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Rusk Proud We Survive

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SECRETARY OF STATE DEAN RUSK and his most violent critics are enmeshed in a seeming nuclear paradox. He counts as his most important single accomplishment the fact that a nuclear war has been averted for seven years. They claim that in the Vietnam war he is obsessively pushing the United States toward the risk of nuclear disaster.

Before history proves who is right, the opposing arguments are likely to intensify.

One reason for this is the impending resignation of Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara. Inevitably, this will put Rusk in a position of unusual primacy among the Cabinet officers of the Johnson Administration, at least until and if a successor at the Pentagon can establish a powerful position of his own.

The Secretary of State, by law, is the first among equals in the Cabinet. Whether he is so in reality depends on the man's relationship to the President, at whose whim, literally, he and all Cabinet members serve.

By the degree of tangible operating power each has held in the Kennedy and the Johnson Administrations, many assessors of power in Washington would list McNamara ahead of Rusk. Rusk probably would sincerely disagree, because of the primacy of his Secretaryship, if he ever made comparisons in such terms—which he would never admit doing.

Distorted Image

TO THE WORLD outside the select circle at the top of the bureaucratic hierarchy, McNamara, in the past year or two, came to be looked upon as the leading Cabinet "dove" on Vietnam and Rusk the leading "hawk."

The image was a distortion, an oversimplification. It had some elements of accuracy, however, in McNamara's growing pessimism and frustration about the course of the war and Rusk's conviction, more visceral than anything else, that one day, somehow, "the breaks will come" and the cause will be justified for all to see.

If the dove-hawk relationship of McNamara and Rusk had been as polarized as it was made to appear, Rusk presumably would be jubilant at McNamara's departure and the tightening of the circle of veteran militants on Vietnam at the pinnacle of power.

There is no evidence of that, even in a very cynical city where suspicions kindle almost spontaneously. For Rusk to say about McNamara's exit from the Cabinet, as he does in the interview on this page, that "I feel like a twin losing his brother," may sound corny. But whatever differing viewpoints they have had on specific policies, the closeness of the Rusk-McNamara working relationship has been genuine.

Insiders expect the cross-fertilization they instituted between the State and Defense Departments to survive them individually to a considerable degree, although that is bound to fluctuate with new personalities.

Nearly seven years in office have left the world not too much wiser about what the "real" Dean Rusk is like. There is constant puzzlement about what is behind his usually bland demeanor.

One thing behind it is usually well-hidden resentment at the barbs aimed at him for being "Buddha-like" or "a cold fish," or, in the nastier characterizations evoked by the Vietnamese war, "cold-blooded" or "unfeeling."

A Cheek Forever Turned

RUSK IS A MASTER of suppressed feelings. He regards this as a vital requisite for his job. As one very close Rusk-watcher puts it, he "sublimates himself, in almost monkish fashion," as an essential ingredient of his inordinately idealized concept of loyal, patriotic Government service.

His cheek is forever turned, especially to receive, if he can, blows aimed at the President—for whom he feels duty bound to suffer in silence whatever fate deals out from the top or bottom of the deck.

His talk, unsurprisingly, is freer, more spirited and more humorous in private than in public. He has a shrewd touch for the pungent phrase, with the soft tones of his native Georgia blending a poor boy background into a Rhodes Scholar-at-Oxford overlay to produce memorable metaphors.

But he winces when they are publicly disclosed, such as his classic comment in the midst of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis: "We're eyeball to eyeball—and I think the other fellow just blinked."

Rusk's closest associates in the State Department, while exposed to his more unveiled expressions, generally admit frustration in penetrating to the inner man's mind, often even on subjects that directly affect their duties.

But after an exceptionally long tour of service, the conviction has begun to dawn on those around Rusk that perhaps there are not "two Rusks" at all, but that by and large he operates on the premises he states as verities, as simple as they may appear to be. That is, that what his supporters or critics may think is an official "mask" is in fact the real Rusk, only in a slightly expurgated, sanitized version, trimmed to fit his version of the dignity and aloofness he believes his job demands. The publicized "enigma" of Rusk is itself an illusion, according to close observers of him from the days before as well as since he has been Secretary.

Rusk will never admit it openly, but he is a far more com-

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portable man under President Johnson than he was under President Kennedy. Few, if any, Secretaries of State have had their resignations rumored or reported more often than he has, and remained in office longer.

