

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

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Laos - 1959

8 Sept.

- 1.) Press conference by E. Ortoua (President of SECCO)
- 2.) — " — by T. Vilaihongs (Laotian  
Delegation to the UN)

8 September 1959

The President of the Security Council, Egidio Ortona, met with the press at 1:40 p.m. today. The others present at the meeting were there also, except for Matsudaira, and it was explained that his absence had no political significance, that he had left for a luncheon engagement.

Mr. Ortona said that they had met and had gone over the various problems confronting the subcommittee in the discharge of the functions assigned to it by the Security Council, which it hoped to discharge as effectively and as rapidly as possible. They had discussed problems of organization and coordination, and problems connected with the designation of representatives. They planned to impress upon their governments the urgency involved, and to try to get them to designate representatives within the next 24 hours, if possible. They considered it pertinent, in view of the spirit and character of the resolution, that these representatives ~~in~~ be attached to and be part of the delegations to the Security Council, as this was a subcommittee of the Council. They hoped that the answers would come within the next 24 hours, with a view to holding a meeting ~~in the near future~~ on Thursday afternoon with the designated representatives who then possibly would proceed immediately to Laos, to be there this week. It was difficult to arrange this "flying-wise, earth-wise, globe-wise," but they hoped that representatives could be designated who could be on hand very soon in New York. The possibility had been examined of holding a first meeting here, at which the representatives could gain common knowledge of the facts of the situation, examine documents, learn what was available here, before going on to Laos. To save time, they had asked the Secretariat to prepare in two days all possible background information, including historical and diplomatic developments.

A brief question period followed, as Mr. Ortona said he had to telephone ~~in~~ Rome at 2 p.m.

Asked (by Joe Lash) how the committee envisaged its functions, whether it would sit in the capital, send observers to the border areas, and so on, he said that this sort of thing would have to be discussed on Thursday.

Asked (by Tom Hamilton) when the committee had decided that it should go to Laos, he said that they "thought that you cannot conduct such an inquiry as indicated in the resolution without going to the spot." Moreover, during their meeting, they had ~~announced~~ received an invitation from the Government of Laos, asking that the subcommittee go there. To another question, he said that the communication from Laos also ~~mentioned~~ contained information on the situation and that details could no doubt be obtained from the ~~Laos~~ delegation.

He was then asked if this was not a committee of investigation, ~~and~~ ~~in the communication from Laos~~ and whether that was a procedural matter. He ~~asked~~ replied, "Is this a question of semantics?" The task of the subcommittee was to conduct inquiries

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and to collect information. He would leave it at that.

Asked (by Max Harrelson) if any of the four ~~representatives~~ had designated their representatives as yet, he said no.

Asked (by Bill Frye) if they envisaged that the representatives would need to be armed, he said that they did "not need arms to collect information."

Asked (by Pauline Frederick) how soon they envisaged a report to the Security Council from the fact-finding group, he said that it depended on the facts. He could not anticipate. They were to report as soon as possible.

Asked (by Jacques Edinger) if it was envisaged that military personnel would be designated, or diplomats, or ~~some~~ civil servants, he said, ~~that~~ "It can be anybody." He could not anticipate. But they should have good health, as ~~that~~ "it is not a good climate."

To another question, he said that none of those present today envisaged going themselves.

Asked ~~in~~ (by ~~MM~~ CBC) if he regarded the Council's action as an important precedent for the future, he said that he could not anticipate what the Security Council would do on future occasions.

Asked (by Joe Lash) how big a team was envisaged, he said that that was still to be discussed. It depended partly on the rank of those designated. An ambassador might expect a staff of 20 persons; someone not an ambassador might be satisfied with one. It depended also on the availability of personnel.

8 September 1959

Thephathy Vilaihongs, of the Laotian delegation, met the press at 3:35 p.m. today, and distributed copies of the Laotian letter. He also translated the text into English orally.

He said that "the subcommittee wouldn't go to Laos unless we invite them, and so we are inviting them."

He was then asked (by K. ~~Subraman~~ Balaraman) if he thought that establishment of the subcommittee would solve all the problems of Laos. He said that it would not, but it did have significance, for the following reasons: Laos had requested help from the United Nations, and the prompt action that had followed showed the deep interest of the United Nations in the problems of Laos. Secondly, ~~in~~ Laos had been given moral support. "We know that while these people are there, no further aggravation of the situation can happen."

Asked about the present situation in ~~Laos~~ Laos, he said he had no confirmation of the withdrawal of Vietminh troops. He had a cable today stating that fighting was still going on in many areas, with skirmishes and a casualties. He was sure that there were still some Vietminh troops there.

He then answered ~~several~~ several questions regarding the ~~in~~ "insubordination" of Colonel Singkapo, whom he said he knew well and had served with in the liberation army against the French in 1946.

Asked (by Alexander Gabriel) if his government would deny the subcommittee the right to examine testimony that the internal situation in Laos arose from the breaking of two accords, he said he could not reply. He did not know what the position of his government would be.

Asked (by Tran Van Ky) about an invitation to correspondents, he said he had sent a cable to his government stating that there were suggestions in United Nations circles that Laos invite a few correspondents to follow the work of the subcommittee, ~~at the expense of the government.~~ at the expense of the government. He had recommended this, but did not know what ~~his~~ his government would do.

In reply to further questions, he said that the first thing the subcommittee would find in Laos would be Vietminh prisoners, of which they had ~~many~~ "very many," including a major and a captain. He had no figure on the total. Laos had a standing army itself of 25,000. As to the international commission, in 1957 his government had made a statement, after its agreement with the dissidents, to the effect ~~that~~ that the presence of the commission was no longer needed. Canada had then withdrawn from the commission, and after that initiative, the other two members had adjourned sine die. Laos had never ~~said~~ said that the commission had not done anything or that its members were undesirable, ~~he~~ he observed to another questioner. But Laos was now a sovereign country.