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UPI Telephoto

Rogers is shown with the President in the White House in 1970

The Reluctant Diplomat

Rogers' Time Ran Out

By Stewart Hensley
United Press

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Secretary of State William P. Rogers was a reluctant diplomat who didn't want the job in the first place.

Four years ago, shortly after taking the post, he told a small group of newsmen at dinner that he had accepted the post because "an old friend" asked him and he would serve until he was no longer needed.

Yesterday, time ran out for Rogers — not necessarily because he was no longer needed but because he had been increasingly disturbed by the Watergate revelations and was not particularly making any secret about it.

"I feel like the last of the whooping cranes," Rogers said yesterday. "I am the only cabinet officer of the original Nixon cabinet still here. I am leaving on account of good health."

'OBSESSION'

At a news conference on Monday, he deplored the administration's "obsession" with national security matters to the extent that it violated the civil rights of individual citizens.

Rogers' refusal to go along

with the conventional administration approach on Watergate came as no surprise to those who have known him since the days when he was attorney general under President Eisenhower.

Yesterday, at an impromptu meeting with the correspondents who cover his department, Rogers denied that Watergate had precipitated his departure. However, he added "that does not mean I don't have my own feelings about Watergate."

He said he had planned to quit at the end of four years and had promised his law firm he would do so. However, he contended that he had stayed on an additional seven months simply to wind up loose ends.

COOLING

But it was clear that despite the cordial exchange of letters between Mr. Nixon and Rogers, the relationship had cooled from what it was in previous times of close association.

Rogers denied that he and presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger, who will succeed him as secretary of state, did not get along too well because of the White House insistence on handling most of the big issues.

Rogers said he personally was always fully informed and despite the "natural jealousies in a bureaucracy," personal relations between him and Kissinger were good and "so were the results and that's what counts."

While riding in his plane with him four years ago high above Pakistan, I jokingly asked if Rogers thought he would go down in history as "a great secretary of state."

He replied: "Absolutely not. There are great Presidents but secretaries of state are remembered by the mistakes they make."

DULLES

He recalled at that time that John Foster Dulles "blew" the Aswan dam deal with Egypt, that the late Dean Acheson allegedly "drew the defense line at the wrong place in the Far East" and Dean Rusk,

whom he admired greatly, never was able to get out of the Vietnam bog long enough to show his real ability.

He said that Dulles, Acheson and Rusk obviously considered being secretary of state "crowning points of their careers" so they felt failure very keenly.

"As for me," Rogers said in that conversation four years ago, "the crowning point of my career is sitting around the swimming pool in Bethesda with my grandchildren" and this job is simply one "I promised a friend I could do as well as I could."