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Laos - 1959

6 Aug.

Nehru, Jawaharlal (Prime Minister of
India)

- 1 letter from D.H.

The Secretary
East Asiatic Office,
Foreign Ministry and Ministry
for External Affairs,
New Delhi, India.

6 August 1959

1. I still owe you my sincere thanks for your constructive and valuable letter of 30 June which I highly appreciate. You will have heard from Mr. Desai that the reason for my delay in replying was caused by my intention to wait until he had had an opportunity to report to you on our conversation in Geneva and to tell me about your view. The other day, I received his letter on the matter and I avail myself of this opportunity to thank you also for the valuable information he was transmitting from you.

2. Events have now in some respects by-passed our previous considerations and the situation facing us presents difficulties of greater seriousness. However, neither you nor I have been taken by surprise. As we have feared, the situation has turned for the worse in the absence of appropriate arrangements for the handling of the conflict.

3. I just received your message, transmitted by cable 6 August. I thank you for it. Again, I am, in essential respects, in agreement with you on the points you raised. One thing is that we have run into difficulties regarding the operation of the Commission. Another and quite different matter would be for that reason to attempt to take the conflict outside the scope of the Geneva Agreements, with all the further complications that might flow from such a step.

4. Not believing in the possibility of useful action now within or through the Security Council - or the General Assembly - and facing the difficulties which have arisen regarding the Commission, I tend to believe that the most encouraging perspective open to us is the one indicated in your reference to positive action through the two Co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference "who may, in consultation with the parties concerned, devise modified procedures". In this context, I wish to tell you that I have been approached - so far on a hypothetical basis - with the question whether I would consider a joint demand of the two Co-chairmen, that I appoint an impartial fact-finder to seek information on the position on the frontiers of Laos and Viet Nam and to recommend means of reducing tensions, as providing a basis on which I could act. My reply in principle - likewise given on a hypothetical basis - has been in the affirmative, as such an approach would maintain the matter within the terms of the Geneva Agreements and as the demand de facto would come from "both sides".

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His Excellency
Shri Jawaharlal Nehru,
Prime Minister and Minister
for External Affairs,
New Delhi, India.

5. Thanking you again for your various communications which considerably facilitate efforts from our side to render such assistance as may be demanded and as may be within the range of our competence, I wish to reiterate my assurance to you of my willingness, personally, to do what I can within the framework of the general political and legal view of the situation which I know that we share.

Dag Hammarskjöld