

Students Find Diplomacy Glamorless

Foreign Service Tuned Out

Second of Two Articles

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From 1967 to 1970, not a single graduate of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs joined the foreign service of the United States. Last year four signed up.

At the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), two 1970 graduates joined—compared with nine in 1967.

Harvard Prof. Ernest May, director of the Institute of Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, expresses deep concern for the future and says interest in foreign affairs careers has "plummeted." Said May: "In the '50s and early '60s I would talk with maybe 20 or 30 students a year, inquisitive

minds, who expressed an interest in the foreign service. In the last few years, if I've seen more than two a year, I think that's a generous figure.

Paradoxically, there are more candidates for the foreign service than ever before, but fewer are coming from the graduate schools of foreign affairs and from the Ivy League schools in the East which in the past have sent aspiring ambassadors into the service.

The disenchantment reflects more than the decline of the State Department as the chief foreign policy arm of the government, a fact underlined again during the past week as Secretary of State William P. Rogers has been repeatedly excluded from most of President Nixon's meetings in Peking with the top Chinese leaders.

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It reflects, in part, a widespread desire among students to tune out of world affairs, to concern themselves with America's problems at home.

It also reflects disillusion with the entire national apparatus that produced Vietnam, and beyond that it reflects the questioning of the whole spectrum of U.S. foreign policy.

President Nixon, in his annual foreign policy message to Congress, concluded with the kind of confidence in America that is difficult to find on the campuses.

"Today," he said, "the United States is once again acting with assurance and purpose on the world stage . . . We know where we are going." His State of the Nation address was similarly upbeat. "America," he said, "is not great because it is strong, not because it is rich, but because this is a good country."

There is evidence on the campuses, however, of continuing doubt about the place of the United States in the world. There is a pervasive sense of failure about the motivations and results of past policy and past efforts to change that policy.

But even if Mr. Nixon's characterization of the United States as a "good

country" is not widely shared, neither is the belief that this is a "bad" nation.

"We're in midpassage," said Irving Kristol recently. "The '60s were a decisive decade." It was a decade in which one lesson above all seems to have been learned: that the world is a pretty complicated place after all. "Before the 18th century," said Kristol, "it was assumed politics were hard, not easy. After that it was felt it was easy." That is, until the '60s.

Shared by the Public

A recent Gallup poll shows it is not only the students and the so-called "intellectuals" who sense this. The survey, released in February, showed that 54 per cent of those interviewed were dissatisfied with the way the United States is being governed, reflecting what the pollster called "disenchantment with the ability of the government as a whole to deal with pressing problems." A poll taken in April, 1971, reported in "Hopes and Fears of the American People" showed 34 per cent of those asked expressing concern that "our traditional way of doing things is not working and some basic changes

are needed if we are to work together."

The disillusion with the foreign service seen in some of the nations "elite" schools is paralleled by disenchantment with government service generally.

John R. Marquand, a senior tutor at Harvard, claims that in the old days every other freshman coming to see him wanted eventually to be Secretary of State. Now nobody does. But neither do they want to be secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, despite considerable interest among students in domestic affairs, especially problems of the ghetto, urban development, poverty.

"There is one healthy aspect of it," according to Thomas C. Schelling, one of the nation's leading strategic theoreticians who is now teaching at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

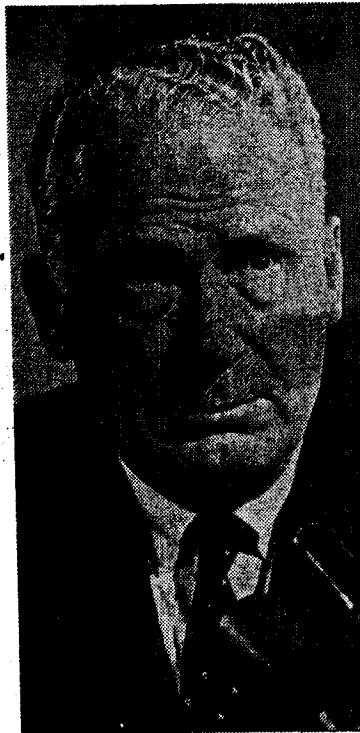
"It used to be the case that the government meant Washington, D.C.," says Schelling. "Now people are much more interested in working on problems not necessarily from an office of the Assistant Secretary . . . This is partly, I think, a disillusion with centralized government . . ."

