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Laos - 1961

13-18 Jan.

J. F. Eagers, U.N. - 2 interoffice memoranda

- da to D.H.

To the Secretary-General.

13 Jan. 61

LAOS

I. The political situation

A. There is a spate of proposals, all "under active consideration".

Most important: (a) Reconvening three power control commission.

Difficulty, which Lao government is legal in eyes of members. Suggested solution: accreditation to the King.

(b) Peace commission consisting of India, Burma and Indonesia. This is Boun Oum's proposal.

(c) 14 Power conference consisting of Geneva powers together with the Control Commission members and neighbour states Thailand, South Vietnam, Burma and Ceylon. This is Prince Sihanouk's proposal of 2 January now approved by Moscow, Hanoi and ... Paris.

It may take some more time to thrash out an agreed procedure. It looks like a case of too many cooks....

B. New complication is the introduction of old Korean type small reconnaissance planes by the United States which Phoumi forces use as primitive bombers.

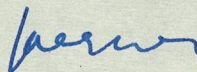
C. Meanwhile Souvanna Phouma plays his cards close to his chest - has refused to return to Vientiane.

D. At present United Nations does not seem to be brought into the picture, except that Khamphan Panya is on his way to New York "to present evidence of foreign intervention".

II. Our Mission

Zellweger most intent - for private reasons - to return to Zürich early in February, seems to have become nervous by the lack of hard information on future of the Mission. Maybe as a result he sent us a very strongly worded telegram when he heard that Gaillard's replacement had been decided. My information is that his wish to leave Vientiane now does not mean that he would be unwilling to return - after one or two months? - but it may be that he had expected an offer to extend his contract. However that may have been, Mr. Cordier sent Wednesday a most soothing reply that should please him and set him at ease for the moment. Some action should be taken, however, shortly. I am at your disposal today and Saturday (and if required on Sunday too).

13 January 1961



J.F.E.

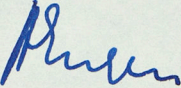
UNITED NATIONS  NATIONS UNIES

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

CONFIDENTIAL

TO: The Secretary-General

Date: 18 January 1961

FROM: J. F. Engers 

FILE NO.: _____

SUBJECT:

A. My impressions of yesterday's talks with Khamphan could be summarized as follows:

1. He seems to have lost some of his bounciness, and appears less self-confident than last year.
2. His story about the last six months was interesting, but extremely ex parte and the omissions were significant.
3. He and his friends have lost the first round of the poker game with Prince Souvanna Phouma.
4. He is not too confident about what will happen once Graham Parsons leaves.

B. I should add the following as my assessment of the situation:

1. The anti-French gambit is an old game. (He told me more than a year ago that Gassouin was a Mendesiste, not a real representative of de Gaulle, now it is something else.) The French have, of course, put their money on Souvanna Phouma, but the hands of another Western Power and its clients are not so clean either.
2. The question of broadening the government remains open (Foreign Ministry temporarily filled by Prime Minister is a straw in the wind). How to go about it presents a real difficulty. Should it be used as a bargaining point to achieve international settlement, or should it be brought about as a result of such settlement?
 - (a) I believe that actually there is not much choice, and that broadening will have to come first.
 - (b) Souvanna Phouma's price will be high, since he will be clever enough to see to it that he does not become a

captive of his adversaries. That means that some people will have to be dropped from the government (including, possibly, your two visitors).

3. Khamphan, no doubt, had a good point when he dwelt on the unity of the pre-August government. Such unity would, of course, be difficult to find in a "broadened" group. But he forgot to tell that that unity had been brought about by the December 1959 coup d'état and elections that left something to be desired from the point of view of orderly and fair procedures. That unity within the executive engendered extra-parliamentary opposition with results we all know. Thus unity and cohesion within the government do not necessarily constitute the best over-all solution.

C. United Nations position:

1. The plans now bruited about are techniques and procedures that are closely connected with the reactivation of the Geneva machinery in one form or another. The U.N. was not a party to these agreements and can therefore take no position for or against any of these plans.

2. The U.N. is, however, not indifferent to the objective of the present day international discussions around Laos, that is, to decrease the temperature and to find a mutually agreeable solution of the Laos problem.

3. This interest is based on (a) the general objectives of peace and security detailed in the Charter; (b) the success or failure of its own operations in Laos; (c) the Cambodian proposals that are before the General Assembly.

4. The U.N. at the present time cannot, on its own initiative, formulate new plans that might tend to prejudge the international conversations now being held. It should neither expect their failure nor be unprepared if they miscarried.

5. It should, however, be kept in mind by all concerned that a referral to the United Nations either now or after exhausting other means does not guarantee a better or easier solution of the problem.

6. International action either outside or inside the U.N. can never be a substitute for action by the Laotians themselves. Their factions and families have to achieve a measure of agreement among themselves in order to maintain the unity and national integrity of the country.

7. Unless the present government believes that time is on its side (which we cannot judge, but doubt), we would advise that it continue to pursue its attempts to broaden its base, which will have to be done anyway, sooner or later.

8. Pending some measure of internal security, our T.A. operations must of necessity remain restricted. To the extent that they have to be limited, their intended results will be less than complete and the philosophy behind them will have had less chance to make itself felt. What is more, their continued operation under present political circumstances might tend to reflect on their usefulness at a later stage. This difficulty has been very much in our mind and should be noted by the Laotian authorities.

9. We also see some merit in further exploration of the ideas put forward by Prince Sihanouk for a neutral zone.