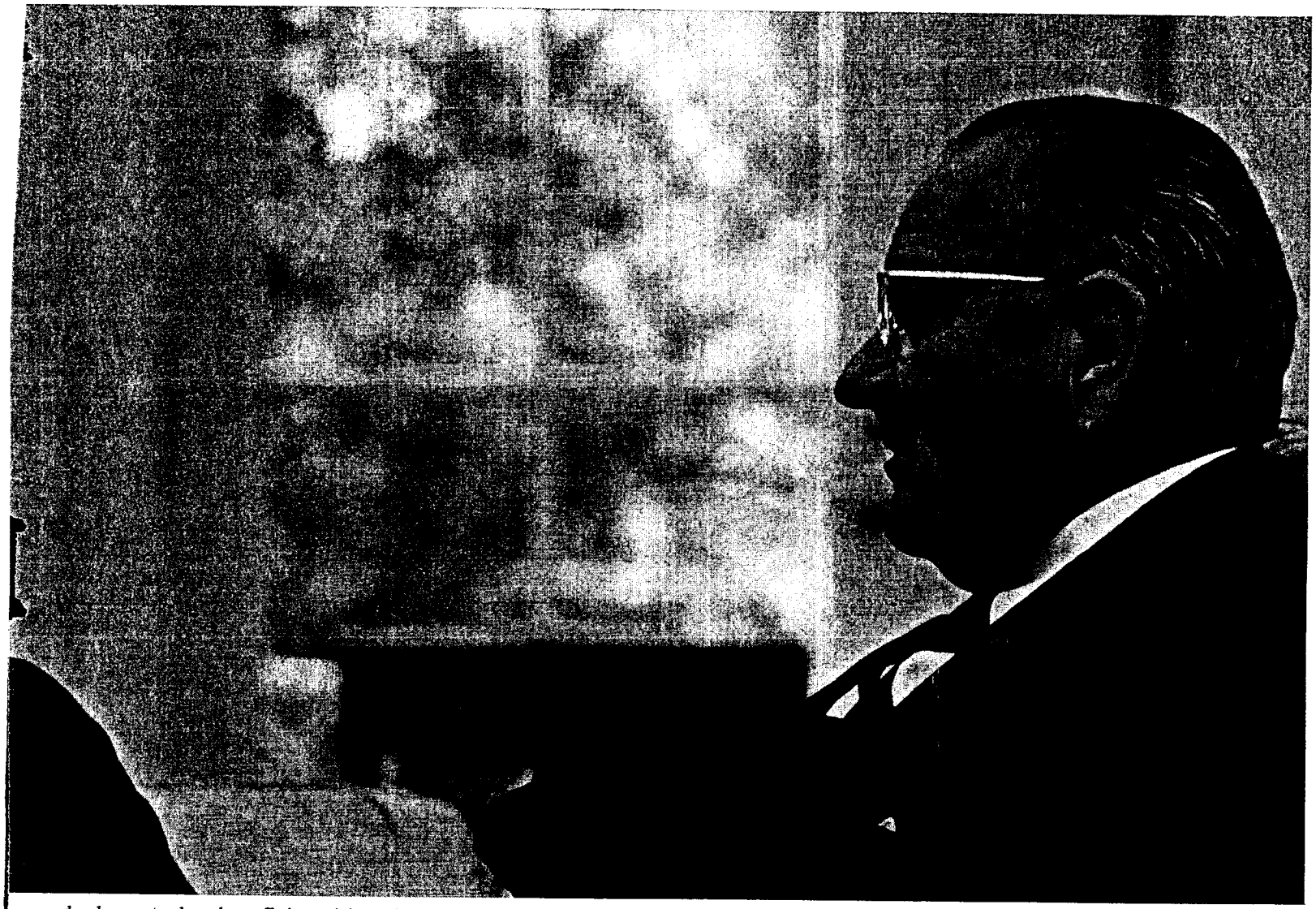
Rostow is often to be found in L.B.J.'s office briefing him on new

by ***THOMAS B. MORGAN***

An unusual discovery in this season of discontent would be an absolutely doubt-free human being. But Walt Whitman Rostow, who plays a singular role in the process of making Vietnam decisions as Special Assistant to the President for national security matters, comes close. Unfazed by antiwar protests in Congress or in the streets, Rostow is perhaps the most happy fella in the White House, a zealous Johnsonian convinced that our Vietnam policy is "on the right track." Getting to know him, one gets a better understanding of that policy.