"Some of it is maybe a belief that genuinely the appropriate jurisdiction within which to work on problems is less than the whole nation. People who for example are interested in using the courts as a place to protect the consumer . . . or in civil rights . . . or in the environment . . . don't need the federal government."

A "Commitment to Inaction"

In both international and domestic affairs, there is what Massachusetts Institute of Technology Prof. Martin Rein calls a growing "commitment to inaction . . . to this notion that intervention tends to make things worse." Rein, who is in the department of Urban Studies and Social Policy, sees much "more caution and much more doubt about what ought to be done." Whereas it was once believed that "commitment and heart" were enough to make progress, he says, now he sees students returning to their books to develop technical ability in specific fields.

"There is more interest in pursuing careers," says Martin Peretz, a young Harvard assistant professor. "The great promise (of the '60s) that the sys-



George Ball: Able men are leaving.

tem is about to crumble is not so . . . so now they have to work."

But these students, for the most part, have grave doubts about careers in the foreign service.

Kenneth Button, a graduate student at the Fletcher school from Wilmette, Ill. put it this way: "The foreign service is no longer glamorous. You still get sent abroad but you don't have the responsibility that I think you had in the old days . . . Traveling is part of the glamor, but responsibility is also part of the glamor, and if it weren't there they wouldn't get good people . . . If the concentration of decision-making is going to continue at the presidential level, they don't want aggressive, imaginative people . . ."

Disclosures by columnist Jack Anderson about governmental decision-making during the India-Pakistan crisis seems to have confirmed some of the students' worst suspicions. "It's

very disillusioning," said Mark Nichols, one of Button's classmates.

"If you're a—let's say a first or second secretary or something like that in some far-off country, I don't think you'd be likely to go out on a limb . . . in pushing a policy you think should be pushed if you know that the next week somebody from Washington or the NSC (National Security Council) staff is going to fly in for a weekend, talk to the ambassador—who may be a political appointee—talk to the leaders of the government, and go back and have policy determined by memos that he gives (Henry A.) Kissinger.

"You know, you spend your life in an area only to have policy made on the whim of a weekend trip . . . This doesn't, I think, allow for a great deal of encouragement for young, aspiring FSOs (foreign service officers)."

There was only slightly less pessimism voiced by Michael Moodie of Wisconsin, another Fletcher student. "There are a hell of a lot of things that are more hopeless than being effective in the State Department as a young FSO," Moodie suggested.

He said he would consider joining the foreign service "with the hope that I would begin in some area of the world that Kissinger hasn't found out about yet, and, you know, affect policy even marginally. And I think that in your smaller legations you can do that to a certain extent . . . on an individual, person-to-person basis you can contribute something just by being a good person in a spot at a particular time. . . ."

"An Unimpressive Bunch"

Nevertheless, there are more candidates for the foreign service than ever before, according to John H. Stutesman Jr., the service's deputy director of personnel for recruitment. Stutesman says the service is now attracting candidates who in the past would never have thought of signing up for FSO careers such as business school graduates, economists, communicators.

What is happening is that the service is no longer recruiting significant numbers of political officers, the area, in the words of one FSO who quit "where the action is." He added: "No well-trained person wants to volunteer to be a hack in some obscure job." As a result many State Department officials have expressed disappointment with many of the new recruits, whom one FSO called "an unimpressive bunch."

Although the remark sounds like a remnant of elitist snobbery, it is one heard at all levels of the State Department. It is made in defense of meritocracy, not in search of aristocracy.

Former Under Secretary of State George W. Ball, recently commenting on the spate of summitry that is displacing traditional diplomacy, wrote recently: "Able men, with proper pride in their professional skills, will not long tolerate such votes of no confi-

dence, so it should be no surprise that they are leaving the career service, making way for mediocrity with the result that, as time goes on, it may be hopelessly difficult to restore the (State) Department to the level of effectiveness required by the urgent problems of the day."

