

Mr. Dove and Mr. Hawk

WASHINGTON

Secretary of State Dean Rusk and his leading critic, Senator William Fulbright, have a good many characteristics in common. They were both Rhodes scholars and thus certified intellectuals, and they both have southern accents and smoke too much. Moreover, they were both candidates for the job of Secretary of State in 1960, when John Kennedy seriously considered Fulbright for the post. In the end, Kennedy decided against Fulbright because of his civil-rights record and chose Rusk instead.

Suppose Fulbright, not Rusk, were Secretary of State today. What would he do—or what does he think he would do—that Rusk is not doing? And why is Rusk not doing these things that Fulbright thinks ought to be done?

Recently, to try to answer these questions, this reporter interviewed both Fulbright, the Senate's leading dove, and Rusk, the Administration's leading hawk, on the same day. It was an interesting experience, for both Fulbright and Rusk are interesting men.

Bill Fulbright is a likable fellow—as most politicians are, for an unlikable politician has a hard time getting people to vote for him. But Fulbright does not mind being disliked. In fact, he enjoys being in an unpopular minority—in the early 1950's he was briefly, to his credit, a lonely minority of one against Senator Joe McCarthy. Over a pleasant two-hour lunch, Fulbright named three specific actions which he wanted to take, and which Secretary Rusk and President Johnson did not want to take. Here they are:

First, Fulbright would "cease to oppose" the seating of Communist China in the U. N.

Second, he would propose to Communist China a treaty calling for the "neutralization of the entire region as between China and the United States." He would "indicate to the Chinese Communists that we are prepared to remove American military power from all of Southeast Asia in return for a similar prohibition on her part."

Third, he would cease bombing North Vietnam, cease further reinforcement of American forces in South Vietnam, and cease all offensive operations there. As Gen. James Gavin proposed, he would adopt instead a defensive holding posture in Vietnam, in "enclaves," which he compares to Gibraltar or Guantánamo.

The purpose of this Fulbright program, which is in essence the program of the more rational members of the senatorial "peace bloc," is to achieve "accommodation by negotiation." The accommodation would include internationally supervised free elections leading to a government in which the Viet Cong, if successful at the polls, would take part. On this score, there is no difference between Fulbright and Rusk, for Rusk has the same announced purpose.

Fulbright is convinced, he says, that "de-escalation" of the war would "increase rather than decrease the chances of negotiation leading to accommodation." Rusk and the Administration, Fulbright says, believe the opposite, and this is the "key difference" between them.

Dean Rusk refuses to be drawn into a debate at second hand with Fulbright, but there are certain obvious points to be made about Fulbright's program. The senator says that he would defend Formosa against Chinese Communist attack, and the Chinese Communists have made it abundantly clear that they will not join the United Nations, or seek any accommodation with the United States, unless this country abandons Formosa. They have made it equally clear that they are not interested in an agreement with the United States to "neutralize" Southeast Asia, because they do not want a neutral Southeast Asia. They want a Communist Southeast Asia, which is hardly the same thing, as Fulbright acknowledges.

As for Fulbright's key proposal—a cessation of the bombing and a withdrawal of American forces to defensive positions—Fulbright agrees that it is "possible" that this would lead to a quick victory of the Communist forces over the South Vietnamese forces outside the "enclaves." All military observers on the spot are absolutely certain that it would lead to such a result. It is hard to see how a Communist victory would induce in the Communists an accommodating mood. It would seem far more likely to lead to a neutralist or pro-Communist government in Saigon, which would order the American forces to leave South Vietnam.

Queried on this point, Fulbright was amiably fuzzy. "I'm not an ideologue," he says. "These countries want mainly to be independent. Tito proved a Communist can be independent, and

Tito's a lot better for Yugoslavia than King Peter or the Turks. Anyway, what is it worth to prevent these places going Communist? Nixon says, 'We won't give an inch anywhere in the world,' but some inches are more important than other inches."

Dean Rusk is convinced, and quite obviously deeply and genuinely convinced, that to give the "inch" that Fulbright is willing to give will lead to disaster. The Secretary is outwardly an impassive man. He himself has said that he looks like "your friendly local bartender," and he does. But he also looks a bit like the Gautama Buddha. His round face, behind black-rimmed round glasses, is expressionless, even inscrutable, as he sits straight up in a leather chair, chain-smoking cigarettes.

But when he talks about the importance of halting Communist aggression in Southeast Asia, it is easy to sense the conviction, even the passion, behind the exterior.

"Why is Southeast Asia important?" he asks. "There are the resources, the geography, the two hundred million people. But that's not all. If aggression succeeds, it invites larger and more dangerous aggression, possibly leading step by step to world war. That's a lesson we learned, or ought to have learned, thirty years ago. I'm not the village idiot. I know Hitler was an Austrian and Mao is a Chinese. I know all the other differences between this situation and the situation in the 'Thirties. But what is common between the two situations is the phenomenon of aggression."

Rusk does not pretend to know precisely how the war in Vietnam can be won, but because he is certain that aggression cannot be allowed to succeed, he is deeply sure that the war cannot be allowed to be lost. As between Rusk and Fulbright, Rusk seems to this reporter to have far the better of the argument.

Both men are certainly honorable men and patriots, with more than their share of intelligence. But this reporter's deepest impression was that neither of them really knows—or even really *thinks* he knows—just how this country is going to get out of the mess in Vietnam with its national honor intact. Like most of the rest of us, both are groping earnestly in a great dark.

Stewart Alsop

SEP 1960



Rusk



Fulbright