

# Rusk and Shriver in a Verbal

## Can't Recall Red Peace Bid, Says Ex-Secretary

By Larry Dum

Dean Rusk and Sargent Shriver were holding firm here today in their verbal skirmish over President Nixon's early conduct of the Vietnam War.

Rusk, Secretary of State under both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, yesterday labeled the Democratic vice presidential candidate's charges that Nixon "blew" a 1969 chance to end the war as "wishful thinking."

Shriver, due in San Francisco today for a campaign tour, shot back that Rusk "was always labelled as one who favored firm prosecution of the war. He was known, for want of a better word, as a 'hawk' and that may have influenced his evaluation."

### 'Signal'

Shriver started the verbal exchange between him and Rusk last week by charging that the North Vietnamese had "signalled" they were willing to negotiate (seriously) for an end to the war in late 1968 and early 1969 by withdrawing troops from

South Vietnam "three months before Nixon took office."

Said Rusk: "I like Sargent Shriver very much. But I don't recall any peace overtures made by North Vietnam. We had tried many times to contact directly or by third governments or by private individuals to establish a dialogue with Hanoi."

In the interview with KRON-TV Rusk said: "There were some people on our side who attached some significance to the withdrawal of the North Vietnamese forces across the DMZ back in the late part of 1968.

"But the North Vietnamese negotiators didn't give any hint that this was a sign or a signal. You know, when crises are settled — like the Berlin blockade or the Korean War, the Berlin crisis of 1961-62 or the Cuban missile crisis — what happens is that you explore the problem of the other side, and somebody on the other side says, 'Yes, there's a possibility of peace here.

Let's get down and talk about it."

"That didn't happen with North Vietnam."

### L.A. Statement

Shriver, at a Los Angeles news conference, said that Rusk had been in Washington at the time — and apparently made a different evaluation of the situation than did Shriver, who, as U.S. Ambassador to France at the time, was in Paris where peace talks were under way.

Said Rusk: "Well, he was ambassador in Paris at that time and he was following very closely the discussions

that Ambassadors (Averell) Harriman and (Cyrus) Vance were having at that time with the North Vietnamese.

"So he was fully briefed on everything that was happening and he had all the reports from South Vietnam on the disposition of North Vietnamese forces. So the question really revolves around whether the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces across the DMZ was a major political move.

"Now the North Vietnamese negotiators didn't indicate that. And so I'm in-

## Deadlock

clined to think that this is a kind of wishful thinking on the part of some of our own people who hoped that this would be a move that in fact turned out to have no result."

On other current topics, Rusk said:

• Regarding former Attorney General Ramsey Clark's bitter indictment of U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, "I would have been glad had his group also visited Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam and looked into the men in arms that North Vietnam is now send-

ing into Thailand, so we could get a balanced picture of the total effort. I have no doubt that there have been some unintended victims of the bombing in the North.

"But if the United States had set out intentionally to destroy civilians in the North or to bomb the dikes, in the first place, there would not have been a Hanoi for Ramsey Clark to visit. It would have been wiped off the face of the earth. And if we had been intending to destroy dikes, vast areas of North Vietnam would be a

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• On Clark's personal views of the destruction in the North, Rusk said, "I don't want to impugn the slightest shred of the sense of his being a traitor or being disloyal or anything of the sort. He's a great American and a decent fellow."

• On Rusk's plans for the upcoming presidential campaign, Rusk said of fellow Democrat George McGovern: "I don't plan to take any active part in the campaign. I plan to watch and read and listen and think, and go into the polling booth in November and cast a secret ballot."