

Where Rusk, McNamara Differ

They Agree on Fundamentals, But Diverge on Procedures

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More and more Washington is talking about one of the most obvious facts about the Johnson Administration: the ironically inverted roles and postures of the two top Cabinet officers, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara.

President Johnson has said that Rusk represents the olive branches in the Great Seal of the United States and McNamara the arrows. Yet more and more McNamara sounds like the diplomat seeking new paths to peace, whereas Rusk gives the impression of being a low-key reincarnation of John Foster Dulles and his Cold War hard line.

White House officials say this is all a matter of personality and they deny any basic division of views. Yet, as so often has been said, what counts is not so much the facts as what people think are the facts.

The growing contrast between the two men is largely the result of the words and deeds of the Defense chief. That the irrepressible McNamara has been acting deliberately is attested by the comment of one of his aides on McNamara's recent eyebrow-raising Montreal speech. The aide said that his boss was trying to get



DEAN RUSK



ROBERT McNAMARA

thinking started in a new direction—"to do a Peng Chen."

Peng Chen, the mayor of Peking, lost his political head, apparently for suggesting that Red China ought to break loose from the Maoist strait jacket. But Robert Strange McNamara remains by all accounts extraordinarily high in the esteem of Lyndon B. Johnson.

Diverge on Details

Rusk and McNamara do agree on the fundamentals in the two major areas of current concern, Vietnam and NATO. Both consider the Vietnam area to be part

of containment-of-communism; both feel NATO must remain strong for defense and as a basis from which to bargain on a European settlement.

Yet the record shows they diverge on how to proceed, and perhaps on how fast to proceed, on the basis of these agreed fundamentals.

Last fall it was McNamara who pressed the President for a pause in bombing North Vietnam, supported by his deputy, Cyrus Vance, and prodded by his Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, John T. McNaughton. Rusk by all accounts was most reluctant

though he finally went along.

Last month at Montreal McNamara startled many by giving the kind of philosophical speech ordinarily the job of a President or Secretary of State. He said world security cannot be found in vast armaments but only by "practical cooperative action" among all nations, including Red China.

A measure of the surprise engendered by the speech was its publication in full in the London Daily Mail, resulting in a flood of favorable letters. A somewhat embarrassed McNamara has since taken pains to explain that Rusk had read it in advance and approved.

More recently the two Cabinet members differed in tone, though not in substance, in testifying on NATO before a Senate committee.

Rusk gave a sterile prepared account of the recent NATO meeting in Brussels coupled with a warning that "the problem for democracies is to avoid tempting thieves." McNamara gave more stress to "clear signs of movement in Europe" and declared that NATO institutions are "not immutable."

Would Give Same Answer

In reply to a question, McNamara said the United States would cut its forces in Europe if the Soviet Union trimmed its troops in East Germany. Rusk's defenders reply that Rusk probably would have given the same answer had he been asked. By the record, however, it most likely would have been well hedged.

The fact is that the State Department's top hierarchy on European affairs—Rusk, Under Secretary

George Ball and Acting Assistant Secretary J. Robert Schaezel— all share the Dulles apprehension about any mutual thinning out of forces in Central Europe. Included is the old theme that American forces would pull back thousands of miles whereas the Soviets would move only a few hundred miles.

McNamara was not asked about that objection but he is known to have an answer: technological change. Operation Big Lift proved that thousands of troops could be swiftly moved to Europe from the United States, and still bigger transports, which can land on minimal airfields, are being built.

Basically, Rusk and his colleagues fall back on the assumption that the Kremlin is frozen in its European policy and is unwilling to risk substantive moves toward European—and German—reunification.

In this, State is supported by the bulk of the experts here and in Western Europe. The public Soviet response, thus far, to French President de Gaulle's overtures while in Russia fit that reading of Soviet Policy.

Change of Attitude

Furthermore, American efforts in the Kennedy-Johnson years to encourage new thinking in West Germany have until recent months fallen on deaf ears. But recently there has begun a notable, perhaps historically major, change of attitude in West Germany though it has yet to produce new government policies in Bonn.

This sort of thing, along

with the President's efforts at "bridge building" to the East in such matters as trade and personal exchanges, is what White House officials call "environmental improvement." They contend, with State, that the United States simply cannot get out ahead lest it upset the Germans and play into de Gaulle's hands.

Hence, at such a moment in history it is Rusk who gives the appearance of holding back. Indeed, at Brussels Rusk suggested and won approval for having the permanent NATO Council look into the East-West issue, about as decent a burial as could be conceived for a lively idea.

It is not, of course, McNamara's job to play diplomat, which is exactly what some of his critics, in and out of State, think he is doing. It is pointed out, for example, that McNamara has shown an abysmal lack of international diplomatic finesse on a number of occasions, notably in the cancellation of the Skybolt missile.

McNamara admirers naturally deny that he is poaching on Rusk's preserve. Yet it is the Secretary of Defense rather than the Secretary of State who increasingly gives the impression of being the restless, ever searching Cabinet member seeking ways to move the United States into the rapidly flowing stream of changing times.