The political, economic and military aspects of foreign affairs have been Rostow's study for nearly 30 years, out of Yale and Oxford, by way of the graduate faculty in economic history at M.I.T. Among his many books and essays are portraits of Soviet and Chinese society, an analysis of America's "national style," a widely respected theory of economic development and a tract on—of all things—target selection for World War II bombing raids on occupied Europe. Rostow is an especially staunch advocate of the efficacy of bombing North Vietnam. He has been a consultant to every postwar administration in Washington and, since 1961, a full-time federal bureaucrat, one of the new breed of "action intellectuals." On Lyndon Johnson and his foreign policy, he has become an unembarrassable partisan.

The interesting thing about President Johnson," Rostow says, "is that in the face of this grueling test in Vietnam, he can carry on a global foreign policy. The way he balances his attention and energy is one of the most admirable things in modern presidential history. The strength and grace of the man! To have the will and the time! I'm proud to have a chance to work with him at this searching interval."



developments abroad or offering opinions—his own and those of others

In the foreign policy-making process, Rostow serves as technician, adviser and White House spokesman. "It's God's work," he says. On the technical side, he is the daily source of the President's summary of world events digested from information reported from the Departments of State and Defense, the intelligence network and the daily press and other media. He also coordinates the work of the 20-man National Security Council staff: the primary two-way bureaucratic link between the President and all those sufficiently interested in foreign policy goals to contribute an opinion on better means to achieve them. Aspects of the Vietnam war, for example, involve Rostow and the NSC staff with the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, Agriculture and Commerce, the Bureau of the Budget and the CIA, Congress, the RAND Corporation and other "think tanks," numerous universities, professional pundits, planners and systems analysts, to name a few. The most significant output of the staff takes the form of "decision papers"—advisory presentations of opinions, facts, options and priorities—for the President's "yes, no, see me" reply. It is at this point that Rostow also functions as an adviser. He usually has an opinion and expresses it in writing.

In the day-to-day operations of the National Security office, Rostow-the-technician is on constant personal call from the President for, say, more information or a progress report. Less often, Rostow-the-adviser is asked for his own point of view on strategy and tactics. As technician, he is responsible for preparing the agenda of the President's Tuesday policy luncheon with the Secretaries of Defense and State. As adviser, he makes his contribution at the luncheon itself, with all due deference to the Secretaries. As technician, he hands down presidential action-decisions to the appropriate bureaus. As adviser, he is called on for

CONTINUED

At a White House Tuesday Lunch, Rostow sits with (clockwise around table) Humphrey, CIA Director Helms, Rusk, Johnson, McNamara, Joint Chiefs Chairman Wheeler and Press Secretary Christian.

Rostow

CONTINUED

speech drafts. "The art of this job," Rostow says, "is keeping the two functions separate."

Talking about his duties, Rostow emphasizes the technical side. He pictures himself as a "two-way communicator" whose "low-visibility task" is "98%" informational. He says he passes along all information impartially because "I know I'd be blown clear out of the water if I used this job to lobby for my own ideas." He cites his smooth relations with Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara as proof of his self-restraint.

Over-all, Rostow's influence on the course of government, while not insignificant, is substantially less than that of the two Secretaries or, at least, the vast bureaucracies they represent, or some of the President's old friends like Clark Clifford, Averell Harriman and Abe Fortas, or in reality, for that matter, Ho Chi Minh.

But he has another kind of influence that, while it can't be measured, can't be discounted either. Rostow speaks for the White House at press briefings, from lecterns and in conversations around "the town." He speaks not only as the man with more access to the President than any other foreign policy adviser, but also as the operator in charge of the nerve center of U.S. foreign affairs. It follows that his listeners must assume that he is virtually as well-informed as the President himself. "He reads the cables," as they say. If knowledge is power, secret knowledge is all the more powerful.

