

January 14, 1961

**Record of the Conversation between Prime Minister
Zhou Enlai and the Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy
of the Soviet Union in China**

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai and Nikolai Sudarikov review Soviet, Chinese, and Vietnamese aid to Laos.

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Record of the Conversation between Premier Zhou [Enlai] and the Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy of the Soviet Union in China

Time: 14 January 1961

Location: Premier's Reception Room

In Attendance: Vice Director of the Soviet European Affairs Department YU Zhan

Translator: YAN Mingfu

The following conversation took place after the temporary assistant to the Soviet embassy [Nikolai] Sudarikov delivered Khrushchev's letter to Premier Zhou (It was only printed once).

[Nikolai] Sudarikov: I also want to report to you on a certain matter. Firstly, thank you for aiding us in resolving this kind of problem. According to your instructions, we sent material aid to Laos and talked things over with Comrade ZENG Yongquan and Comrade LI Qiang. The Bureau of Civil Aviation and Airforce have both been very helpful in transporting the goods. There have already been 42 planes sent with supplies, among them 14 Lushin-14 and 10 helicopters. 10 LI-2 planes will be dispatched tomorrow.

Zhou [Enlai]: Is that a war plane?

[Nikolai] Sudarikov: It's a small plane and easy to land. A portion of the AN-12 planes have already gone back. They're bigger and unnecessary primarily transporting cargo. Aside from that, we also transported a large number of parachutes, weapons, and fuel. During this process we encountered a small problem. We've already spoken on this with Comrade YU Zhan. Because the planes took off in a rush, the crew did not take their documents with them. It's entirely reasonable to bring up this issue as 180-200 people crossed the border in plain clothes and brought documents. The Western Bourgeois and newspapers are currently making a ruckus over us aiding Laos, but that's not important.

Zhou [Enlai]: This was requested by Phouma's legal government, so it's perfectly legal!

[Nikolai] Sudarikov: Completely legal.

Zhou [Enlai]: They're the illegal ones!

[Nikolai] Sudarikov: America gave them 4 war planes. Our planes that went over this time had absolutely no problem. The crew, weather, and hardware were all fine.

Zhou [Enlai]: How many LI-2 planes did you send over in total?

[Nikolai] Sudarikov: There are 18 in total that went over the course of 4 days. Our Chinese comrades have done very well in this aspect, you've been very discrete organizers and there haven't been any issues. You've done very well in providing fuel and rations for the crew. We will repay you for the fuel, and please provide us with the cost of taking care of the crew, as there weren't many to begin with but there are quite a few now. Just this last time we sent 180-200 people.

Zhou [Enlai]: Has the first wave of supplies already arrived?

[Nikolai] Sudarikov: The weapons and parachutes have all already arrived.

Zhou [Enlai]: They've been fighting well, even a little better than we anticipated, from North to South. They should prepare for set backs though and be ready to just keep moving forward.

[Nikolai] Sudarikov: The Vietnamese ambassador told us that our Vietnamese comrades think they can consolidate now and find a firm footing among people.

Zhou [Enlai]: The military's source is the masses. Without the people's support, they will not be able to stand, nor will they be able to establish a base. Phouma is currently in Phnom Penh and is in constant contact with your ambassador there. He has received permission from U Nu through two Burmese officials (An official from the Sanitation Department and the Chairman of the Legislative Committee) to travel from Burma to Kunming today, after which he will go from Kunming to Hanoi and then return to Phnom Penh. He may meet with Quinim [Pholsena] in Hanoi.

[Nikolai] Sudarikov: Comrade Chen Yi mentioned that, but isn't Quinim going to come to Beijing?

Zhou [Enlai]: That's what was decided at first. Quinim has a lot of business right now and he may go to Xiangkhouang with Souphanouvong to meet with the army.

[Nikolai] Sudarikov: Right now that most important issue is that Phouma does not waver.

Zhou [Enlai]: These things are always like that, it's very easy to waver. One must keep working. The national bourgeoisie are all weak. However, Phouma publicly requesting the Soviet Union to support Souphanouvong is good. Currently, there is no way to hold a Geneva Conference. Even U Nu says that something needs to happen between Kong Le and the Lao Patriotic Front forces first. Only then will America be forced to participate in the conference. The situation is favorable right now, as neither Cambodia nor Burma have recognized Boun Oum's illegal government. Khrushchev has replied by telegraph to Sihanouk saying that he supports that suggestion, and we are about to send a letter saying the same. Comrade CHEN Yi has also signed a letter to the two chairmen of the Geneva Convention saying that he supports Sihanouk's recommendation. Anyway, we cannot hold a conference right now. Perhaps if something happens [in Laos] then we'll be able to hold one. We shouldn't emphasize the usefulness of the International Supervision and Control Commission. If they want to hold a conference, they will have to deal with Phouma's government rather than that of Prince Boun Oum. India has taken up a very tow-faced position. They want to deal with both Phouma and Boun Oum's governments. That's India's attitude. Poland has not yet responded, which is correct, they should take time to observe. Canada is actually very interested as they oppose the rebuilding of the International Committee, and are in favor of instead holding a Geneva Conference. It is my estimation that America supports this. If we are to hold an International Committee, both sides must agree to a cease fire, but that would be disadvantageous to Boun Oum, so he will not agree to that as currently the important regions such as Xiangkhouang, Xam Neua, and Phongsali are all occupied by Phouma and the Lao Patriotic Front forces. They want to win these regions back first. America does not approve of reviving the International Committee right now either. So why do they approve of holding another Geneva Convention? They want to leave themselves a way out in case they are unsuccessful militarily. If Kong Le and the Laos army are able to hold and then take Luang Prabang, then the

US will hold a conference. They're preparing to take that step. (Sudarikov interjects: There are a lot of conflicts surrounding the Laos problem right now. England, France, and America are emphasizing different things.) England is in favor of Phouma returning to Vientiane to join Boun Oum's government and give it more credibility. France is still watching, they hope that Phouma will end up being in charge. Currently there is a commonality in that the majority of South East Asian treaty countries are against sending troops to interfere. It's not only England and France who are opposed, but Australia and New Zealand as well. Originally Pakistan wanted to interfere, but they've already pulled away from that position. The Philippines are watching and waiting. Though Thailand is interfering, they're not willing to admit it for fear of attracting the conflict to their own doorstep. This is a very good situation. On one hand we implement political resistance, and on the other hand we provide military aid. We are holding the flags of supporting Laos, opposing interference in internal politics, approving peace talks, and holding a Geneva Convention. America doesn't dare approve either. You have legal relations with Laos and have provided them aid. That is excellent, and we have been providing aid from the sidelines. We have given weapons to Laos through Vietnam. They still need 6500 uniforms from helmets to clothing, which are currently being rush produced. They also need all sorts of equipment like flashlights, etc. We are providing all of those things through Vietnam.

[Nikolai] Sudarikov: They have need of all kinds of aid. We've also given them 42 radio sets. This trip to Burma has been very successful.

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