

2. I then raised with Harriman the possibility that Commission consideration of the pending charges against the North, and now the South, might lead to a reference to the Geneva Co-Chairmen and even to pressure for a new conference on Vietnam. What would he think of such developments?

3. Harriman replied that no repeat no one on USA side was keen on a conference on Vietnam but that the Secretary of State was discussing future possibilities with the British Foreign Secretary in Paris this week. He was not repeat not sure of the exact character of what Rusk would be putting to Home but he thought it would include a suggestion that the Co-Chairmen might explore informally the prospects for a cessation of the fighting in Vietnam. The formula developed at Geneva for Laos, viz. to give the Co-Chairmen a specific role in seeing that the agreement was carried out, might provide a useful precedent. It was of course, far from certain that the Chinese Communists would be willing to cooperate in any Soviet attempt to pacify Vietnam; the situation in Laos was different. In any event he thought there could be no repeat no question at the moment of a Fourteen Nation Conference on Vietnam. What might be possible were informal talks which could lead on to a conference if there were some indication that the "socialist" group were willing to discuss some settlement. But a conference would be no repeat no use if it were to be used by the communists solely in attempts at neutralization, the displacement of the Diem régime, and for propaganda purposes. Harriman had the impression that Lord Home felt that any new move on Vietnam would be inopportune just now and that it would be better to wait for some hopeful sign. Harriman personally disagreed with this view and thought that no repeat no time should be lost in exploring the possibilities. He would be taking this matter up with the Secretary when Rusk returned from Paris.

4. When I suggested that any report by the ICSC to the Co-Chairmen in the near future would disclose the serious situation in Vietnam and so precipitate consultation by the Co-Chairmen, Harriman agreed. Such a report, he thought, would almost inevitably present points of controversy; for this reason, we should be thinking about the situation that might then arise. In this connection, he hoped the Canadian Commissioner would be able to avoid enquiry by the Commission into the details of USA assistance to South Vietnam. It would obviously be better for USA and SVN to take the line that the nature and extent of USA assistance would be determined by what was needed to counter aggression by the North.

5. I then raised with Harriman the matter of SVN cooperation with the Commission; if the Commission were to be helpful, this was of great importance. Harriman fully agreed and at once gave instructions that a message be sent urging SVN to prevent placing any obstacles in the way of the Commission, to make full information available for the Commission's purposes and to avoid harassment of the Polish delegation.

6. Harriman reiterated USA appreciation of the thankless nature of the task that the Canadian Government had undertaken in the Indochina Commissions. USA hoped that we would take a sympathetic view of requests that the SVN would shortly be making of the Commission for increased patrols. He was not repeat not sure where such patrolling might be most helpful, but thought along the demilitarized zone and the area bordering Laos. In this connection, USA hoped that within Laos itself action might be taken to prevent its use as a corridor or safe haven. He was doubtful how much information would be received from the Lao Government, but he hoped that this channel of help to the Viet Cong could be stopped. Patrolling difficult territory along the Lao border might not repeat not be effective, Harriman realized; nevertheless it might have some deterrent effect and a useful counterpart to the Commission's action on subversion allegations. Once more, Harriman made it plain that he was placing great hopes on the new role assigned to the Co-Chairmen by the Geneva Conference on Laos to "police" the actions of their respective sides.