

January 16, 1961
Transcript of Talks During receipt of
Representatives from Laos by Chen Yi and Vice
Premier Luo Ruiqing

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Transcript of Talks During receipt of Representatives from Laos by CHEN Yi and Vice Premier LUO Ruiqing

Date and time: 17:00 hours on the afternoon of January 16th, 1961
Location: People's Committee [Hall], Yunnan Province, (Kunming)

Persons in attendance:

Chinese representatives: Vice Premiers CHEN Yi, LUO Ruiqing and Governor YU Yichuan

Representatives from Laos: Chairman Peng Phongsavan, Minister Khamsouk Keola, Councilor Suphan Parachensyli

Vice Premier LUO [Ruiqing]: It's a bit cold today.

Vice Premier CHEN [Yi]: This is very similar to the weather in Rangoon.

[Pheng] PHONGSAVAN: It's slightly colder than in Vientiane. There are areas in Laos that are a bit chilly but not as cold as this.

[Vice Premier] CHEN [Yi]: Winter in China, Kunming is the best, but it's been a bit colder these last few days. You are kind of like us Chinese [with regards to the weather]. I've met with Prince [Souvanna] Phouma previously and the Vice Premier has also paid a visit. It's unfortunate that he has passed away. The situation in Laos at that time is different now. Things have much improved.

[Pheng] PHONGSAVAN: The current situation in Laos is quite unfavorable. Our presence here is proof of this fact.

[Vice Premier] CHEN [Yi]: But there have been improvements in some aspects.

[Pheng] PHONGSAVAN: We've come here because the state of affairs is not good. We left two days before Vientiane erupted in to war.

[Vice Premier] CHEN [Yi]: Premier ZHOU Enlai, Vice Premier LUO [Ruiqing] and I, while in Rangoon, mentioned to U Nu to assist your return home. We wished to see you at that time but there wasn't [enough] time.

[Pheng] PHONGSAVAN: While in Rangoon we received calls from Prince Phouma in Phnom Penh twice to meet with him there. But we didn't go because we were unable to. The situation in Laos is quite severe, especially due to foreign interference and the influx of new weaponry used to exacerbate matters. We decided to return to Laos but did not go directly.

We preferred returning to Laos via Kunming and Hanoi because we feel that China and Vietnam are our allies and we could use this opportunity to visit and discuss the situation in Laos with you both. Prince Phouma was originally to come go to Peking and had already made arrangements to do so but because the situation progressed so quickly had no choice but to cancel (later changed to postponement). We are

eager to restore a relationship with China. During the period of rule by a Pro-American government, there was a break in the relationship established in 1956 with China by Prince Phouma.

Recently, Prince Phouma's friend, Captain KONG Le, led a coup allowing us the ability to restore our relationship with China again. Unfortunately, the eruption of war in Vientiane has plunged the situation into a state of decline, leaving Phouma with no choice but to leave for Phnom Penh. Before war broke out in Vientiane, Phouma intended to head a delegation of friendship, but canceled due to the situation in Vientiane.

Afterwards, he (referring to Chancellor Khamsouk Keola) ordered representatives be brought to China and as they were preparing to depart events began in Vientiane. (The Minister stated "I intended to go to China on the 10th of December but instead went to Rangoon.") Captain KONG Le led a coup last year on August 9th, freeing Laos from the controls of imperialism and earning the support of the people of Laos. The purpose of his coup was to establish a governance doctrine of peaceful neutrality which is also in line with the aspirations of the people of Laos. However, Phoumi [NOSAVAN] wouldn't have it so. He tried to suppress this movement and launched war in Vientiane with hopes of overthrowing the government.

But Laos endeavored for independence and extricated herself from a policy of foreign interference in her internal affairs. This progressed rapidly with the support of the people. I'm confident that with the support of the people this movement will ultimately achieve victory and succeed at expelling all imperialists, returning the country to a state of independence and freedom and establishing a doctrine of peace and neutrality. We've been in support of Phouma's legitimate government from its inception and we're confident that with the support of other friendly and peaceful nations our victory is guaranteed.