Increasingly, students with interest in foreign affairs are looking toward careers in the World Bank and in private development organizations.

Despite the recession, which is driving students to put applications into every available slot, there is also great reluctance to sign up with private banks operating abroad. Button told of an interview with one bank. "I was really appalled," he said. "I asked them their bank's attitude towards development . . . and they said, essentially, that we're out to make a buck and profit is the most important thing."

Student interest in foreign affairs careers, while always confined to a small group, is even more limited today. "The current preoccupations of our youth," wrote Harvard Prof. Graham T. Allison recently, "are predominantly, pervasively and indeed almost entirely not issues of foreign policy . . . The public issues of greatest concern are domestic."

Prof. John Roche of Brandeis sees the students there as "fundamentally . . . tuned out of the world." So tuned out, in fact, that even in a student body that is two-thirds Jewish he finds "very little basic sympathy for Israel."

Students are leaving the colleges today committed, in Allison's words, to "the retraction of power." Where their elders, schooled in the lessons of Munich and the failure to nip aggression in the bud, had sought to exert American power throughout the world, the current generation is impressed with the limits of that power and questions the

propriety of using it even if it could be effective.

The "revisionist" interpretation of the Cold War, in the view of Irving Kristol, "has affected this generation . . . even if they've never read a line." He said: "It enters the popular culture that the United States is an interventionist, quasi-imperialist power."

For over a decade, revisionist historians had been writing that the United States was a counterrevolutionary, status quo power intervening in small countries not for the stated idealistic purposes of preserving democracy but for economic gain. It was a nation, the revisionists said, which by its post-World War II actions provoked Soviet reactions and precipitated the Cold War.

As the Vietnam war became increasingly unpopular, revisionist thought provided an explanation and even a rationale. For students today, the bipolar world does not exist, and they wonder if it ever did.

"When I started teaching (in 1960) and cast aspersions on the motives of American foreign policy the kids thought I was wacky, that I was some kind of left-wing crank," says social studies professor Peretz. "Some humored me and said they were glad they'd come to Harvard because they'd met a radical kook. Now there's virtually nothing you can say that casts aspersions which isn't denounced as a whitewash.

"The received wisdom . . . was that American foreign policy was responsive to the mendacious, avaricious motives of the Soviet Union and that American policy was motivated by goodwill . . . Now they believe everything the revisionists say. After you read Seymour Hersh (on Mylai) you can believe anything," Peretz says.

With the reaction to Vietnam, in Roche's view, students turned to the revisionists in the way a drunk uses a lamp post: "For support, not light."

Until 1960, according to Kristol, "the basic claim of American radicals was that the essential goodness of America was corrupted by wicked men. The New Left denies this essential goodness. This can infect the entire culture."

Something of a middle view seems now to be emerging.

Stanley Hoffman, a history professor at Harvard, says: "What I find the students not buying . . . (is) the breast-beating quality of . . . the revisionists . . . I find there is something much more matter-of-fact, that . . . we're neither better than anybody else, which means we shouldn't be a world policeman. But we aren't worse either. So the attitude is a kind of cynicism about America, as (about) the world as a whole."

Samuel Popkin, an assistant profes-

sor of government at Harvard who has been a government consultant on Vietnam and who has been summoned by the Boston grand jury looking into the disclosure of the Pentagon papers, says: "When we were students we knew America was moral and justified. We knew Russia was bad and therefore we assumed that what we did to stop Russia was justified. . . .

"The revisionists are Cold Warriors who flip out—from white to black—and say that having recognized our own evil we simply had the labels wrong and that the Russians are the good ones . . . I want to be of the generation that says that capitalism can produce inequities and communism can be stifling and tense . . . you have to give up the quest for instant heroes and easy solutions."

A Lack of Certainty

Many students today blame their elders for having taken the lessons of Munich too far, and they do not want to make the same mistakes. The lessons being drawn from Vietnam are that the United States should not get involved, should not intervene. But it is characteristic of the pervasive doubt that students are also asking whether this is the right lesson.

