

Dean Rusk: On the War

These remarks by former Secretary of State Dean Rusk are excerpted from a conversation he held last month with Georgia broadcasters at the University of Georgia's School of Journalism. The conversations were broadcast by WSB in Atlanta. Mr. Rusk is now Professor of International Law at the University of Georgia. Concluding excerpts tomorrow cover his observations on the Presidency and State Department.

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LEFT



Seymour Leichman

At this particular time I would mention two situations that are highly dangerous. The first is the Middle East. There, the two sides that live in the area—Israel and its Arab neighbors—show very little indication of being willing to make the concessions that are necessary to establish peace.

The second is the situation in Berlin. It is one of the key points of confrontation between East and West. There have been evidences of increasing harassment of Berlin by the East Germans—undoubtedly with the support of the Soviet Union.

I did not mention Southeast Asia because I do not believe that Southeast Asia under present circumstances is likely to engage the Great Powers. I would put that behind the Middle East and Berlin as an actual trouble spot at the moment.

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President Kennedy in a press conference once seemed to subscribe to what is called the domino theory. I always avoided that myself because I don't think this is a matter just of theory. We're not playing games with little wooden blocks.

One can just look at what is happening there on the ground in Asia. Now today the peace of Asia is being disturbed by some 50 regiments of North Vietnamese in South Vietnam, by 60,000 North Vietnamese in Laos; by 40,000 North Vietnamese in Cambodia. By North Vietnamese-trained guerrillas operating in Northeast Thailand.

Now you don't have to look for a domino theory. You can just look at what is happening on the ground and say that there is not going to be peace in Asia—whatever part we may or may not play in it—unless activities by North Korea, Peking and Hanoi stop.

and, also quite optimistic that India has the capability of protecting itself against any serious effort across the mountains from China.

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I think that [South Vietnam] depends a good deal on the pace of Vietnamization and whether they will be given the time to build up the forces that they need, with accompanying special forces such as helicopters, bombers, communications, things of that sort, to defend themselves.

I think it is possible, but it may take a little more time than many people in this country would hope. And, therefore, I think President Nixon faces a very difficult problem in trying to determine whether the American people will give him the time that is required to put the South Vietnamese in a position to defend themselves.

One of our greatest disappointments during the Johnson period was that we were not able to bring that war to a conclusion while we were still in office.

But I think we have to think about it pretty hard and try our best to avoid situations like Vietnam by trying to put these smaller nations in positions of danger in a better position to take care of these problems themselves.

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It is commonly said that the only thing they've been able to agree to [at the Paris peace talks] is the shape of the table. Nevertheless I feel that it is important for that point of contact to remain. Because if there comes a time when there is something serious to discuss between the two sides, there is a simple and easy way to bring it about, to discuss it.

And I think it's possible that when the conclusion of this situation comes it may come rather unexpectedly and by surprise. Most of the crises in this post-war period have been concluded

sooner or in ways different than was expected at the time.

I would think that it doesn't cost us a great deal to be there. Ambassador Bruce is one of our great diplomats and is apparently willing to stand it for a while. We ought to maintain the point of contact just in case it should prove to be useful at some point.

I must confess that I do not expect much to come out of those talks. Among other things because I don't see what incentive Hanoi has to negotiate. They're going to, I think, almost certainly wait to see how far our withdrawal goes; to see how the situation develops in South Vietnam. And it may be in any event that the conclusion will come on the ground by de facto action. A kind of dribbling away of the total effort, rather than by a formal negotiation.

But I would keep the talks going.

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I think [Hanoi] relied rather heavily on the division in this country. I don't draw from that the conclusion that we shouldn't have a lively and active and even boisterous debate in this country. It's a great public issue. And in our kind of society we ought to talk these things out—in a free society. But one of the prices we pay is that these fellows in Hanoi can listen in on us.

Now Hanoi can hear about 50,000 people marching around the Pentagon calling for peace and it would take a good deal of sophistication on their part to realize that maybe that's not the way decisions are made by the President of the United States. So I think they can be misled by our public discussion to a degree.

I mean, for example, if we had heard that 50,000 people were marching around the headquarters in Hanoi calling for peace, we would think the war was over. And it probably would be.

The United States has not underwritten all of these areas. Through formal treaty we've taken responsibility with respect to Vietnam, Thailand and South Korea. But we have not thrown ourselves into that total situation. I do think we have a stake in the outcome and I think we can hope as a matter of policy that these smaller nations of Asia will be able to defend themselves and avoid being overwhelmed by their neighbors to the north.

I'm relatively pessimistic about Cambodia and Laos. Pretty optimistic about, say, Thailand and South Korea,