[Vice Premier] CHEN [Yi]: Precisely. We have a responsibility to see to your safe return to Laos. It's a relatively simple matter. You may return to Sam Neua via Hanoi. As a socialist nation and as a nation who put forth the Five Principles, we've always been in support of independence, democracy and liberation of the masses. We sympathize with you and support the legitimate government headed by Prince Phouma and support all the doctrines for peaceful neutrality adopted by this government. We are also sympathetic to the justified coup lead by Captain KONG Le. Because of our good standing as neighbors, it's our responsibility to provide you with support.

We're in support of the policy of peace and neutrality implemented in the Kingdom of Cambodia by Prince [Norodom] Sihanouk. With the support of The United States and Thailand, Son Ngoc Thanh wishes to overthrow the government of [Prince] Sihanouk. We are opposed to this because it's unjust. Nepal and Afghanistan are both under monarchist rule. We have a good standing relationship with them and are also in support of their pursuit of a policy of peace and neutrality. These Kingdoms won't provide American imperialism a military base and will not take part in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. This has led us to become good friends. On the flip side, the governments of [South] Korea's Syngman RHEE and Vietnam's Ngô Đình Diệm are not under monarchist rule but have endangered their motherland by with division and have provided military bases to the U.S., putting the citizens of Mainland China in danger. Thus, we and their own people are in opposition to them.

You are aware of the relationship that China has with Cambodia and Burma. These relationships prove China advocates living peacefully with other nations without interfering in their national affairs, allowing them to determine their own rule of government. Our policy is much different than that of the United States in that the Americans must meddle in other nations internal affairs. They demand other nations

provide military bases to reach their goals of political and military control. Thus, it is very clear that Phoumi [NOSAVAN] is working for the Americans. He started civil war and has drawn in not only the Americans but Thailand and JIANG Jieshi's military to massacre the people. His defeat is certain. Within the announcement by the legitimate government headed by Prince Phouma, they were labeled as a ring of traitors. This is absolutely correct.

Chairman MAO, Chairman LIU Shaoqi and Premier ZHOU Enlai have already decided to provide you assistance. This isn't an issue. Furthermore, we're already in possession of a large arsenal of weapons, ammunition, provisions and medicines from Vietnam to provide you with and we will continue to provide you assistance going forward. There is a road from Điện Biên Phủ that intersects with Sam Neua, Phongsali and Xiengkhouang which is quite convenient. After your arrival in Hanoi you'll witness the assistance that we can provide. A significant amount of these items have already arrived at the front line. In addition, the Soviet Union, China and Vietnam will coordinate air transport. There are 18 helicopter and airfreight planes available for transporting goods from the Soviet Union via China to Vietnam then via airfreight to the front lines.

From the view point of your Chinese comrades, as long as you remain united internally, take full advantage of this assistance and persevere through battle, you are certain to achieve victory. You are much stronger than the rebel group mainly because of your support from the people of Laos and their opposition to the rebels. The United States has also encountered public condemnation and the rebel forces are experiencing low morale.

All the Asian and African nations want to free themselves of from imperial rule which is certain to be an arduous process. It's unavoidable. The divisions between those for and against democracy, pro and anti-Americanism and patriotism and treason must be dealt with. Battles must be fought in order to completely rid ourselves of imperialism and achieve peace nationwide. This was China's experience during the 1930s.

The development achievements in Kunming witnessed by you representatives could not have been conceived before liberation. This is because our expulsion of the imperialists allowed patriots for democracy and the masses the opportunity to commence reconstruction.

Within China today there still exists a strongly unified battlefield. This front is comprised of the Communist Party, democratic parties and people's organizations, working together for reconstruction. But it's at this time that JIANG Jieshi's treasonous faction is still in Taiwan under the protection of the Americans to hinder our reconstruction efforts. Combat is unavoidable. The American State Department is unwilling to give up on someone like JIANG Jieshi, who no one supports, and does not recognize a new and powerful nation like the People's Republic of China. They not only want to control China but all of Asia and the entire world. This is America's ambition. Our experience here in China is how we have come to understand the logic of the American's. The American's will not give up on JIANG Jieshi's group, efforts to expand the civil war in Laos or utilizing Boun Oum's forces. Unless the Phouma administration and the unified patriotic front are able to unify their patriotic vigor internally and force them all out, the American's will not give up.