He was particularly wounded by the report, first published by Arthur Schlesinger and then supported by other Kennedy associates, that President Kennedy had just about decided to drop him after the 1964 election.

President Johnson, by contrast, publicly has drenched Rusk in Texas-sized effusion as one of history's "greatest Secretaries of State." Rusk was often privately ill-at-ease in the free-wheeling New Frontier style of direct presidential dipping into detail at any echelon of the State Department, and the Kennedy readiness to allow anyone at hand, including a Schlesinger, to square off at a Rusk recommendation.

The Johnsonian style of executive operation, as well as President Johnson's background, political style and even the Johnsonian accent and language, fits better with Rusk, and vice versa. More Johnsonian phrases than anyone will admit—plus the remembered ones directed at Hanoi, such as "nobody there will pick up the phone" or "All we ask them to do is to leave their neighbors alone"—are borrowed from Rusk's private and public vocabulary of verbal over-simplification.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Rusk's comments these days hold no public clue whatever about leaving office, despite his long service.

McNamara's departure makes Rusk's tenure more assured than ever; the

President could not under any foreseeable circumstances alter his two prime Cabinet posts in quick, or even close, succession in the midst of an open-ended war.

Rusk, as he describes it in the accompanying interview, does count as a major accomplishment of his career, and justifiably so, the de-escalation of the East-West shouting match that echoed through earlier post-World War II years.

The outraged critics who picket his house or shout through his speeches these days, however, would counter that Rusk has vitiated this accomplishment by "reckless" military escalation in Vietnam. If the Vietnamese war goes over the brink in a greatly expanded war, they would be proved correct. Rusk is determined that history will show they are wrong, and history is bound to measure him by this test.

Undramatizing Issues

IT IS IRONIC in many ways, but perhaps coincidentally vital in other respects, that Rusk came to the Secretaryship determined to avoid the "brinkmanship" image deliberately disseminated by President Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles.

Where Dulles sought to dramatize foreign policy, Rusk seeks to do just the opposite. Said Rusk in 1963, "there are problems about dramatizing issues, if drama gets in the way of settlement . . . It is the purpose of the Department of State to try to bring about what some people will call a boring situation, that is, a period of peace. I should not object if we got

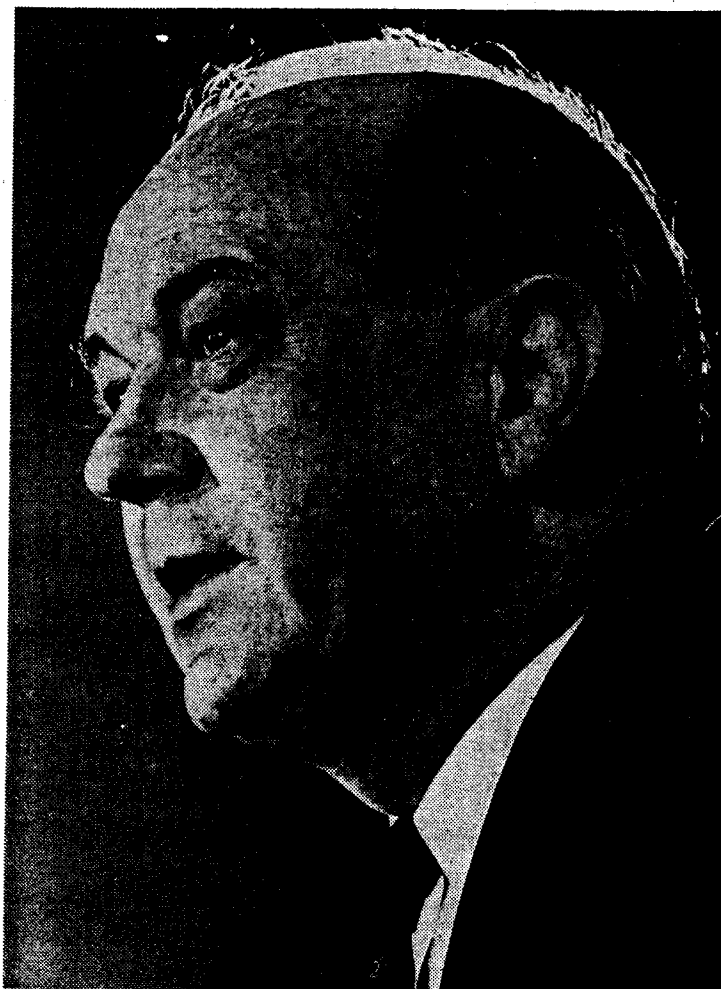
international relations off of the front page for a while. I see no prospect of it."

