

worldview

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PAST POLICIES, FUTURE PROBLEMS

The sorrow and sense of tragedy that have surrounded the resignation of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles mean more than the sympathy men always feel for one struck down by a terrible illness. They are a tribute to Mr. Dulles himself, a tribute the more remarkable for its aspects of irony. It is as though the announcements from Walter Reed Hospital had suddenly, unmistakably, revealed as Mr. Dulles' greatest virtues those elements in his policies which, before, had been considered his gravest defects.

As Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was the center of great controversy, both in this country and among our allies. At home he was distrusted, and even disliked, by "liberals." Abroad he was frequently pointed to as the symbol of America's decline in world affairs from a position of leadership to one of mere negation. He was assailed for "inflexibility," for moralizing, for lack of imagination, for failing to see that the struggle against Communism is more than a military holding action.

Now, many of those who said these things most severely are speaking in quite different tones. Inflexibility, moralizing, lack of imagination are seen, and praised, as indomitable purpose, high moral vision, and putting first things first. More than any other statesman of this generation, John Foster Dulles has understood the unchanging nature of the Communist menace, one of Mr. Dulles' former critics now writes; another of them states that were it not for Mr. Dulles' major policies (which he violently opposed) the world would long since have been plunged into war.

History of course must decide whether Mr. Dulles' critics were wiser when they were implacable or when they had repented. But whatever may be history's judgment on Mr. Dulles' particular policies and pronouncements, it will most certainly judge him personally as he is being everywhere judged now, as a courageous man of noble purpose who rendered untiring service to his cause.

It seems impossible to say anything more final now in judgment on many of the particular controversies that raged around Mr. Dulles, because most of them are still unresolved. And it would seem a grave mistake—a great danger—to assume (as some now seem to assume) that the tragedy of the Secretary's resignation had resolved them.

The Dulles "strong" policy on the islands of Quemoy and Matsu, for example, may, and probably did, prevent Red Chinese invasion of the islands last summer. But it seems premature and even naive to think that this policy "solved" the problem of the off-shore islands. Quemoy and Matsu are still there, and Red China is still there, and a real solution has yet to be seriously suggested by our government, much less achieved.

The controversy over the doctrine of massive retaliation is another example of real, and terrible, issues yet to be seriously faced. The announcement of, and repeated emphasis on, this doctrine may (as many believe) have effectively deterred the Soviet Union from military action in the past, and even now in the case of Berlin. But the dreadful choice which this doctrine offers us—the choice between surrender or mutual annihilation—is with us still, and as a long-range policy it is difficult to see that such a choice can lead anywhere but to disaster. A viable defense policy for the United States has yet to be found.

Another, and more elusive, example: the battlefield where the struggle between "the free world" and Communism will be resolved is rapidly shifting from Europe to Asia and Africa. And the weapons which will be decisive in that struggle are increasingly economic rather than military ones. History is not static: it changes even when statesmen remain the same. Who would say that the United States has begun the effort to adapt its policies to the changes which history will force upon it? Here, and in many other areas, the policies of the past—no matter how valid they may have been for their time—will not be enough. The need for adaptation and change is ever upon us.