Your Chinese Comrades see the situation in Laos as favorable. Phongsali, Xiengkhouang, Ban ban and the Plain of Jars were liberated quickly which reflects the sentiment of the people. People's hearts are with Phouma and not with Boun Oum's treasonous forces. In the eyes of Your Chinese Comrades, Quinim PHOLSENA and Captain KONG Le deciding to retreat from Vientiane was an important and accurate strategic maneuver. After retreating from Vientiane they'll be able to liberate a large

portion of the northern territory. If they did not retreat and reached a stalemate with rebels in Vientiane, they would have made no progress. Approximately 3 weeks ago when Captain KONG Le and the Honorable Quinim PHOLSENA retreated from Vientiane, the battalions of Phoumi [NOSAVAN] and Boun Oum went in. The west then claimed victory, stating that the elected government failed. At that time we said that their claim of victory came too soon. Now the west is realizing that the situation is not favorable [for them]. The government is making strides in military development, has liberated many regions in the country and is much stronger now. In addition, rebellion morale is low.

From the perspective of your Chinese comrades, there is internal unity among patriots in Laos, liberated regions have remained so and a greater number of areas are being liberated. These achievements are most crucial. International negotiations could be held but not for the purpose of coming to any final resolution. Meaningful final resolutions would be to have solidarity within the patriotic united front, sincere unity between military troops commanded by Captain KONG Le and the Lao Patriotic Forces, stabilization of regions already liberated and a continued pursuit of achievements towards victory. Victory on the front lines is the main determining factor for conditions in Laos. We can inform our honored guests that during talks between Premier ZHOU Enlai and Prime Minister U Nu, Prime Minister U Nu repeatedly emphasized that international negotiations are only possible after legitimate Laotian forces make progress, and only then can discussions be in Laos' favor. This statement is quite meaningful. I'm divulging this information so that you may take it into consideration.

You've left your homeland for quite some time and are probably unclear as to the international propositions regarding the state of affairs in Laos. I will explain them to you. The United States has recommended reinstating supervisory control and a supervisory committee. However, the United States disapproves of [Prince Norodom] Sihanouk's appeal to hold a grand conference with the Geneva Conference member states, which include Thailand, North and South Vietnam, Burma, etc. The United States hopes the treasonous forces of Phoumi [NOSAVAN] and Boun Oum have outcomes in their favor otherwise they are unwilling to hold talks. I want to remind our honored guests to be aware that on this issue the rebels and patriots equally want favorable outcomes. This fact is worthy of consideration. I can honestly say from experience that we had a similar situation when dealing with the Americans and JIANG Jieshi. As long as we had victory on the front lines we could force the Americans to have negotiations otherwise the prospect of negotiations would only be an illusion. Britain proposes incorporating Prince Phouma's government into the organization of Phoumi [NOSAVAN] and Boun Oum.

[VICE PREMIER] LUO [Ruiqing]: In other words, Britain does not view Phouma as a counterpart but has prepared to utilize him and recognizes Phoumi [NOSAVAN] as a future counterpart.

[Vice Premier] CHEN [Yi]: France's attitude is to wait and see how things develop. [Jawaharlal] NEHRU of India has no interest in this and suggests both governments join the international committee. Thus, talks between U Nu and Premier ZHOU Enlai will be crucial. Only if you are able to become more unified and gain more triumphs can advances be made and only then can you convene an international committee.

I'd like to propose that our honored guests be alert. Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. It would be unfortunate for Laos to be split into two conflicting regimes. Internal conflict would certainly bring about the destruction of property loss and life but there is no alternative. If victory at the front lines is not achieved then all of Laos will again be plunged into chaos. [If this happens] the United States and Britain will promote the treasonous forces of Phoumi [NOSAVAN] and Boun Oum and scrap peace and neutrality completely which will basically destroy any patriotic influence. The masses will be plunged into an even greater state of suffering. There is no way to

avoid this battle.

