

Rusk Wins by 4 to 1 ^{Pub 9/19/66}

Salinger Joins O'Donnell, O'Brien, Sorensen In Saying JFK Intended to Keep Secretary

By Roscoe Drummond

IT NOW STANDS 4-to-1 among his close aides that President Kennedy was not going to dismiss Dean Rusk as Secretary of State.

You may recall that "A Thousand Days" by White House insider Arthur Schlesinger Jr. made front-page headlines around the world by reporting that the President had decided to get rid of Rusk at the first good opportunity. Schlesinger stated that the embarrassment of having to admit he had made the wrong appointment in the first place kept JFK from firing Rusk.

The evidence that Prof. Schlesinger either mis-heard, misunderstood or mis-reported Mr. Kennedy's views is accumulating steadily.

Because Dean Rusk remains as Secretary of State and because his credentials in many capitals were impaired when it was stated so authoritatively that he had lost the confidence of the President who appointed him, it is well to have the record set straight.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S two closest associates, Kenneth P. O'Donnell and Lawrence F. O'Brien, do not support the Schlesinger view. Among all the White House staff of those years, O'Donnell was the closest to JFK, saw him more than any other aide and probably was the most influential. O'Brien was

not far behind. If they ever write their own projected book, it will reject the view that Rusk was on the way out.

Another senior member of the team, Theodore C. Sorensen, who could think like Kennedy as well as write like him, has already put his information on the record. In his book, "Kennedy", Sorensen wrote that "at no time, press reports to the contrary, did the President regret having selected" Rusk as Secretary of State.

And now comes the further word of President Kennedy's press secretary, Pierre Salinger, who, in his book, "With Kennedy," puts it on the record that "not once did I ever hear JFK express any lack of confidence in Rusk, much less a desire to remove him from the Cabinet."

"He (the President) did, on occasion, express the wish," Salinger writes, "that Rusk would be more forceful in presenting his own views, but the criticism was not quantitative. JFK was frequently upset with many of his appointees, including me, but his anger at the moment

did not reflect his total view of us."

From my own knowledge, I can report that on more than one occasion President Eisenhower was "upset" by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his anger would at times go up like a roman candle. But that didn't mean that Gen. Eisenhower was thinking of removing Dulles.

Rusk is probably closer to President Johnson than he was to President Kennedy and the last thing LBJ wants is to lose him.

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