

Era of Pride and Spirit

Murphy Was One of the Brilliant Generation of Foreign Service Men

By JAMES RESTON

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 29—The resignation yesterday of Under Secretary of State Robert Murphy was something more than the end of a long and notable diplomatic career. It was the beginning of the end of that brilliant generation of Foreign Service officers who helped guide the nation through the convulsive transition from isolation to world leadership. There were many remarkable American diplomats before Secretary Murphy and there are many more who never served in the isolationist era, but Mr. Murphy's generation was different from any that went before or came after.

It staffed the first really professional Foreign Service established by the Rogers Act of 1924. It took on the responsibilities of the new internationalism. It created a pride and spirit and standard of professional excellence seldom equaled in American history. It endured the McCarthy war at home. And it stayed the course beyond World War II and well into the "cold war."

In Older Part

There were really two parts of this transitional generation. Secretary Murphy was in the older part, which included Joseph C. Grew, William (Billy) Phillips, and Sumner Welles, who preceded him as Under Secretaries of State, though with different responsibilities.

Allen W. Dulles, present director of the Central Intelligence Agency was with Mr. Murphy in the latter's first diplomatic job in the American legation at Berne, Switzerland, in 1917. And among the other prominent diplomats of that time were Alexander Kerr, George S. Messersmith, John C. Wiley, Jay Pierpont Moffat, C. Pinckney Tuck, Norman Armour, Ray Atherton and James C. Dunn.

The second part, which is perhaps better known today but also bridged the two quite different eras of American diplomacy, came along a little after Secretary Murphy. Under Secretary Loy W. Henderson, who entered the service in 1922, was among them and so was H. Freeman Matthews, who entered in 1923, and is now expected to take the Ambassadorship to Germany that was offered recently to Secretary Murphy.

Younger Men Enter

Shortly after the diplomatic and consular services were combined under the Rogers Act, a remarkable group of younger men entered the service. Ellis O. Briggs, now Ambassador to Greece, and Stanley Woodward, now Ambassador to Canada.

John Carter Vincent, one of the casualties of the McCarthy era, all came into the service in 1925.

A year later, George F. Kennan, perhaps the most original thinker of the lot, came in with the newer crop of recruits from the West. Raymond A. Hare, now Ambassador in Cairo, joined in 1927, and after him, two other brilliant Soviet experts, Charles E. Bohlen, and Llewellyn E. Thompson Jr.,

past and present Ambassadors to the Soviet Union, who entered the service in 1929.

Though the United States did not recognize the Soviet Union until 1933, the State Department anticipated that event by several years. Robert F. Kelley, a brilliant Boston Irishman, created a Russian Division and somehow managed to get funds to send men like Mr. Kennan and Mr. Bohlen, Eddie Page and others to Europe to study the Russian language and the problems of the era.

Taciturn Disciplinarian

Mr. Kelley was a taciturn disciplinarian, who saw that his men went to the Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes, insisted on objective, carefully documented reporting, and added greatly to the preparation for the Soviet era.

Incidentally, Mr. Kennan recalled today that, suddenly, in 1938, this division of Kelley's was abolished, its files destroyed and its library—the best Russian collection in the nation—transferred to the Library of Congress.

Mr. Kennan's explanation of this mystery was that President Franklin D. Roosevelt and former Ambassador William C. Bullitt regarded the young Soviet specialists as suspiciously anti-Soviet.

Nevertheless, the training period by then was over, and when Maxim Litvinov came to Washington in 1933, as the first Soviet Ambassador to the United States, he testified that Mr. Kelley's young men were in many ways better trained in Russian history than anyone in the Soviet diplomatic service.

Just as the First World War led to the expansion of the Foreign Service, so the second war expanded and diluted it with a vast army of experts from the wartime propaganda and intelligence agencies.

Retains Many Good Men

It is not the same service today. It retains many good men, such as Ambassador Jacob D. Beam in Warsaw, who followed the Thompsons and the Bohlens in the early days of the Nineteen Thirties, but its growth has undoubtedly altered the role and spirit of the service.

Thus, Mr. Murphy's retirement is a reminder of a special period. It had its faults. There is more democracy, if less pride, in the service today. There is no William R. Castle Jr. or William J. Carr around today who knows everybody in the service and can make appointments on the basis of personal knowledge.

Also, the others of Mr. Murphy's generation are nearing retirement. Loy Henderson has wanted out for some time. Mr. Kennan has gone to Princeton to write the history of his time. John Paton Davies Jr., John Carter Vincent and Sam Reber have been lost in the political battles of the Fifties. And not only the Matthews, but the Thompsons and the Bohlens are now entering on what is likely to be their last posts.

In this sense, Mr. Murphy's announcement was symbolic. The Foreign Service, of course, will go on, but not in the same way.

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