

John Foster Dulles.

A Statesman and His Times

by Michael A. Guhin

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Willard Barber

The son of a Presbyterian minister, John Foster Dulles's early years were deeply and permanently influenced by religious and moral precepts and examples. His first serious application of the formal education he received as a Princeton undergraduate and then an honor student at the George Washington Law School was to engage himself in the defense of the United States at the Versailles Peace Conference. Appointed to the delegation by his uncle, Secretary of State Robert Lansing, Dulles was given general responsibility for the economic sections of the treaties drawn up with Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria. He was especially influential in maintaining a sense of moderation in fixing the amounts of war reparations.

Even earlier, by appointment from his grandfather, former Secretary of State John W. Foster, Dulles had served as a junior secretary to the American advisors to the Chinese delegation at the second Hague Peace Conference in 1907. Participation in international conferences was even more relevant than academic training for the role which Dulles was to assume in 1953 as Secretary of State.

In the presidential election of 1924 Dulles supported the Democratic Party ticket. He supplied the nominee, John W. Davis, with a list of issues on which he thought the Republicans were particularly vulnerable. During the Truman Administration the then middle-aged Dulles was a consultant to Secretary of State Acheson, and as personal representative of President Truman, with the rank of ambassador, Dulles negotiated and signed the Japanese Peace Treaty. Considering his service during World War I on the

War Trade Board, whose chairman was also head of the Democratic National Committee and with whom Dulles continued a close friendship for many years, it is clear that Dulles was much more the public servant than the partisan politician.

Intertwined with careers in law and public service was a continuing commitment to religious principles. This took form, at different times, in activities within denominational organizations. In 1924 Dulles, as a leader of a modernist faction, successfully defended the New York Presbytery and the ordinations of the Reverends Harry Emerson Fosdick and Henry P. Van Dusen in the General Assembly held that year by the Presbyterians. In 1937, as a representative of the Universal Christian Council, Dulles attended the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State. Already an elder in his own church, Dulles derived from the Oxford experience a reinforced opinion that religion (and churchly manifestations of moral and ethical concepts) could serve as a significant tool in moving toward international cooperation. In a broader context he served during the 1940's on laymen's committees on war and peace, and eventually, at the invitation of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, he became chairman of the Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace.

In 1949 Governor Thomas Dewey of New York appointed Dulles to the Senate vacancy caused by Senator Robert Wagner's resignation. In his brief tenure (he was defeated by Herbert Lehman in 1950) Dulles challenged Robert Taft and other conservatives in advocating ratification of the NATO Treaty. He later became foreign policy advisor to

Eisenhower, as he had been to Dewey in the latter's presidential candidacies. Since the early days of the Republic no Secretary of State had come to office with as lengthy a record of bipartisan experience in the area of international affairs.

Recounting the story of John Foster Dulles's life and work is a monumental task. Dr. Michael A. Guhin (currently a member of Dr. Kissinger's staff) has approached that task courageously. The intricacies of Dulles's complicated careers are adequately exposed. The rhetoric and overstatements, indulged in during political campaigns, however, are rather blandly excused. That Dulles appeared more than a hundred times before Congressional committees is cited as evidence of his realization of practical necessities, inasmuch as the Eisenhower Administration was confronted during six of its eight years with a Democratic majority in Congress. But Dr. Guhin must be faulted for repeated tangles in chronology, which are very frustrating to the reader. Guhin omits explanations of Dulles's role in the Guatemalan intervention in 1954 and in the rise of Castroism in Cuba. Canada and Mexico are ignored, as is the whole continent of Africa except for Egypt. An incisive characterization of the man about whom he writes is missing, although Guhin reproduces a multitude of quotations. In defense of the author it can be said that Dulles was a prolific writer, starting with an outstanding undergraduate essay on "Pragmatism" and continuing through five decades of adult responsibility. Perhaps a clearer understanding of the man and his perception of the need to accommodate principles to reality will emerge from future analyses. Other public figures come to mind whose youthful *statements* (by Lyndon Johnson on race relations, or by Richard Nixon on communism) were outgrown over the years, replaced by more generous and liberal *actions* (civil rights legislation and personal negotiations in Peking and Moscow) when a sense of national interest accompanied the rise to power.