Another proposal is to have the United Nations come in and interfere. We have exchanged ideas with the leaders of Cambodia and Burma on this issue. It's our view that interference from the United Nations would be most detrimental. The Congo is an example. Interference by the United Nations is essentially using the law to cloak giving the United States control which would be a great misfortune. Civil war in Laos would be expanded to all of Indo-China. Cambodia and Burma are already under threat and China is also feeling uneasy. It's better to hold an expanded Geneva Conference, namely a 14-state conference. The U.S.S.R., China and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam have already agreed.

([VICE PREMIER] LUO [RUIQING]: But Phouma must be the counterpart delegate.)

But calling this conference still relies on the victory of your front lines or it won't be held and efforts will be to no avail.

The current situation in Laos can be resolved only by continued effort towards governmental and military success, making headway, working towards democracy and establishing a policy of peaceful neutrality within the monarchy. No other system of solutions will resolve the problem in Laos. The treasonous forces of Phoumi [NOSAVAN] and Boun Oum are in favor of the West and propose joining forces with the oppressive Manila Group, scrapping peace and neutrality. This will only expand the civil war and threaten all of Indo-China. Cambodia already feels the threat. Prince [Norodom] Sihanouk is extremely frightful of this prospect. U Nu and Ne Win are also in fear of this. We also feel uneasy and unsafe and especially in Yunnan Province. We wholeheartedly wish you victory and are willing to do anything we can to assist. It is good that the honored guests wish to immediately return home through Kunming because there is work to be done. It would be better if Phouma returned to Sam Neua. This would be even more beneficial. We are willing to provide any assistance needed for the entire war. As far as our 3 honored guests' visit to China is concerned, when the situation is more convenient you may come at any time. But because work must be done, it is not possible now. It's best to return home. Go through Kunming to Hanoi. I am confident comrades in Hanoi will take good care of you until you able to finally return to your motherland.

[Pheng] PHONGSAVAN: After listening to the kind words of Marshal Chen (referring to Premier CHEN Yi), we are very grateful and happy. We have now arrived on Chinese soil and can see that China is a powerful nation. We've seen the successes in Kunming. The liberation of Kunming has changed its appearance. This is proof of the Chinese people's great efforts in repairing and building their country. The people of Laos are people of a small nation but also have a legitimate aspiration to be independent and have fought for this independence for fifteen years. In the beginning, the fight was against the French colonialists and afterwards, the battle was against Japanese aggression. Now, because of foreign imperialism, especially the interference from American imperialism, there is internal fighting and civil unrest in Laos. This is most unfortunate for a small nation like Laos. Though the nation is not large and the population is small in number, the people will not cease to fight for independence.

During this civil war, Phouma's legitimate government has been supported by the majority of citizens. There is only a small portion of the population controlled by the rebels and the formidable nation of the United States. The United States gives strong support to the rebels with modern armaments like tanks, planes plus provisions and funding. Recently, they've also provided four assault planes equipped with rocket and machine gun artillery. This new complication will be hazardous for ground troops. Captain KONG Le has already called on world opinion to denounce this action and request termination of the use of this type of weaponry. This is a threat to peace in

Asia and the world.

