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167. If the Chinese invade Indochina, "he [Acheson] said it was clear that it was futile and a mistake to defend Indochina in Indochina. He said we could not have another Korea.... we could not put ground troops in Indochina....our only hope was of changing the Chinese mind." Secretary of State Note (L.D. Battle), 17 June 1952.....

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE SECRETARY

June 17, 1952

Following his telephone conversation with Sir Oliver Franks today, which is reported separately, the Secretary saw General Bradley and Mr. Perkins. Later Sir Oliver dropped in at the office following a meeting in Mr. Jessup's office. He asked if he could see the Secretary for a few minutes to get the further report on the matter of talks on Southeast Asia. He repeated what he told us earlier that he had had a second message from London following the report which the Embassy had sent of Mr. Perkins' conversation with Mr. Steele.

The Secretary said that he had talked about this matter with General Bradley this afternoon and that Friday was the only day which General Bradley could possibly meet and that was very inconvenient for Mr. Acheson. He said, therefore, he thought that any talks were impossible to arrange. He then said that he would be glad to talk to Sir Oliver right at that moment and see where we stood.

The Secretary reviewed the situation and the talks which took place in Paris. He said that in the earlier meetings which had taken place on Southeast Asia, everyone had started from a different point and there had been little in the way of conclusion reached. He said that he felt what was needed now was political decisions.

The Secretary then analyzed the situation as we saw it. He said that if the Chinese came into Indochina in force, we would have to do something. We could not remain passive. He said that none of the things we could do were very pleasant ones and we felt that a warning was highly desirable. He said that we felt we should not give a warning, however, if there had been no agreement on what we did in the event the Communists moved in anyway. He said this would make us look very silly and would weaken the effect of any other warnings.

He said it was clear that it was futile and a mistake to defend Indochina in Indochina. He said we could not have another Korea. He said it was also true we could not put ground forces in Indochina. We do not have them and we could not afford to immobilize such forces as we had. He said we could take air and naval action, however, and had discussed whether this should be confined to approaches.

He concluded that our only hope was of changing the Chinese mind. He said that we could strike where it hurts China or we could set up a blockade against trade. He said we had concluded that our mission would not be to destroy the Communist regime. He also said that we fully realized the danger of bringing the USSR into the show.

The Secretary concluded that there was no point in getting our military people into any talks. He said we must get political decisions first. He said that if firm decisions could not be reached that we perhaps could reach tentative decisions. He said that it had been clear at Paris that he was somewhat "ahead of the play" while the French and the British had urged us to discuss these matters and had wanted discussions before decisions were made. When the question actually came up, they were not ready to talk.

The Secretary remarked that Mr. Letourneau had said in Paris that the military talks had reached some decision as to how to evacuate the wounded, etc., in the event of difficulties. He said that our Navy had talked to Mr. Letourneau regarding port sizes, capacity of ships, etc., with regard to evacuation.

Sir Oliver said he thought he understood the point, would report back to London and would let us know if there were anything further on it.

Mr. Acheson said that if his analysis were wrong and the British Chiefs of Staff had any different one, he would be glad to hear of it.

S LDBattle