The only thing they are sure of, it seems, is that there are no simple answers. This period of doubt, the sociologists say, is what has led students to turn inward, away from foreign policy matters. It is also one of the reasons why they are no longer agitating for change, for they are not sure what that change should be.

The result is a striking quiet on the campuses, "so quiet that it is almost impossible to recapture the Spring of '68," says James R. Kurth, a young assistant professor at Harvard. "The day will come when nobody will be able to understand what went on."

The withdrawal from Vietnam, the draft lottery, the 18-year-old vote are some of the factors that have cut into

campus activism. Beyond that, the recession is mentioned frequently.

"Eighty per cent of the students," Kurth says, "realize the importance of getting a job or going on to graduate school. In '68 to '70 they figured they could change the 'system' and get minimum subsistence as well. Now, for example, a '68 grad who went to work in a poverty program came back recently wanting to go to law school. Now he has a wife, and probably children. He feels he needs \$10,000 a year—not much, but \$10,000. And for that he needs to get recommendations . . ."

Sociologist Daniel Bell suggests still another reason. "There is always more radicalism in a liberal administration than in a conservative one," Bell says. "You can make more demands on a liberal administration while with conservatives no payoff is possible. The '50s were quiet—we had Eisenhower. If you get a liberal Democrat in '72 you may have more demonstrations, not like before but more than now."

Chayes puts it this way: "When there is no receptivity to change, none but the very committed pursue it. Then, once there is a chance, everyone begins to push." Everyone—the blacks, the students—has quieted down, says Chayes, because college administrations have learned how to cope and the government in Washington is conservative. "Very few people," he said, "have the capacity for perpetual anger. They've hit their heads against the wall enough."

Roche calls it the "burned-out syndrome," adding: "Every time you have this great revival in religious history you then have a period in which you can only get five people for the second coming of Christ."

The Changes Made

In part, the moderates—and they were always the vast majority of the demonstrators—have been put off. Says Bell: "It is in the nature of an extremist movement to generate more outrage. You need increasingly sharper and more dramatic issues to mobilize and this sloughs off the moderates."

"This was true of (Sen. Joseph) McCarthy, who finally went after the Army, and it has been true of the SDS," said Bell. "They exhaust themselves. SDS thought it had a good idea in getting kids early, in high school. But for the young ones some of the fad and fashion lost its edge so it turned out to be a self-defeating tactic."

Kurth, who spends a good deal of time with first-year students, summed it up this way: "Two years ago, social class and revolution was in; now it's dead and psychoanalysis is in. Radical politics are certainly out."

There are many students who agree with Sam Brown, the former Harvard divinity student who organized students for Eugene McCarthy and the

national antiwar moratorium in 1969, who wrote that the demonstrations were counterproductive. Some think the Chicago demonstrations at the 1968 Democratic national convention can be blamed for having won the election for Richard M. Nixon. Disturbances at the University of California at Berkeley have often been cited as having played an important role in the election of Ronald Reagan as governor of California.

But historically the demonstrations, in Bell's view, accomplished some very important things. "They influenced mass opinion in this country," said Bell. "They turned it around effectively—evidenced alone by Johnson's decision not to run."

Beyond that, they influenced the whole set of policies in the alliance of the university with government funding of research. "Without the kids," said Bell, "we would have had complete unity of university and the government. Nobody regarded it as wrong to take on government funding . . . Now there is a great degree of questioning about it. Four to five years ago, every major university was undertaking classified research projects. None do now."

Bell thinks the demonstrations went even deeper: "There has been a crack in confidence of the government as a whole. There has been a great loss of nerve. The . . . moral legitimacy of the system was called into question."

No one can predict how long it will last but the campuses are in a period of retrenchment or reassessment. In all fields, in the words of MIT's Rein, "doubt is now stronger than commitment for action, and doubt leads to the desire to know."

Students—and their professors—are not so free with their advice for the government any more, partly because the administration is not seen as one open to ideas. But it's also because there is less assurance about how correct that advice might be.