

Rogers: A Nixon Loyalist Upstaged While in Office

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 22 — William P. Rogers does not anger easily, but he was undoubtedly stung when he was described publicly by Senator Stuart Symington as "the laughing stock of the cocktail-party circuit" on the ground that Henry A. Kissinger was already "Secretary of State in all but title."

Today it was announced that on Sept. 3 Mr. Kissinger would have the title, too, as well as the power that many have felt—and said—he has had for so long.

The announcement confirmed one of the most persistent rumors in Washington, one that has emerged again and again along with comments similar to the one by Senator Symington in March, 1971, that rankled Mr. Rogers.

Comments such as Mr. Symington's were already commonplace, as was the accompanying speculation about the reasons compelling Mr. Rogers, a successful lawyer, to stay in a job for which he seemed to have no particular affection.

Puzzlement and Curiosity

In the more than two years since then, as Mr. Kissinger has emerged as the most notable personality of the Nixon Administration—and surely one of its most powerful figures—the puzzlement and curiosity have continued.

The answer probably lies in the same qualities that led Mr. Nixon to appoint Mr. Rogers to the post in Dec., 1968. He is one of the President's few intimates, a trusted and utterly loyal friend.

Privately, but only privately, Mr. Rogers has expressed his frustration. Publicly, he has been a good, smiling soldier, until very recently. Thus his comments on political financ-

ing and, on Monday, on the Watergate affair—in both cases departing from the Nixon Administration line—were seen as clues that he was planning at last to resign. His distress about the Watergate episode has been known for some time, but he did not express it until he was on the way back to private life.

He made no pretense of expertise in foreign policy. He once said he "understood" that President Nixon would be making foreign policy—that's his constitutional responsibility.

"Mine was to advise him and head the Department of State—and I was perfectly prepared to play that role," he said.

Liked in The Department

But he was rarely asked for his advice, at least on crucial matters, and did not make an overwhelming effort to school himself in the sometimes tedious intricacies of foreign policy. As a result, despite his genial personality he was ill at ease in his relations with the press and held fewer news conferences than any other Secretary of State in recent years.

Although there was resentment among State Department professionals about what they saw as his acquiescence in the studied decline of the department's influence, he was very well-liked and respected as a person.

When he has disagreed with Administration policy, Mr. Rogers has not said so aloud, but it is known that he has disagreed on occasion, as with the decision in 1970 to invade Cambodia. In General, his views are believed to be moderate and peaceable: "Unless we are ready to risk war or intrude recklessly in others' affairs," he said in early 1972,