Thus when Rostow speaks, usually in tones of stentorian optimism, it is difficult not to believe that he has the inside dope. It has to be impressive when Rostow tells a reporter "off the record" that he has a "gut feeling" we're winning in Vietnam. (It must be said, however, that Rostow has lately dissipated some of his influence on the Washington press corps because, as one reporter puts it, "of his total dedication to Johnson's policies.") It is also impressive when he tells an audience in Leeds, England that "History . . . will show in Southeast Asia . . . that the international status quo cannot be altered by use of external force" —obviously assuming the U.S. presence in Vietnam as part of the status quo. Even in private conversation among his fellow bureaucrats, Rostow's words and arguments carry extra weight, especially among those with less clout but a greater sense of the uncertainty and contingency of events. We have it from the White House that Rostow is one of the five most important men in Washington. Who the others may be isn't said. But, one gathers, were there no Walt Rostow on President Johnson's staff, he would have to be invented.

His daily fare is appalling events, but at night he sleeps

Rostow is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When the President travels, Rostow travels. His roundup of world events is the first thing the President reads in the morning. The decision papers are the last things he reads at night. In between, Rostow and the President are never long out of touch, by phone or in conference, in the Oval Office or, at times of crisis, in the map-lined, bunkerlike Situation Room, which is part of Rostow's suite in the basement of the West Wing of the White House. His private office is a fair-sized room that would look out on Mrs. Johnson's pleasant green gardens if the curtains were not perpetually drawn for security. The furnishings are attractive—a contemporary desk, chairs and tables, plus a comfortable leather couch. Books overflow from shelves along one wall onto side tables and the floor. Three small TV sets (one for each network), a globe and a bowl of fruit provide, respectively, an atmosphere of urgency, sophistication and simplicity. The color print of the President on the wall is addressed to Rostow "from his friend, Lyndon B. Johnson." There are also some paintings by Peter Rostow, age 15. The telephone has a direct line from the President ("One long ring, that's him," Rostow says), intercom lines to the Situation Room and its adjacent communications center (a line from it goes to Moscow) and trunk lines to State and the Pentagon.

When Rostow talks on the phone, his secretary often listens in at her desk in the outer bullpen, making notes for him. She is a shy, matronly woman who, performing that function, reminds one of a desk sergeant getting it all down for the police blotter. Voices on the lines endlessly talk about the war in Vietnam, the crisis in the Middle East, civil war in Nigeria, guer-

rillas in Bolivia, starvation in India, riots in Hong Kong, the H-bomb in China, De Gaulle in France and Stokely Carmichael in orbit. Rostow's daily diet consists of appalling events, with Vietnam as the main course. But none of it seems to get him down. "At night," he says, "I sleep."

Then there are his charts. For visitors, Rostow often produces three large white squares of cardboard with neat graphs in black ink showing "progress" in Vietnam. One chart traces the improvement in the ratio of Vietcong-North Vietnamese army weapons-losses to ARVN losses. The second represents the decline in VC/NVA incidents of sabotage, terrorism and harassment. The third illustrates the increasing number of VC/NVA killed-in-action compared to the decreasing number of ARVN KIAs. There is no chart to show this year's decline in the number of ARVN troops in actual combat, the increase in American casualties or other signs of counterproductivity in the war.

Rostow's most striking characteristic is his seeming absence of anxiety. He is a gray, harmless-looking man with soft green-blue eyes behind light-rimmed glasses that give him the look of your kindly professor. He has good teeth and smiles often, as when he says, "Well, we're trying to keep a war from starting today." People who know him, from the President on down, invariably remark on his lack of hostility, animus, bile, bitterness or pique, and, conversely, on his sweetness, magnanimity, geniality, buoyance and all-around goodness. His enemies lament that he would make a better target if he weren't so goddamned nice. The President says, simply, he's the kind of man you'd name as trustee for your wife and children.

Just past 51, Rostow is square-built, tallish and trim. He plays tennis three mornings a week, indoors and out, all year round. He always travels with his racket and sneakers. "Only two times I didn't," he says, "were to Bonn for Adenauer's funeral and on a Polaris submarine." His clothes match his easy disposition. His suits are mostly gray, his rep ties rarely go with his socks. By the end of a day, he may be grizzled, coatless, tieless and a little unbuttoned. When the President sends for him, he spruces up.

His habits are temperate. Once

CONTINUED

Rostow

CONTINUED

in a while, he'll smoke a metholated cigarette, but a pack lasts him several days. Sometimes he amuses himself by writing songs. As a youth at summer camp, he used to play piano accompaniment for silent movies. He also put on camp shows and once directed fellow camper Cornel Wilde in *The Emperor Jones*. "If I hadn't decided to do what I'm doing, I might have earned my keep as a tune writer," he says.

