

9. I then went on to ask McConaughy where he thought the present course of USA might lead if in fact the proposed assistance to South Vietnam should prove insufficient for its avowed purpose. He admitted that it was difficult to answer this question. He could only say that USA was committing its national prestige in this effort as a means of preserving Southeast Asia in the free world; the consequences of failure could certainly be grave.

10. As to the effect of planned USA action on the Geneva Conference on Laos, McConaughy agreed that this was a difficult question. He conceded flatly that if the planned scale of USA assistance were made immediately effective and public, it might be very difficult to achieve agreement with the Communists in Geneva. If however it was possible to get an agreement in Laos before there was an opportunity for the Communists to react to the new USA plans, the State Department was hopeful that it might be made to stick. Indeed it was thought that the action proposed in Vietnam might then have a salutary effect on the situation in Laos. In any event McConaughy assured me that USA was not repeat not slackening its efforts to achieve agreement in Geneva despite the complications which had already become apparent there. USA recognized signs that the Communists, especially Pushkin, were getting anxious about whether or not repeat not an agreement was possible. McConaughy then spoke along the lines of Harriman's representations to Ronning namely that it was highly desirable to finalize an agreement with the Communists without delay. In particular he was hopeful that we would find it possible to be flexible on one or two of the outstanding problems on which we had been (understandably) insisting on solid conditions for the effective operation of the International Commission in Laos. I simply reiterated our view that in the light of our difficult experiences in the International Commissions over the years we thought such conditions were necessary.

11. I drew McConaughy's attention to Reuters press report appearing in November 17 papers in which USA officials in Saigon were being quoted as foreseeing a crisis in relations with the International Commission as a result of present trend of USA policy. McConaughy fully agreed that this was most unhelpful. I had the impression that he would take action to forestall further such unfortunate comments which cut across the State Department's intentions as to the public position USA should maintain.

12. In general I would say that McConaughy gave us a very full and frank disclosure of USA plans and the thinking behind them and that he was sincere in seeking an equally frank reaction from us. I should be grateful if you would let me know as soon as possible what further views you would wish me to express to the State Department in response to McConaughy's communications to me.

[A.D.P.] HEENEY

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au secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures*

*Ambassador in United States  
to Secretary of State for External Affairs*

TELEGRAM 3533

Washington, November 20, 1961

SECRET. CANADIAN EYES ONLY. OPIMMEDIATE.

Reference: Our Tel 3528 Nov 17 and Candel Saigon Tel 227 Nov 16.†

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