The middle man of a trio of cold

warriors—Secretaries Acheson, Dulles and Rusk—was guided in relations with the Soviet Union by a number of propositions, enumerated by Dr. Guhin. One was that the Soviet challenge was neither unnatural nor demonic. Others were that the challenge could exert a salutary effect on the West (the latter would have to put its own house in order); war can be avoided without compromising basic convictions; the goal of U.S. policy is a world at peace rather than the eradication of communism; there is no panacea; and the danger of war comes from miscalculation by either side.

Dr. Guhin is at his professional best—abetted by nine-hundred citations in a fifty-page reference section, and by Dulles's own memoranda on the treaty with Japan, the Berlin blockade and the Geneva Accords on Southeast Asia—when he shows that the Eisenhower-Dulles foreign policy was part of a continuing link, preceded and followed by similar policies espoused by Truman, Acheson, Kennedy, Johnson and Rusk. Nonrecognition of mainland China, construction of bilateral and multilateral alliances, reactions and counteractions against Russia over Berlin, Greece, Cuba and atomic weaponry, and maintenance of military power: these were fundamental policies of the United States for a generation.

Dulles said: "We are not so closely wedded to doctrinaire concepts that we cannot adjust our policies to the demands of the hour. . . . We cannot deal in absolutes. This, to many Americans, is a source of worriment." This "worriment" led many Americans to criticize what they saw as "confusion" and "indecision" on the part of Dulles. But Dulles, as Secretary of State, was faced less by uncertainty and ambiguity in foreign relations as he was forced to resolve the dichotomy between what we all wanted and what it was possible for us to achieve.

Modesty was not a quality ordinarily ascribed to Dulles: His appearance, style and personal idiosyncrasies did not lend themselves to such a characterization. But for

his countrymen as well as for himself he bespoke an international modesty. We should not act and talk "as though God had appointed us to be the Committee of Admissions to the Free World and as though the

qualifications for membership were to be found by our looking into a mirror." Here we perceive the essence of Dulles: a reference to the Deity while announcing a line of diplomatic conduct.

A Window on Russia for the Use of Foreign Readers by Edmund Wilson

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 280 pp.; \$7.95)

Paul A. Goble

The relations that exist between the social and political condition of a people and the genius of its authors are always numerous; whoever knows the one is never completely ignorant of the other.

—Alexis de Tocqueville

Russian literature has long been an object of study in the West, and its relationship with the social and political life of an often tragic people has been carefully investigated. Unfortunately this valuable and legitimate task has all too frequently been a substitute for, rather than an adjunct to, serious literary criticism. As literary concerns with language, style and the exposition of human values and actions have been eclipsed by political concerns in the criticism of Russian authors and their works, much has been lost both in our understanding of Russian literature and, as Tocqueville suggests, in our knowledge of Russian social and political life. The late Edmund Wilson is one of the notable exceptions to this practice.

Russians tend to assume, as Wilson points out, that "no foreigner can really know Russia, since one cannot imagine it correctly in any terms supplied by the West, and nobody but a Russian [they] think—not entirely without justification—can have the freedom of the Russian language." In offering to be our guide to a world partially cut off

from Western experience, Edmund Wilson first has to deal with the Russian language; for contained within it are both the terms and relationships needed to understand Russians and the reasons it is so difficult to translate.

Wilson himself came to the study of Russian at middle age "with the insight and intelligence of an adult," that is, in the same way in which he would have us approach both the language and the literature. He points to the richness and variety of the linguistic heritage and to the unfortunate fact that much of this has been squandered in the Soviet present. Thus, for example, words of the feudal past, verbs such as *pereparycat* ("to whip everybody all around") have now been supplanted by verbs like *likvidirovat* ("to liquidate"), a change in words reflecting a change in worlds.

But if the verbs have changed, the verb system has not—different verbs still have numerous and naturally irregular aspects, a feature of the language which contributes to the uniquely Russian sense of time and of movement through time. And lest we forget Turgenev's remark that "although the Russians are the most incorrigible liars in the whole world, there is nothing they respect so much as the truth," Wilson includes a special section on the various Russian words for liar and lying as well as one on the special possibilities of