

Clear It With Hoover

Even after publication of the curious correspondence between Secretary of State Rusk and J. Edgar Hoover, it is far from certain that the Administration will be able to override the veto Mr. Hoover has hitherto exercised against the long-stalled Soviet-American consular treaty.

There can be few, if any, precedents for the spectacle that correspondence presents: the Secretary of State, in effect, asking a Federal police official of sub-Cabinet rank to stop blocking United States foreign policy, and then receiving a reply so cryptic and ungracious that it can only further encourage opponents of the Administration policy. It is a reminder of the magnitude of Mr. Hoover's power, with implications that go far beyond the immediate issue.

The fate of the consular treaty is crucial, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has acted wisely in altering its schedule to give priority to the treaty's consideration. Ratification means more than normalizing Soviet-American diplomatic relations and providing badly needed additional protection to American citizens traveling in the Soviet Union. What happens to the treaty will foreshadow the probable outcome of the rest of the Administration's constructive program for trying to improve relations with Moscow.

If the consular pact cannot be ratified, then the East-West trade bill is probably dead and the space treaty may have been still-born. The entire direction of American foreign policy toward the Soviet Union at an extraordinarily critical moment in world history is at stake.