Rostow's mind is a sharp, fast, flowing political instrument. He has a prodigious memory, with an uncanny capacity for reproducing the precise sense of long conversations. He speaks with the urgency of an evangelist and writes very nearly as fast as he talks. President Kennedy, a speed-reader, once said that Rostow ("The Professor," he called him) was the only man he knew who could write faster than he, the President, could read.

Unblushingly, he pairs L.B.J. with Churchill, Bolívar, both Roosevelts

Rostow likes to play with analogies, comparisons and historical parallels. At one time or another, President Johnson in Rostow's conversations or speeches has been compared with Simón Bolívar, Winston Churchill, both Roosevelts, Woodrow Wilson and John Kennedy.

Hero-hunger seems to gnaw at his vitals, but it is offset by his lack of more ordinary yearnings. Money, for example, is far down on Rostow's list of values. His job pays $30,000 and carries the usual perquisite of a phone-equipped, chauffeur-driven car from the federal motor pool. He has a small additional income from the continuing sale of his books. But no doubt he could earn much more as a teacher, writer and lecture circuit-rider. "Helping the President," he says, "is the most rewarding thing a man can do."

Criticism of his ideas or his style doesn't seem to bother Rostow, although one can't be sure he would let on if it did. Unmerciful lampoons of Rostovian optimism and intellectualism going the rounds from Cambridge to New Haven to New York to Bethesda leave him

unruffled. The *Atlantic* monthly last spring published a squib written by Harvard's James C. Thomson Jr., a former member of Rostow's NSC staff. It imagines a meeting in the Situation Room chaired by "Hon. Herman Melville Breslau," Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. A sampling: "In general, he [Breslau] felt, the events of the previous days were a wholesome and not unexpected phase in South Vietnam's growth toward political maturity and economic viability. The fall of Saigon to the Vietcong meant that the enemy was now confronted with a challenge of unprecedented proportions for which it was totally unprepared: the administration of a major city. . . ."

After reading Thomson's satire, a friend of Rostow's in Washington phoned a friend of Thomson's in Cambridge saying, "If James Thomson wants to make war on the Administration, we're ready for him." Rostow himself abides. "I believe the President is doing right in Vietnam, the world and at home," he says. "I've never been more at peace in a job."

All this is not to say that Rostow is a stranger to trouble and disappointment. His rise to power, such as it is, has been no boat ride. He was adviser to the 1960 presidential candidate John F. Kennedy, and contributed two of the most effective slogans of his campaign: "New Frontier" and "Let's get this country moving again." He was part of the Kennedy brain trust and wrote, essentially, the new President's first foreign aid message to Congress. He had a right to expect an important role in the Kennedy government.

At first, he had wanted the job of chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council and was disappointed when Dean Rusk turned him down in favor of a more prosaic career man. He got instead a White House assignment as McGeorge Bundy's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, which did not sound so important. Then Bundy reorganized the National Security Council to facilitate Kennedy's control over foreign affairs and, incidentally, greatly enhanced the specifications for his own job and Rostow's. Bundy's NSC soon became known as "the little State Department." But late in 1961, Kennedy sent Rostow to head the Policy Planning Council after all.

CONTINUED

Rostow

CONTINUED

It was still a good job, but now not as attractive as it had been. In a letter to Kennedy, Rostow wrote: "I am going from being a parish priest in Rome to being a bishop in the provinces," which gives you another idea of Rostow's analogical facility.

Rostow labored at State in relative obscurity, producing ideas on economic development, the German problem, and so on, that mostly fell on Rusk's deaf (to Rostow) ear. He also served as Ambassador and U.S. Representative to the Inter-American Committee on the Alliance for Progress. Then on April 1, 1966, a few months after Bundy had resigned to become head of the Ford Foundation, President Johnson tapped Rostow to return to the White House.

