

... And Rusk Holds

SECRETARY OF STATE Dean Rusk displays none of the mental travail that torments most other Washington officials about the outcome of the war in Vietnam.

He does not pretend to know just when, or how, it will come out. But he once told an interviewer: "It's going to break fast one of these days."

Rusk is holding fast for the break.

Many misread Rusk's bland manner, his use of cotton-wool language to shroud double or triple meanings and his litany of oversimplifications ("They (Hanoi) keep hanging up the phone"; "The other side has to stop doing what they're doing"; "You cannot stop this war simply by stopping a half of it").

Rusk sees the objective of the war as neither diffuse nor abstract. In a rare public display of bluntness and forwardness, he once took a questioner by the coat lapels and said firmly:

"There is one thing you had better understand: We are never going to let North Vietnam take this piece of real estate. That is the beginning of the story—and the end of the story."

Confident of Power

OTHERS STRUGGLE with their consciences over whether the United States should be in Vietnam; should we have made this move or that; will what we are doing now really work? Rusk not only appears to be, but is, so far as his closest associates can discern, untroubled by such doubts.

To Rusk, who already has served longer than most Secretaries of State, American power is so vast that once the United States puts its hand to a problem with full commitment, it will be resolved. There will be periods of heavy strain; some blood may be spilled, but once the adversary becomes fully aware of the power aligned against him, or what Rusk sometimes calls "the objective factors involved," the United States will prevail.

Rusk's experience in the postwar bureaucracy goes back to President Truman's pressure that pushed the Soviet army out of Iran in 1946. Rusk then was a junior officer in the Office of United Nations Affairs with wartime experience as a senior staff planner in Burma and later at the War Department that once made him think of pursuing a military career.

In Rusk's mind, a clear line runs from Iran to Vietnam, and it is labeled "aggression," varying only in form. In 1950, he was Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs when President Truman, faced with the danger that American forces might be

compelled to evacuate South Korea, said, "They can't do that to us." And that, Rusk proudly recalls to friends, was that.

The Use of Power

AT THAT POINT in history, Robert S. McNamara was controller of the Ford Motor Co. in Michigan. Walt Whitman Rostow was teaching American history at Cambridge, England. Lyndon Baines Johnson was just completing his second year in the United States Senate, sitting in the front row next to J. William Fulbright.

During the 1964 election campaign, Rusk once remarked to a small group: "When Lyndon Johnson is elected President in his own right, you are going to see a man who really understands the use of power in this world."

A longtime friend and associate of Rusk's, the late John Foster Dulles, also was keenly conscious of the use of power. The Dulles concept, accompanied by resounding declarations of American righteousness and an absolutist stand against the Soviet Union and Communist China, was dubbed "brinkmanship."

That is not Rusk's style or, in more recent years, his position. He speaks far more moderately of "organizing the peace of the world." He has taken a major role in lessening U.S.-Soviet tensions in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations and in developing policies that recognize that the Communist world is far from the monolith it was thought to be under Stalin.

Yet in the Vietnamese war, Rusk has come to sound to many more and more like Dulles with his catch phrases and oversimplifications.

The Lightning Rod

BUT VERY MUCH unlike Dulles, Rusk never gives the impression that U.S. foreign policy is formulated under his hat. Rusk is the all-purpose buffer for the President in foreign affairs; the lightning rod; the shock absorber.

One barb that wounded Rusk more than most was Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.'s description of him as a man who always sat "Buddha-like" in White House meetings, inscrutably declining to say what he really thought.

"I was a Buddha at meetings where Arthur Schlesinger was present," Rusk has said acidly, "because I knew fellows like him were there taking notes."

As the senior Cabinet member, Rusk maintains, his advice was for the ears of the President alone. He refused to have his opinions bounced about in

Fast for the Break



'... all-purpose buffer for the President'

seminar-type sessions where President Kennedy might casually call first on a staff assistant as readily as on a Cabinet Secretary.

Rusk is intensely loyal to the men he has served under. Where the White House is concerned, whatever he suffers, he suffers in silence. He never allows himself to be drawn into comparisons of presidential abilities or judgments.

But although he would consider it improper for him to acknowledge it publicly, Rusk is much more comfortable with President Johnson's style of operation than he was with Mr. Kennedy's. Both Rusk and Mr. Johnson are Southerners who came as strangers to

the Establishment; both operate best out of the limelight. And Mr. Johnson puts greater weight on what Rusk sometimes calls "the great statutory departments" of the Government than did his predecessor.

There is an extra reason for Rusk's placidity these days. It is his conviction that he has adequately demonstrated, by probing all the conceivable crevices of diplomacy, that Hanoi is unready to do business on terms that the United States is ready to offer. Therefore, he concludes, it is right for the United States to pour on more military pain.

Rusk by no means flinches from that conclusion. To him it is a necessity, to produce "the break" that he is convinced will one day come.