

# LARRY RUSK ON VIETNAM

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not furnish a choice to the people. It deprives them of one.

## "STUBBORN DISREGARD OF PLAIN FACTS"?

If American actions in Vietnam are defensible, Administration attempts to defend them should square with the "plain facts." Self-deception about American intervention can be a greater peril than discriminating protest. Only by recognizing the ambiguities of the situation can we reach accord with the deepest levels of the American conscience and with the common conscience of mankind. The Administration may have contrived the discreet silence or the grudging lip-service of some foreign governments and of some United States Senators, but the hazards and inconsistencies of the present policy are widely recognized both at home and abroad.

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The situation in Vietnam raises serious moral questions, not merely diplomatic and tactical ones. As a nation we hold immense power. To permit it to be used in reckless and barbarous ways is to imperil the entire basis of American leadership.

Let us make known to the government and to our compatriots that we oppose the disastrous policy of continued bombardment of North Vietnam. Continuation of the present policy makes it impossible for Americans and Russians to talk further about peaceful co-existence and encourages all Communist nations to close ranks in opposition to the United States.

World opinion does not support United States military operations in Vietnam. Throughout the world these operations appear increasingly to be a campaign in the self-interest of a Western power rather than in the interest of that stricken Asian nation. Indochina has been macerated by twenty years of anti-colonial, nationalist and communist warfare. The United States has the military might to defeat the Viet Cong. But unless we show immediate restraint, and show humane imagination in bringing interested parties to the peace table, we risk the loss of the respect and sympathy of men and nations far beyond the present theater of war.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Citizens must speak out on issues of national policy. We will not be intimidated by charges of gullibility or disloyalty.

We demand that the Administration return to the "plain facts" and make an earnest attempt to obtain a negotiated peace. Reiteration of the phrase "unconditional discussions" is not enough, especially because the condition is attached to it that the rebel forces in the civil war are not to appear at the conference table. Peaceful intentions can be made plainer than this. We must arrange for an immediate cease-fire and offer to negotiate with the principal combatants, including the Viet Cong; we must cease our air raids on North Vietnam; we should use the good offices of the United Nations in bringing about these ends; and we must assure the world that we will not use nuclear weapons in the pursuit of victory or in the "pursuit of peace."

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