'The good Lord never decreed all problems are solvable'

Jack Valenti was Rostow's most important sponsor and, because of Rostow's sentiments on Vietnam, there was no protest from the Pentagon about bringing in a man from State. But the President apparently felt a need to appease Bundy's fans, who had expressed shock over the appointment of a loquacious hawk to fill the nest (or saddle) of "the iron knight of the soft line." Like Lou Gehrig's old No. 4, Bundy's title—Special Assistant for National Security Affairs—was retired. Rostow was named simply Special Assistant to the President. These subtle distinctions are important: Rostow's was a less imposing title, shared by garden-variety presidential speechwriters, envoys, domestic-side aides and other members of the White House staff. The President also made several other moves to indicate a general reduction in rank for the National Security office, including the signal that Bill Moyers, press secretary and foreign affairs spokesman, would be taking a greater interest in NSC operations. Finally, the disparaging word got out that Rostow's promotion had been approved by Dean Rusk on the condition that a carbon copy of any schemes submitted to the President by Walt Rostow would be sent to Rusk's office at the *big* State Department.

And who, through it all, including the latter embarrassment, never complained, never argued and never lost his bounce? Nor did Rostow crow when, in the ensuing months, Moyers quit to be a publisher on Long Island and he himself surfaced not only with Bundy's job, free and clear, but also with Moyers' role as spokesman! Like Alfred E. Neuman, Rostow is not mad at anybody, and apparently never has been.

The full flavor and depth of Rostow's beliefs about U.S. foreign policy, their righteous rationality, and his corresponding view that the direction of history is inevitable and going the American way would require a small volume. (Rostow has already written it: *View from the Seventh Floor* in 1964.) But one

may dip briefly into conversations with Rostow for a sense of his thought.

"The central historical fact of our time," he says, "is the diffusion of power away from Washington and Moscow. It is the inevitable result of the spread of the industrial revolution. We are not strong enough to shape the world, but there are forces out there that want the kind of world we want and—taking a sober, unsentimental view of what's happened in this generation—there is reason for hope. It's dangerous. It's a lot of work. It's no time for cheap optimism. But there's no reason for despair."

Rostow is most passionate about Vietnam. "The duty of men," he says, "is to prevent war and buy time. You have to do your duty. The good Lord never decreed that all problems are solvable. You do what you do against a background of 20 years of building and maintaining an environment for peace. . . . The troubling element in the Vietnam debate is the public's lack of knowledge of Ho Chi Minh and General Giap, who have devoted their lives to taking over the French colonial empire in Southeast Asia and who decided on aggression in 1959. They've been obsessed with it. . . . About the bombing of North Vietnam, we have a good conscience. Throughout this period we have offered to stop bombing on fair and decent terms. And we unilaterally held off bombing a number of times without response. The fact is, we look upon North Vietnam with more com-

CONTINUED

passion than any previous enemy."

Listening to Rostow, one waits in vain for a sense of tragedy, or dismay, or the slightest doubt about the assumptions and essentially military means chosen by the Johnson administration in pursuit of peace. Instead, he has a snug theory for almost everything—including a theory about theories. "I am a trained historian," he says. "I have learned that men who say they have no theory are controlled by bias. As a social scientist, I've stood for the view that a man should make explicit his implicit presuppositions."

At M.I.T. in the late '50s, Rostow wrote his magnum opus, *The United States in the World Arena*, including an appendix setting down his "concept of the national interest," which, he stated, was central to his judgment. The essence of his Romanesque concept is that the combination of America's geographical position and material resources renders the U.S. inferior to the combined resources of Eurasia (which Rostow defines as Europe, Asia, the Middle East and even Africa), including its military potential. This makes "the American relationship to the power balance in Eurasia . . . central to the nation's security problems." It follows, he wrote, that it is in the American interest (a) that no hostile power should dominate Eurasia and (b) that the "societies of Eurasia [should] develop along lines broadly consistent with [our] own ideology, for under modern conditions it is difficult to envisage the survival of a democratic [American] society as an island in a totalitarian sea."

A busy decade at M.I.T. honed his thinking about America

Rostow denies that he is a prophet of *Pax Americana*. He has the speech he delivered last February in Leeds, England to prove it. The first sentence, in which he quotes President Johnson in a line he himself is said to have written, is perhaps as good a summary as any of his own vision of the future: "In his State of the Union address on January 10 of this year, President Johnson said: 'We are in the midst of a great transition: from narrow nationalism to international partnership; from the harsh spirit of the Cold War to the hopeful spirit of common humanity on a troubled and threatened planet.' " He makes the leap from the *Cold War* to *common humanity*, assuming that no responsibility today is too great to be beyond the reach of American power, limited though it may be. He promises that there are no promises we cannot keep—perhaps because in his own life-experience so much of his own promise has been, for better or worse, fulfilled.