Although the Laotian soldiers have a strong will to continue the struggle, they'll be massacred if they confront this type of modern weaponry which they have no defense against. The world community should intervene in this issue and condemn the use of this modern weaponry, especially those who share friendship with our Laos [condemn this act]. I am willing to again call on our friendly nations to prevent the United States from bringing in this type of weaponry and seek measures to remove these weapons from Laos or we will need to have comparable equipment. I'd like to use the opportunity to mention one thing. While we were in Burma, we thought to organize a new liberation force outside of the Kingdom of Laos' own combat troops and Captain KONG Le's military forces. Rebel forces still occupy the town of Luang Prabang. Luang Prabang is home to the King. Its liberation would be a great political and military achievement. It would be a great accomplishment for the entire struggle and would boost the morale of our soldiers. In order to liberate Luang Prabang, we will organize forces centered around Phongsali. Besides Laotians, there are many residents in the mountainous regions and tribesmen that are willing to join the struggle but are ill-equipped and without provisions. If they are able provide substantial support, we could utilize terrains within close proximity to Luang Prabang and Phongsali and quickly liberate Luang Prabang. I wish to present this issue to our honorable hosts. We will mention this issue to concerned parties on our way through Hanoi. We currently have Luang Prabang surrounded but lack the forces to launch an offensive and capture it. If there were two to three camps with more effective combat strength it could be capture. I have already mentioned the importance of liberating Luang Prabang.

Now, I'd like to reveal a secret plan to Marshal CHEN Yi. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization has already decided to have Laos divided into two parts; one section, the area that cannot be won over is to be controlled by the army of the Kingdom of Laos; the other, will be controlled by SEATO and converted into the new North Korea and Vietnam. As Laotian citizens, we must use all effort to avoid this type of division. Laos is already a small nation and a division would be its end, like disappearing from the face of the planet. So we must move forward with the struggle, resist any division and fight to quickly capture Luang Prabang. This will help to bring the entire nation to a quick victory.

[Premier] LUO [Ruiqing]: This view is accurate. As Deputy Premier Chen stated, the situation in Laos is quite favorable. Phongsali, Xiangkhouang and the Plain of Jars have been liberated in succession to constitute one region. The front lines have been victorious and the enemy's morale is at a low. (CHEN introduced "This is our chief of staff") Sam Neua, Xiangkhouang and the Plain of Jars are essential. These locations are second only to Luang Prabang in importance. Stabilization of these liberated areas now is the only way to liberate Luang Prabang. The forces of Phoumi [NOSAVAN] and Boun Oum wish to retake Xiangkhouang and the Plain of Jars through a counteroffensive. But they wouldn't make much stride because morale is low among their fighters. A counteroffensive would be defeated. Of course, there is still the need to remain alert. A few days ago, after your forces captured Xiangkhouang province, you then captured and additional two to three strongholds. The counteroffensive that enemy forces advanced at the intersections of routes 13 and 7 from northern Xiangkhouang and western Luang Prabang has already been halted. The liberation of Ban ban is essential to keep a hold on Xam Neua. When enemy forces retreated Ban ban, 200 prisoners were taken which is a great victory. The Honorable Chairman has just stated the hopes to avoid the division of Laos and being dragged into the Manila Group. These are also our hopes. But Vice Premier CHEN [Yi] has just made it clear that the United States won't give up on its aspirations. It won't give up on its tool: the treasonous forces of Phoumi [NOSAVAN] and Boun Oum. Calling on the international community to condemn the United States is the right move. World opinion is already in condemnation of and will continue to condemn the United States but we can't rely on this alone. Vice Premier CHEN [Yi] has already stated that internal unification is essential. Cementing the positions already gained

by government forces and gaining victory on the front lines is the only way to avoid a division and being pulled into the Manila Group. Only in this way can democratic independence be implemented and can a policy of peace and neutrality be achieved.

The view of your Chinese comrades is that you must have internal unity and solidify gains already made. In this way the frontlines will gain a new victory and the forces of Phoumi [NOSAVAN] and Boun Oum will fall apart. Because of the low morale of the forces of Phoumi [NOSAVAN] and Boun Oum, there are patriots among them or they have been influenced by the patriots. In the areas under their control, most people are in opposition to the rebels and are in defense of Phouma's legitimate government. The arrival of the treasonous forces of Phoumi [NOSAVAN] and Boun Oum and the temporary division of Laos is unfortunate. However, it's only temporary and unavoidable. Only by continuing the struggle can the forces of Phoumi [NOSAVAN] and Boun Oum be defeated and a division be prevented.