This did not mean, on any account, as the world soon was to see, that Rusk flinched from the use of power. Behind his outward placidity, as events have shown, Rusk can be a very single-minded, determined fellow—on Vietnam, on Communist China, and anywhere else he puts an "aggressor" label.

Rusk has expended the bulk of his energy on personal diplomacy, and if Vietnam "breaks" the way he sees it, it could pay off, particularly where the Russians are concerned. Even his sharpest critics—those who are knowledgeable about diplomacy—agree that he is very good at private, professional diplomacy.

Where Rusk has been weakest, as even his admirers privately concede, is in providing inspired, vigorous leadership to the State Department. The perennial complaint, which re-echoed at the outset of the Kennedy years, that the Department was failing to provide adequate "leadership across the whole front of foreign policy," has persisted, and probably has intensified, in the Rusk years.

What has suffered additionally, although here Vietnam is the prime cause, is the effectiveness that Rusk once prized so much in his relations with Congress. He does not concede the damage is nearly as great as most others would measure it, but it is major damage because he soared so high on a cloud of pre-Vietnam, or at least pre-Dominican Republic, approbation.



By Wally McNamee—The Washington Post

Dean Rusk . . . keeping nuclear beast in a cage.

7 Years on the Spot

IN JANUARY, Secretary of State Dean Rusk will have served for seven years—longer than all but five of the 53 other Secretaries of State in our Nation's history. This puts him in striking distance statistically of the tenure of John Quincy Adams, James Madison, William H. Seward and Hamilton Fish.

The service record is held by Cordell Hull: 11 years, 8 months and 28 days.

Length of service by itself, of course, is a weak guide to the historical impact of a Secretary's service—especially in a nuclear age when one miscalculation can obliterate all. Rusk, in effect, made just that point in an unusually introspective interview with Murrey Marder, diplomatic correspondent of *The Washington Post*. These were the key questions and answers:

Q—WHAT DO YOU personally regard as the single most significant accomplishment of your seven years in office?

A—To add seven years to the period in which a nuclear weapon has not been used in anger. If anyone doesn't understand that answer, he is a fool. To keep this (nuclear) beast in its cage for seven more years is something one gets a lot of satisfaction out of . . .

It [the accomplishment] is trying to find a basis on which crises are settled . . . It does mean talking, literally interminably, with the Russians in 1961-2 in the Berlin crisis until, literally, the fever was talked out of that crisis.

Take ABMs [antiballistic missiles; the United States has proposed talks with the Soviet Union for the purpose of heading off the overall nuclear missile race; the Russians have indicated interest, in principle, but so far no agreement has been reached on when talks actually will begin]. One of these days we will be talking about it.

You might characterize this [the need for persistency] by broadcaster Mel Allen's phrase in talking about the New York Yankees: "Hang in there."

Tumult of Experience

Q—Your public "image" these days is overwhelmingly centered on the grim war in Vietnam. You have been seeking to emphasize that the Vietnamese war has not prevented advances in other fields of foreign policy. Your list includes the consular treaty with the Soviet Union and the outer space treaty, following the partial nuclear test ban treaty; the Kennedy Round of global trade relationships; the negotiations on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, plus forward motion on other topics. But is there any one dominant theme that you would use to portray your years as Secretary?

A—There is just too much happening at too fast a pace for any one dominant theme to emerge. I really haven't reflected generally about the tumult of experience that I have lived through to be able to express it that way—maybe someday that may be possible.

Someone once claimed that there

was a "Rusk Doctrine." Several things are instinctive with me; I don't like pet phrases — "massive retaliation"; "a bigger bang for a buck"; "agonizing reappraisal"—such phrases get in the way, so I have tried to avoid them.

I have always felt it is how the story comes out that makes the difference—and not how you look. I don't mind looking bad in the process if the result is good. Or looking stupid or old or tired or anything else. So I have been relatively relaxed on this question of "image"—whatever that means.

Some of the most important things you did, happily, will never be discovered—because if they are discovered you will lose the effect of them. [Meaning the averting of crises by secret diplomacy.]

Q—There have been major changes in the style and pattern of relations with the Soviet Union during both the
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