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Laos - 1960

17 Feb.

Tuomioja, Sakari (U.N. Mission to Laos)

- 1 letter from D.M.

17 February 1960

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

My dear Sakari,

Thank you so much for your letter of 12 February which is very enlightening and contains a great deal of important information.

1. You have been quite right to give your attention to the situation surrounding the elections, since these elections may not only exert a considerable influence on internal developments but may also have international repercussions. Thus the analysis of the new election law has been most useful. While the changes are intended to stack the cards in favour of the pro-Government candidates, the new law is not more "undemocratic" than the previous one. Some of the changes may be considered as purely technical and as an improvement. It would, however, be too much to expect that the opponents of the Royal Government will not point to the way in which this law has come into being. The choice for them will be either to denounce the new ground rules or to take their chance under them, and the possibility that they will choose the former alternative seems to be increasing.

The visit of Maître Maurice Cornil may have had one favourable effect in that it might have indicated to the Laotian Government that their actions are being watched. His trip, however, aroused practically no interest whatsoever in the Western press.

2. Your description of your trip to the Southern Provinces convinces me even more of the necessity of the action we are about to undertake. It is indeed pathetic to see how even the rich and fertile parts of the country are in need of technical assistance in practically every field. Incidentally, I agree completely with you that the wearing of uniforms by Government officials is a most undesirable practice.

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3. Last Friday we had a thorough discussion here about the plans formulated by Heurtematte in his preliminary report (which, in fact, is his final report). Zellweger attended and so did most of the Under-Secretaries and other Headquarters officials closely connected with the execution of the projects. We came a long way in persuading Paul Hoffman to interest the Special Fund in the forthcoming Laos operations

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as a "pilot project", which would eventually take care of some of the more awkward financial angles.

4. Since Zellweger is arriving in Laos shortly, I agree that staffing plans should be left for him to assess and decide once he has been on the spot for some time.

5. Your suggestion about my Lund lecture I will keep in mind for an appropriate occasion.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Dag Hammarskjold
Secretary-General