

Laos 1959-1961 -
correspondence, official
documents, press clippings,
chrono...

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Laos - 1959

21 Aug.

- 1) Press conference by N. Souvannikone, Laos
- 2) Press clipping, The Washington Post

21 August 1959

Ngon Sanonikone (Laos) met the press at 5:15 p.m. today in Room 226.

Through an interpreter, he said that he had just seen the Secretary-General for the second time and had explored with him ~~the~~ various possibilities for a peaceful solution of the problem facing Laos. He had received all the suggestions offered by the Secretary-General. However, they had not exhausted all the possibilities and would see each other again tomorrow at the same time.

In reply to questions, he declined to state the ~~substance~~ substance of his talk with the Secretary-General. He ~~could~~ could say that no solution had been decided upon, but that so many possibilities had been suggested that "we would have to choose between them."

Asked if he had to consult his government and also others, he said it was true that he would have to do so. He would need the accord of his government before a solution could be agreed upon.

A correspondent noted that there had been press reports of various possibilities, such as the sending of an observer to Laos, the sending of a personal ~~representative~~ representative of the Secretary-General, ~~and~~ or referral of the matter to the Security Council or the General Assembly. Had other possibilities been considered? "Yes, many others."

Asked when he would leave New York ~~and~~ and where he would go, he said he would not leave New York "until ~~in~~ I have a definite solution in my hands." Had the Secretary-General said anything about calling off his trip to Latin America? No, the Secretary-General expected to leave on Sunday and had told him so. ~~They would try to find a solution before the Secretary-General's departure, but if they were not successful he had been assured that "close and direct contact would be maintained" while the Secretary-General was away.~~ They would try to find a solution before the Secretary-General's departure, but if ~~they were not successful~~ they were not successful he had been assured that "close and direct contact would be maintained" while the Secretary-General was away.

He was also asked a number of questions, which he had invited at the opening of his statement, regarding the situation in Laos.

He was asked why Laos opposed return of the international control commission. The reason, he said, was that Laos felt it had fulfilled the obligations it had contracted under the Geneva agreements. The commission had adjourned itself, considering its work done. The commission had been set up before Laos became a member of the United Nations. The present rebellion in Laos was beyond the responsibility of the commission and should be dealt with by ~~the~~ the United Nations.

Asked if he planned to consult the two chairmen of the commission, he said that he was leaving everything to the Secretary-General.

What was the situation in Laos now? Had there been infiltration? He said it was possible that there ~~had~~ had been some in the ~~provinces~~ provinces adjoining Viet Nam.

(more)

Was the rebellion in Laos an internal affair? He said that ~~it~~ at first it had ~~seemed~~ seemed so. It had started with the rebellion of about 750 men, and ~~the~~ the Government of Laos, with an army of 25,000, could have coped with that without difficulty. However, there had been provocation and interference from outside that made it an international issue. The best proof of outside interference could be found in the armaments of the rebels. They had earlier surrendered all their arms, but had come back later with ~~new~~ better ones, new ones. He had seen with his own eyes armaments made in Czechoslovakia.

Did his Government proceed on the assumption that this rebellion was the result of a decision by Peking, Moscow or North Viet Nam alone? He ~~said~~ gave as his own personal opinion the statement that the rebellion had been "ordered by the top Communist countries, within the ~~scope~~ scheme of Communization of South East Asia." He cited the previous agreements his Government had made with the rebels. "There is almost nothing left to give them. He have ~~them~~ given them more than we ourselves got." They seemed to be satisfied, and there was no reason why they should not settle down as peaceful citizens, unless they ~~were~~ ~~had~~ had been directed and incited to rebel again.

Matter of Fact By Joseph Alsop

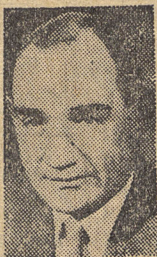
As Ugly as Quemoy?

"I HOPE it doesn't turn out to be as bad as it looks. But I think we've got to be prepared for a Laos crisis as ugly as the Quemoy crisis."

This authoritative governmental summary of the outlook ought to bring up with a sharp jerk the huge majority of people who have hardly noticed the events in remote little Laos. What is going on in Laos is crude, active Communist aggression. It not only seems likely to cause another spasm of the kind of acute international tension that was experienced during the Chinese Communist attack on Quemoy. It can also lead to even more unpleasant results.

The chief base of the aggression is the Communist state of North Viet-Nam, established in 1954 after the American Government gave its blessing to the partition of Indochina. The secondary base is Communist China, which also has a long common frontier with Laos.

As already reported in this space, pro-Communist Laotians have been invited across the North Vietnamese border; have been formed and trained there in military units; and have been infiltrated back into Laos. The first major infiltration into the Laotian provinces of Phong Saly and Sammeua occurred some weeks ago. The infiltration forces, numbering perhaps 2000 men in all, were attacked by the small Laotian army with some initial success. Some units have therefore retired again across the North Viet-Nam border, while others have fragmented into small guerilla outfits.



Alsop

IF THIS were the whole story, the outlook might not be so ominous. But there is a high probability that only a relatively small percentage of the invasion force organized in North Viet-Nam was used for the first attack. The American analysts believe that an additional force of about 5000 men is ready for further border-crossings. Most of these reserve battalions are in North Viet-Nam, but some are also thought to be in Communist China.

Additional infiltrations on anything like this scale, carried on in mountainous country devoid of communications, will present the gravest sort of problem for the Laotian army. Yet the signs suggest that the Communist high command means to continue the attack on Laos.

During the past week an arrogant official statement in Hanoi was followed by a crudely threatening blast from Peking; and the Peking blast, in turn, led to a Moscow statement that supported the Chinese-Vietnamese position in more moderate language. In addition, the Vietnamese Communist boss, Ho Chi Minh, was the guest of Nikita S. Khrushchev in Moscow during the opening phase of the Laos invasion. The successive statements and Ho's Moscow visit are pretty plain indications that what has happened so far is not a mere isolated incident, but the opening phase of a pretty big show.

The nakedness of the new aggression also deserves to be noted. The infiltration Communist units were not only organized and trained in North Viet-Nam. They are also using North Viet-Nam as a supply base at this moment, receiving ammunition and food by coolie transport over the mountain trails. And they are further stiffened by North Vietnamese cadres

with long experience of jungle fighting.

THE REACTION of the American Government to this new Communist aggression has been somewhat delayed by Secretary of State Christian A. Herter's absence in Chile. No decisions on the President-Secretary of State level have as yet been taken. But on the lower levels of the State Department, they are already pointing out that it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for President Eisenhower to receive Nikita Khrushchev as his guest while the attack on Laos continues.

Diplomatic action in Moscow will almost certainly be the first phase of the American attempt to deal with the problem in Laos. At the same time, plans are being perfected to strengthen the Laotian army with rush deliveries of additional arms, including helicopters useful for mountain fighting. Laos is fortunate in having both a stouthearted and able Prime Minister, Phoui Sananikone, and an extremely able army commander, General Quane. With enough aid, they may be able to solve their own problems.

Meanwhile, there are two reasons why such deep concern is already felt about this Laos business, at least in the inner governmental circles. First of all, since Laos has been receiving American aid, and has recently imported a small group of American officers to help train its army, the attack on Laos is obviously intended as a challenge to this country. Secondly, a Communist victory in little Laos would start a chain reaction in Southeast Asia. But since public tranquillizing is the rule nowadays, the Government has not yet communicated its concern to the country.