

## Losing George Ball <sup>Post</sup> 9/23/66

No Administration can lose the services of so exceptional a man as Under Secretary of State George Ball without sustaining a sizable dent. At a time when events have tended to make American foreign policy stylized and sometimes frozen, George Ball has performed the highly essential function of loyal skeptic. He has been particularly valuable during the agonizing discussions of Vietnam, asserting his concern about expansion of the war. Although outwardly the policy may not show it, unquestionably it has been influenced by the searching questions he asked.

Mr. Ball's great virtue to the Administration in this respect was that he kept his doubts within the family. Once a decision was made he supported it to the best of his substantial ability, irrespective of any previous misgivings. This won him the complete trust of President Johnson and of Secretary Rusk, and endowed him with unusual authority.

One of Mr. Ball's great enthusiasms, the Grand Design for Atlantic partnership envisaging British membership in the European Common Market, has not been realized. At the time there was criticism that he had made the effort too much an American project, thereby reducing its chances and causing European resentments. At one point, reportedly, President Kennedy pulled him back. Similarly, on the stillborn multilateral nuclear force, Mr. Ball was sometimes associated with the "theologians"—though with less emotional fervor and more realism. He also took a much harsher line than President Johnson in public about President de Gaulle's course.

But if he was occasionally accused of bulldozer tactics, Mr. Ball mellowed as he learned from experience. Hard-minded, he nevertheless pressed for

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liberal and libertarian principles. As a negotiator, drawing upon his legal background, he exhibited formidable skill and successfully handled many delicate problems.

Obviously a man of such force of character will be missed from official circles. Every Administration needs a loyal devil's advocate in the cumbrous business of foreign policy; and at a time when policy in some respects appears tired, it is much to be hoped that Mr. Ball's successor, Attorney General Katzenbach, or the new Political Affairs Under Secretary, Eugene Rostow, will have the qualities to fill this essential role. Meanwhile, as Mr. Ball looks forward to a well-earned rest, it is good to know that in private life his services still will be available to the Administration from time to time.