THE ADMINISTRATION

The Hawk-Eyed Optimist

For nearly a year, while Lyndon Johnson, Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara agonized over whether to step up the U.S. air raids on North Viet Nam, one presidential adviser consistently argued that the bombing of the petroleum depots around Hanoi and Haiphong was vital to the U.S. war effort. Now that the President has accepted that approach—also urged on him by the Joint Chiefs of Staff—the insistent adviser's influence in the Administration's inner circle has increased considerably. The man: Walt Whitman Rostow, 49, the garrulous, determined special assistant who three months ago inherited part of McGeorge Bundy's job at the White House.

Lyndon Johnson, who likes his staffmen to keep their mouths shut and stay out of sight unless he personally deputizes them to speak and be seen in public, has shown his trust by ungagging Rostow and allowing him to surface publicly from his office in the White House basement. He sent Rostow to Los Angeles last week to participate in the supersensitive briefings on Viet Nam before the Governors' Conference, permitted him to appear on CBS's *Face the Nation* to wrestle with newsmen's questions about the stepped-up bombing.

Rostow joined Johnson and others for strategy talks at the Texas ranch.

More than Pollyanna. Rostow is distrusted by many for his hawkish attitudes and derided even within the Administration as an expounder of outspoken and endless optimism to a President who craves good news. Rostow does see through rather rosy lenses. He has said: "We're closer to an era of real global peace than any time since 1914." On *Face the Nation*, he said bluntly of the Communist campaign in South Viet Nam: "They have been tactically defeated." Having once referred to John Kennedy's success in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis as "the Gettysburg of global civil conflict," he recently updated the analogy by comparing the Viet Nam war to the Civil War's Wilderness Campaign, a series of bloody battles from which the war-weary Confederate Army never recovered.

Still, more and more people are beginning to feel that things are going well in Viet Nam, and Walt Rostow's elevation from the basement reflects far more than Pollyannish optimism. Soon after Johnson took office, Rostow (then a top State Department policy planner) said flatly: "Viet Nam is Johnson's Cuba; it will make him or break him." As one of the Administration's toughest-talking hawks, he began urging heavy commitments of ground troops early in Kennedy's tenure—nearly four years before Johnson actually made the decision in 1965. In a town where appraisals of a situation's dangers often spell delay, Rostow looks for answers to national questions through action based on the best available information, tries to cut through the heavy bureaucracy.

A Turn for the Terse. To many, the urbane, talkative Rostow seems an unlikely confidential adviser for folksy Lyndon Johnson. The New York–born son of a Russian immigrant, Rostow finished Yale at 19, went on to Oxford as a Rhodes scholar, returned for a Ph.D. in economics at Yale, then joined the supersecret OSS shortly be-

fore World War II. In the 1950s he rebutted Marx's theory that a society's wealth is inevitably concentrated in the hands of a few by offering his own optimistic theory that there is an increasing diffusion of wealth through five stages of economic growth.

He served as chairman of the panel that hatched President Eisenhower's "open skies" nuclear-inspection plan in 1955. In 1958 he met Senator John Kennedy, ultimately became a trusted adviser who coined the key Kennedy campaign theme, "Let's get this country moving again," and was the source of the "New Frontier" phrase that J.F.K. used in his 1960 nomination acceptance. Kennedy once said of Rostow, who has written twelve books: "Walt is the only man I know who can write faster than I can read."

After the election, Rostow was put on the White House staff as an assistant to Bundy, later moved over to the State Department in 1961 as chairman of the Policy Planning Council. When Lyndon Johnson summoned him back to the White House after Bundy went off to head the Ford Foundation, he made it clear that Rostow would not inherit all of Bundy's broadly powerful responsibilities. Unfazed, Rostow has steadily won Johnson's confidence by his loyalty and discretion. Aware that the President is irked by presentations that are long or complex, he has taken a happy turn for the terse in his talking and writing. He has been cautious in his staff appointments, leaning toward reflective, middle-aged men instead of the bristling, brilliant skeptics who appealed to John Kennedy—but who frequently irritate Johnson. Despite his critics' gibes that he is no more than "an Ivy League decoration" in Johnson's White House, Walt Rostow is likely to be heard from —both publicly and privately—for some time to come.

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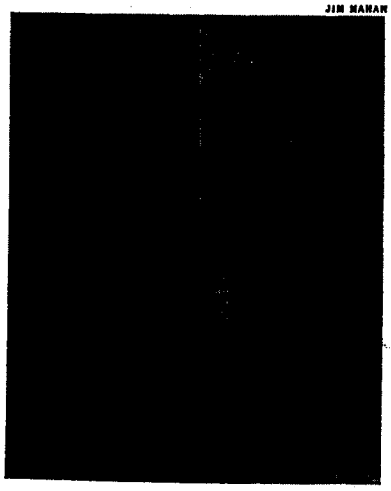

WHITE HOUSE AIDE ROSTOW
To the surface at last.