review of official and unofficial histories of security intelligence than would be possible in the UK; yet, as ever, the thoroughness of the analysis based on that literature is crucial. As one would expect, the academics have attempted to be more even-handed in the use of evidence, and Cleroux has placed more emphasis on telling a good story.

Yet the books show the continued importance of both academic and journalistic work as a supplement to the official review agencies in the drive to maintain the accountability of at least one part of the security intelligence network. To take just one example, both refer to the failed attempt to deport Mahmoud Mohammad Issa Mohammad in February 1988. Cleroux’s account is the most comprehensive, yet, taken together, the story of CSIS operations — interviewing Mohammad in Madrid before he entered Canada in 1987, interviewing him continuously after his arrival, including his abduction for three days in January 1988, and their coincidental presence at Toronto airport as the RCMP prepared for the deportation — raises a great many questions, for example, about the methods by which security intelligence services recruit “human sources.” SIRC’s minimalist report that CSIS neither slipped up in Mohammad’s entry nor compromised his attempt to leave did not discuss these wider issues.³

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Endnotes

2. Ibid., pp. 159-60.


Dean Rusk’s memoir provides a fascinating, if ultimately disappointing, record of the Georgian’s distinguished service in behalf of United States liberal-internationalist foreign policy after the Second World War. Undertaken by his son, Richard, as a labor that might heal the rupture that developed with his prominent father during the Vietnam War, As I Saw It allows both Rusks to speak for themselves — Rusk fils in probing, often poignant section introductions, Rusk père in the main text. For of all recent secretaries of state, Dean Rusk has proved perhaps the most puzzling to historians and political
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scientists. Indeed, as a subtext of what is at base a powerful interfamilial dialogue, scholars will find many clues here to what being a “man” meant during the long Cold War with the Soviet Union. In revealing Rusk’s concepts of character, duty, and responsibility, this counter-point is most suggestive in its clarification of gender requirements in the foreign policy arena, as well as the challenge of capturing the essence of Rusk.

Returning to academia after serving as secretary of state with John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, Dean Rusk declared that like General George Marshall (for whom he worked during the 1940s and the man he most admired in public life), he would never write his memoirs. For the self-effacing Rusk, the Vietnam conflict had been too excruciating. But, characteristically, the former secretary never ducked responsibility for that military disaster, nor for the Cold War itself. Where Stalin’s aggression in Eastern Europe after World War II ensured conflict with the United States, American intervention in Southeast Asia was in Rusk’s view linked inextricably to the broader aims of collective security, designed ultimately to avert nuclear war between the superpowers.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., once described Rusk as a man who sat through the Kennedy cabinet meetings with “a Buddha-like face and half-smile,” seldom speaking and then only in banalities. The text here belies Schlesinger’s view, for if Rusk comes across as an unremitting cold warrior, he does offer important insights into the collective consciousness of that generation of policy-makers whose sensibilities were seared by the failure of the Western democracies to halt Adolf Hitler. The disasters that followed the Munich Conference of 1938, and American unreadiness at Pearl Harbor three years later, furnish the basis of understanding Rusk’s world view. This outlook stressed eternal wariness of totalitarianism, the requirement to prepare, the necessity to deter.

After an unremarkable boyhood in the red clay country of Cherokee County, Rusk worked his way through Davidson College and earned a Rhodes scholarship to attend St. John’s College at Oxford. As he studied here and at Hamburg, and travelled on the continent, he saw first-hand the rise of Adolf Hitler, the emergence of appeasement in England, and the inability of the League of Nations to halt Japanese aggression in the Far East. Following war service in the China-Burma-India theatre — an account which stresses that arena’s peripheral importance to the conflict’s outcome, and the “Burma Road” as a logistical version of the Keystone Cops — Rusk moved to Washington to begin his long State Department career. Except for a stint during the 1950s as president of the Rockefeller Foundation, which he termed as the “best job in the world” and which further strengthened his globalist perspective, Rusk served Marshall and Dean Acheson during the eventful Truman years, and then returned to Foggy Bottom in 1961, an outsider among the Kennedys, but well prepared for the tasks ahead.

Rusk offers a number of shrewd (and often pithy) judgments on the underpinnings and the makers of the US Cold War policies, as well as other key actors on the international stage during the past half century. Despite
delegating much work, he thought nothing of working fourteen-hour days and keeping in touch with as many subordinates as possible. He was also an early critic of racism — several passages highlight the problems it created for relations with the emerging Third World, as well as the United States’ claim to lead the “free world.” As secretary, he also possessed a good sense of humor. One learns here of Harry Truman’s disdain for “Mousie Dung,” of Dean Acheson’s cavalier disregard for nonwhites (“the brown, yellow, black, and red peoples of the world”); and of Rusk’s own distrust of Schlesinger, whom he treats as a cross between a hummingbird and a gadfly — a real “security risk” when it came to sensitive business under JFK. In the most amusing incident recounted here, Rusk recalls an interchange with Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko, in which the latter sought to paraphrase Rusk’s famous “eyeball-to-eyeball” comment made during the Cuban missile emergency. Trying to be clever, Gromyko told Rusk soon after that he was “looking forward to talking with you balls to balls.”

Disappointingly, though, Rusk spares both of his bosses more than he does himself — his accounts of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations are those of a man who denies the right of cabinet officers to question, let alone quarrel, with their president. But if Rusk’s loyalty prevents him from rethinking the hypotheses that underlay the United States’ stance in the Cold War, or its intervention in Southeast Asia, he nonetheless provides a thoughtful rendering of the personal, domestic, political, bureaucratic, and global constraints that made choices in the international arena so complex and dangerous.

When he became secretary of state, Rusk sought to adopt Marshall’s practices of addressing subordinates by last name only and delegating as much work as possible to subordinates. But these procedures merely increased his reputation for being “aloof and enigmatic,” and fed Schlesinger’s pejorative view of the “silent Buddha.” In fact, as becomes clear from Rusk’s discussion of the workings of the department, especially in its relationship with the media, effective policymaking required distance from journalistic and other sorts of intrusion. Yet unlike Marshall, Rusk himself was seldom a maker of policy. Rather, he facilitated the implementation of initiatives taken by two of the greatest foreign policy activists ever to occupy the White House.

Rusk was temperamentally suited to serve, but not to lead — a good soldier in service of an altruistic globalism that seemed to define itself only in response to crisis, not in the context of long-range planning, quiet reflection, or the reconsideration of the crucial balance between means and ends. Richard Rusk poses good questions here. That he does not always get satisfactory answers attest, paradoxically, to the desire for privacy that played such an important role in his father’s public life. As secretary of state, Dean Rusk had notable strengths and weaknesses. The tension between the two becomes clearer as one reads between the lines of this refreshingly non-filiopietistic discussion.

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