Rostow's wife Elspeth is a tall, willowy blonde who teaches history at American University in Washington. Her grandfather was a New England sea captain. They have been married 20 years. She calls him "Popsy" and he calls her "Angel." Besides their son Peter, the painter, they have a daughter Ann, 12.

The Rostows live in a fine old two-story brick house with a big backyard in the Cleveland Park district not far from Washington Cathedral. The district became popular for New Frontiersmen early in the Kennedy administration. The Rostows do not care to swing at Washington cocktail parties, but the President often invites them to the White House for social events. From time to time, they spend an evening with the McNamaras.

Many of Rostow's favorite people do not live in Washington. Max Millikan, for example, is at M.I.T. running the Center for International Studies that he and Rostow founded in 1951. Their association has lasted more than 30 years. Millikan remembers Rostow at Yale as a 15-year-old member of the class of '36. "He did lots of work with little strain," Millikan says. "He knew what he thought about everything. He had passion in his reasoning. He took positions vigorously and . . . wanted to argue for what he believed in."

Rostow's older brother, Eugene

Victor, who was named after Eugene V. Debs, says Walt has always been the same—"ebullient and cheerful." Eugene is Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. A third brother, Ralph Emerson Rostow, runs a ladies' apparel shop in Ann Arbor, Mich. The boys grew up in Irvington, N.J. and New Haven, Conn.

"Our mother," Eugene says, "is

CONTINUED

Rostow

CONTINUED

energetic and optimistic. A club woman. Father was more solitary. He came from Russia in the early 1900s. We were shaped by a particular tradition of Tolstoyan idealism. We were Jewish but anticlerical. Our grandfather wanted Jews to go back to the soil. Our father worked his way through Pratt Institute carrying papers. He loved Chekhov. When he read the news of Chekhov's death, he walked the streets of New York crying. He was a metal worker and a socialist. Gradually we shed the socialist tradition, but we still have the idea from it that everything is related to everything else. There is no such thing as politics or economics in isolation."

The boys' father died when Walt was 21. He remembers him as a man with clear ideals, as reflected in the names of his three sons. "I was very lucky in my parents," he says. "They were very much in love. They had faith in themselves and their children." It seems Rostow has always been more self-assured than most people. "I've known what I wanted to do since I was 17," he says. "I set two goals. One was to pose an alternative to Marxism. The other was to bring modern economic theory to economic history." He recalls that his interest in the new economics of the '30s was inspired by a college chum, Richard Bissell Jr., who had studied with Keynes in London. (Years later, Bissell masterminded the Bay of Pigs invasion for the CIA. One of the two men assigned by President Kennedy to review the ill-fated invasion plans before the final decision to move was Walt Rostow.) Rostow won a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford. He began his doctoral thesis in England, then finished at Yale.

At 15, he knew what he thought about everything

In 1941 he turned down a job as an economist to join the newly formed OSS as a civilian researcher and analyst. "There was never any conflict in Walt's mind," Elspeth Rostow says, "between thought and action or operations and academia. He was an operator first, then a teacher. That's the sequence." In London, during the war, Rostow was secretary to the Jockey Committee, the joint Allied air force unit making daily selections of bombing targets in Europe. He was an Army major by 1945 and holder of the Legion of Merit. "I was growing up," he says, "in a situation of conflicting pressures."

Right after the war, Rostow worked on German-Austrian reparations in the State Department. The idea of European unity was in the air: France's Jean Monnet had been talking about it in Washington all during the war. Rostow drafted a memo developing a concept of regional cooperation as an alternative to narrow nationalist solutions in Europe. Impressed, Monnet persuaded Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson to urge it on the conservative Secretary of State, James Byrnes, who finally turned it down. But the Rostow memo was a significant contribution to Western thinking that led, in 1947, to the Marshall Plan for European recovery.

Rostow went on to teach at Oxford, interrupted by two years in Geneva as a member of the Economic Commission for Europe. In 1950, aged 33, he joined the faculty at M.I.T. By this time, research boosted by data from the new high-speed computers had triggered a postwar social science explosion in the U.S. Part of the fallout was the funding of the Center for International Studies at M.I.T. to see what the flood of new information about human behavior everywhere might mean to foreign policy makers in Washington. Part of the money came from the CIA. "I make no apology for this," Rostow says.

