

Expert on Refugee Affairs Quits Over Rusk Plan to Abolish Post

By MAX FRANKEL

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 6 — Abba P. Schwartz, a vigorous advocate of liberal immigration, travel and refugee policies in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, has been forced out of his high post in the State Department.

Mr. Schwartz submitted to the White House last night his resignation as administrator of the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs. He said it had been offered 24 hours after he learned that he was to be the principal victim of a "reorganization" to abolish his bureau.

The reorganization was described to him as an economy measure. He said it had been planned for "many, many months" without his knowledge and had the approval of Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

The State Department had no comment. A spokesman referred all questions to Mr. Schwartz.

Some high officials said they were too upset by the affair to discuss it. One described it as "shabby," another as "scandalous."

Sought to Free Prisoners

Mr. Schwartz, who is 49 years old, was the principal architect of changes last year in the immigration law that abolished restrictive quotas limiting admission to the United States for certain nationality groups. He also has long worked on measures to liberalize regulations governing the issuance of passports and to eliminate travel restrictions on Americans.

Most recently, Mr. Schwartz is said to have used his wide contacts in international refugee and Red Cross circles to try to negotiate the release of more than 200 Americans being held prisoner by the Vietcong or North Vietnamese forces. He has been described as the Government's only link to these secret negotiations.

Together with Dr. Howard A. Rusk, director of the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the New York University Medical Center, Mr. Schwartz has also worked to promote new programs of help for refugees in South Vietnam.

Aided Cuban Refugees

He was a principal negotiator of the accord with Cuba under which about 10,000 Cubans have been admitted to the United States in recent months. He has also administered American participation in worldwide efforts to relieve the plight of refugees and other displaced persons.



Abba P. Schwartz
Chase, Ltd.

These have been his principal duties as head of the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs. Security programs were removed from the bureau before his arrival in September, 1962, but he had charge of the visa and passport offices, an office protecting the interest of Americans overseas and one for refugee and immigration affairs.

Mr. Schwartz was the first person to hold the post with a Presidential appointment, requiring Senate confirmation, with the rank of Assistant Secretary of State.

He was a close associate of President Kennedy and his brother, Senator Robert F. Kennedy. Mr. Schwartz brought to the job the twin-credentials of long service for liberal causes under the tutelage of Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and the warm endorsement of Representative Francis E. Walter, chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee, who was a zealous Congressional guardian of immigration policies.

Before joining the Government, Mr. Schwartz practiced law in Washington in the firm of Landis, Cohen, Rubin & Schwartz, and became one of the nation's recognized experts on refugee and immigration matters and prisoner-of-war questions.

He was an early member of Americans for Democratic Action, a liberal wing of the Democratic party, and first became a friend of Mrs. Roosevelt while promoting programs to help refugees from Nazi Germany. He was befriended by Mr. Walter, a Pennsylvania Democrat, while counsel to the United Nations International Refugee Organization and legal

adviser to the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration.

Once in the Government, he soon became embroiled in a series of controversies.

There has been an almost constant feud with Mrs. Frances G. Knight, director of the passport office, his subordinate, who protested, among other things, what she called the "dangerous" policy of letting suspected Communists obtain passports unless they were given an opportunity of facing their accusers.

Conflicts Blamed for Step

Mr. Schwartz has had many brushes with Congressional security investigators. He is thought to have encountered frequent resistance inside the State Department in efforts to abolish United States bans on travel to Communist China and other Communist-held territories.

He refused to comment today, however, when asked what quarters or issues he believed had inspired the move to eliminate his job. Other sources said they believed past conflicts and not "economy" had led to the reorganization.

Mr. Schwartz said he had not seen the reorganization plan but understood that his bureau's major functions were to be placed under the office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration, William J. Crockett. Organizationally, Mr. Crockett already had supervision over the bureau, so the main result of its abolition will be the removal of Mr. Schwartz.

Although the change in effect, will amend the Immigration and Nationality Act, that created the bureau, the Administration was said to be submitting it to Congress as a reorganization matter. Unless Congress objects, the change will take effect 60 days after submission.

Secretary Rusk and White House aides having long ago approved the change, Mr. Schwartz said, it appeared to be only a matter of days before the plan would be sent to Capitol Hill.

He said he had first learned of the plan a few hours after his return Thursday night from a confidential mission abroad and was officially informed Friday.

Apparently no effort was made to discourage his resignation.

"I knew nothing about it whatsoever," Mr. Schwartz said.

He said he had made no other plans so far and was awaiting word from the White House on the effective date of his departure.