

Wars of Liberation

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Secretary of State Dean Rusk doesn't seem to appreciate the monumental irony of his own position. On the one hand he insists fervidly on the right of small nations like South Vietnam to independence: on the other he damns the means by which such independence is usually achieved, namely "wars of national liberation."

Rusk would be well advised to retreat to the library for a spell to reassemble his insights on the birth of the United States. Wasn't it a "war of national liberation which freed the thirteen colonies from the British yoke and propelled them to nationhood? And didn't the British—like Dean Rusk today claim that the whole thing was a conspiracy hatched in the minds of Sam Adams and John Hancock, without any popular support whatsoever? Didn't they send the Redcoats to Lexington to capture Adams and Hancock so that they might be shipped to England-and hung, thereby ending the whole business?

The parallels with the American Revolution must be painful for Rusk to contemplate. Weren't the American fighters for the most part...guerrillas, who were then called "minutemen"? And weren't Washington's armies being trained and supported by outsiders such as Lafayette, Kosciusko, Pulaski, Baron Steuben, et al? Didn't the American "Committees of Safety" and the Sons of Liberty" tar and feather Tories, seize their land, kill some. force a hundred thousand to flee to Canada and England? Weren't the Americans...subversives on a massive scale, seeking to spread revolution to Canada, Ireland, and the West Indies? Didn't we try to get Benjamin Franklin to Canada to stimulate a war of national liberation there too? And, finally, didn't we get help from an outside power—France—and finally inveigle her and others into the war on our side?

During the American Revolution, Tories like Joseph Galloway argued that four-fifths of the people were against the rebels and that they survived only because of terror, very much like what Dean Rusk says today relative to Vietnam. The fact is, however, that if the rebels hadn't had popular support they would easily have been defeated, just as the National Liberation Front—ininitely inferior in weapons and finances—would be defeated today if it didn't have popular support.

The tragedy is that Dean Rusk (not to mention McNamara, Bundy and Johnson) is in large measure responsible for the Liberation Front's popular support, just as the stupid policies of successive British governments, beginning with the Stamp Act, drove the American people into Sam Adams' camp. The American Revolution would have been impossible if it hadn't been for British repressions; so the growth of Communism and nationalism in Vietnam would have been impossible without wholesale terror by the French, and by the dictatorships of Bao Dai and Diem, and now the indiscriminate bombing and defoliation by the Americans. As the British had their Benedict Arnolbs, but were unable to win the populace away from the Revolution, so Rusk has his Diems, Khanhs and Kys, but cannot woo the people from the nationalist-Communist coalition.

The tragedy of Britain in 1775 was that it linked itself with the counterrevolution—the Galloways, the colonial governors, the great landholders—rather than Adams and the Sons of Liberty. The tragedy of the United States, 191 years later, is that it hasn't learned from its own history, for it is now aligned with the counterrevolution in

Vietnam. Communism is winning because it is managing a nationalist (not a Communist) revolution; and Rusk et al, are losing because they are managing a counterrevolution.

Back in 1775 British “experts” were sure they could beat the ragged colonists. After all Britain had nine million citizens, the colonists only three million, of whom five hundred thousand were slaves. The British had the second best army in the world; the colonists only those ridiculous guerrillas and the equally ridiculous and tattered army of Washington. The British had the strongest navy man had ever seen; the Americans had no navy, only a few privateers. The British were rich; the Americans were poor and their money was being undermined by British counterfeiting. Yet the Americans won because they were fighting for “national liberation,” and the British lost because they didn’t understand the power of wars of national liberation.

Isn’t there a lesson here somewhere for Dean Rusk and his confreres?

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