Entering a prolific decade, he undertook Center studies that produced a stack of books, including *The United States in the World Arena.* And while on a sabbatical at Cambridge he wrote his "alternative to Marxism," a treatise on the process and stages of economic growth. Basically, his thesis has been that technological and other growth factors are far more significant in the development of nations than "the class struggle." Some economists, especially in Europe, greeted the "alternative," with its concept of "take-off" into modernization, as one of the most original pieces of economic thinking since Keynes. Later, while still respectful, they cooled, having found

CONTINUED

Rostow's theories more descriptive than useful.

Rostow had not been tempted by full-time government work during the '50s—it was a Republican era and he was a Democrat. But he consulted regularly in Washington with such presidential advisers as C. D. Jackson and Nelson Rockefeller. He also chaired the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation foreign policy panel that came up with the "open skies" plan for international arms supervision through air reconnaissance that President Eisenhower presented to the 1955 sum-

mit conference. "There has been no year from 1941 to the present," Rostow says, "that I did not do some government work or other."

Rostow moved to Washington early in 1961. On the National Security staff, McGeorge Bundy chose to bird dog the Congo, Berlin and Cuba issues for the President and gave Laos and Vietnam to Rostow. Kennedy had concluded that guerrilla warfare was, in fact, a new kind of aggression and ordered his aides to study ways of dealing with it.

One of the first to respond was Rostow, who had spent time at M.I.T. during the late '50s boning up on guerrilla operations and counterinsurgency. In a speech at the Army Special Warfare School, Fort Bragg, N.C., in June, 1961, Rostow said: "It is important that the world become clear in mind . . . that the operation run from Hanoi against [South] Vietnam is as clear a form of aggression as the violation of the 38th Parallel by the North Korean armies in June 1950."

In the end, his cheerless early views became policy

For those who would argue that instability in the South was caused less by guerrilla attacks than by the lack of a strong nationalist alternative, Rostow offered his contention that guerrilla attacks added an intolerable burden to a government that might otherwise be viable. He also predicted that, without international action to stop the aggression, "those against whom aggression is mounted will be driven inevitably to seek out and engage the ultimate source of aggression they confront." In effect, Rostow was arguing four years before the fact for the bombing of North Vietnam and using one of his favorite words, "inevitably," to justify his case.

His solution seemed drastic in 1961, a time when President Kennedy and others in the White House were telling the South Vietnamese that they would have to carry the brunt of the battle themselves and when those who argued for political solutions still felt they had a chance to prevail. It later became wryly known as "Rostow's Plan 6," to be used as a last resort. In October 1961, Kennedy sent Rostow to Vietnam as part of a mission headed by General Maxwell Taylor. Rostow helped write Taylor's report which, in effect, translated Rostow's assumptions about our interest in the conflict into a recommendation not only for an immediate increase in American advisers from about 1,500 to as many as 18,000, but also for the deployment of 10,000 U.S. regulars, with a contingency for six divisions, to repel a possible Korean-type invasion from the North. The Taylor (Rostow) report thus echoed earlier recommendations for a major military commitment by Vice President Lyndon Johnson after his own mission to Vietnam in the spring of 1961.

As it happened, by the time of the assassination, Kennedy had sent about 16,000 advisers to Vietnam but no regular fighting troops. Rostow in this period emerged as one of our most dogged theoreticians of counterinsurgency and an arch advocate of a military solution in Vietnam. During his years at the Policy Planning Council, the big decisions on Vietnam were made without his advice. But he put in a direct plea for escalation with a memo requested by President Johnson in early 1964, not long after the death of President Kennedy. Thereafter, with a steady stream of memos and speeches, he urged escalation in Vietnam on anyone who would listen. As reports of the first bombing raid on the North, in February 1965, came off the ticker in the White House communications center, Rostow hurried over from his office at State to monitor the news. In a way, it was the beginning of his return from the provinces.

Sitting in his office in the basement of the White House, now just a flight of stairs away from the President of the United States, Rostow was asked not long ago if his theories and opinions about American policy in Vietnam had been in any way changed by casualty figures, antiwar sentiment or events like the riots in U.S. cities.

Rostow said no, there had been no change. "We're very steady in this house," he said.

Rostow leans against a column at the rear of the White House