

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

HS L 179:87



Dag Hammarskjöld's saml.

Laos - 1959

10 Nov.

Herter, Christian A. (Secy of State, USA)

- 1 letter from D.H.

10 November 1959

PERSONAL

It was most thoughtful of you to give me a ring. Your very generous words of appreciation of what I have been trying to do, all through this affair, were most encouraging. Thank you.

By now you will have seen the text of the Soviet reply to my letter. As I told you, it seems to me to indicate that I was right in my analysis of their stand as regards the first round. Regarding the second round - the situation at and after my return - I have to play it by ear and must, of course, be careful in the presentation of what I initiate on my side.

What decided me finally to take this line, in spite of the present uncertainty about how far the Russians may go in their negative reaction, was in substance the following consideration. It is not sufficient to "save" Laos for the moment; it must be done in such a way as to keep the developments on the rails and in a direction which holds out at least some promise of a later return to stable and peaceful conditions. I believe that a United Nations "presence" - whatever guise or form we have to choose - is necessary for that purpose. However, if the presence were to emerge from a cold-war debate in the General Assembly, leading to a voting defeat for the Soviets; if for that reason it were to have the character of a "mission", declared illegal by the U.S.S.R., and, in a sense, unavoidably competing with the Geneva system; if, finally, the presence were to emerge as a direct response to the original Laos request - than I feel that a presence might easily prove to put us on a dangerous track and to be, itself, counter-productive. These aspects can be avoided with the type of operation which I am trying out and they speak, therefore, in favour of my line in, what I might call, a negative sense. In the positive sense my suggested formula might offer the further advantage of providing a bridge to the Laos Government which would render it more easy in due time to play the necessary game in the necessary direction; however that may be, this latter aspect of the situation has not influenced me very strongly, my stand having been determined by the necessity to play on the better alternative for a presence.

What I have just said gives you the main elements in the calculated

./.

The Honorable Christian A. Herter,
Secretary of State,
Department of State,
Washington, D.C.

risk I am taking. I am convinced that the Russians have fully understood my line of action and would, in these circumstances, have had every reason to note with care if I had permitted their displeasure to force me over to a line in which they know that I do not believe. Therefore, I believe also that I run the Organisation into a lesser risk as regards its relations to the Russians by acting as I do; in the long run I would think that on the inner lines their displeasure is less harmful than a loss of respect.

I shall do what I can to keep you currently informed about developments. At all events, I shall see to it that you get through Cabot the fullest possible picture on my return.

With kindest regards,

Dag Hammarskjöld