As far as assistance is concerned, help from the Soviet Union can be relied upon. The Soviet Union and the Phouma administration have formal diplomatic relations and Phouma has already requested assistance from the U.S.S.R. Thus, this assistance is legal and public. This type of assistance will continue. Although China and Vietnam only have friendly but not diplomatic relations with Laos and thus cannot provide the public support the Soviet Union can, other methods can be used to assist. And it is assistance that can be relied on. As far as I know, the stock of weapons and supplies we've sent through Hanoi have not been depleted yet. A portion is still in Hanoi. Going forward, if either you, Phouma, KONG Le or Quinim PHOLSENA require assistance we will do whatever we can. We're willing to use any means necessary to provide assistance. This will mainly be provided through the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

[Vice Premier] CHEN [Yi]: We've already provided a great deal of assistance. You will realize this upon arrival to Hanoi. For the three nations of Soviet Union, China and Vietnam to equip your tens of thousands of people is no large task and not a problem at all. This isn't a stupendous matter. I can inform you that the assistance we've given to some Asian and African countries wasn't minuscule.

[Vice Premier] LUO [Ruiqing]: We've an abundance of weapons waiting to be used. Transportation to Phongsali is no easy task but it can be accomplished. We've just provided Algeria with a large amount of military assistance.

[Vice Premier] CHEN [Yi]: This is a well-known secret. Our assistance can be relied upon. We have more than 3,000,000 service men. A small portion of that number would be sufficient for your needs. Your independence and adoption of a policy of peace and neutrality are in accord with our mutual interests. The United States doesn't mind offending us and we don't mind offending them. Our two big nations have been at odds for the last eleven years and will continue to be.

[Vice Premier] LUO [Ruiqing]: As just stated by the Honorable Chairman, using the force of three battalions to capture Luang Prabang is essential. In the long-run, if the government forces commanded by Captain KONG Le and the Lao Patriotic Forces commanded by Prince SOUPHANOUVONG, are well organized, well equipped and combat ready, victory is inevitable. Victory certainly relies on unity and the people, but troops must also be well equipped. According to our information, the patriotic forces are already much more combat ready than the rebels but should be strengthened even further. Within the scope of the organization of duties, some other tasks can be accomplished. Reorganize the troops to increase combat efficiency. I am aware that you're in the process of reorganizing troops in the Plains of Jars. This is crucial.

We are in agreement that it is essential to capture Luang Prabang. Concerning when

and how to conduct battle, we hope that upon your return this will be discussed with commanders like Captain KONG Le and others to come to a decision. It's difficult for us to give any specific recommendations. We've heard that the King has already left Luang Prabang for Vientiane. In spite of this, capturing Luang Prabang is still of great importance. As far as what's needed to liberate Luang Prabang, I think the Soviet Union, China and Vietnam can adequately supply you. Assistance is certainly important but you essentially must rely on yourselves.

There's another point worth mentioning. It would be best to force a retreat of the American rocket-equipped fighters. Don't draw them into Laos' civil war. You may call on the international community but it's not clear if this can be accomplished. If you're defeated, relying on world-wide condemnation alone won't cause the Americans to retreat. As far as I'm aware, the rockets equipped on this type of American fighter are mainly use in air battle and have little effectiveness towards the ground. Perhaps, the purpose of these fighters is to deal with the Soviet Union's implementation of airlift and not to deal with issues on the ground. This type of fighter has its uses but is nothing impressive, particularly in dealing with ground warfare. In addition, there are only four planes. Though your nation is small, the total area of about 240,000 square kilometers isn't minute and is jungle territory. The United States has already announced that these are fighters. Since they are fighters, they must be used to do battle in the air. Bombers or aircraft equipped with air to ground rockets are used to deal with ground targets.

I would like to inform my Laotian friends that the United States will certainly intervene so you must be prepared. The intervention may or may not be widespread and may even cease. There exist these possibilities. The United States has been doing wrong world-wide and has been condemned by citizens world-wide. They will certainly fail and you will certainly be victorious. Vice Premier CHEN has stated that China has express condemnation, the Soviet Union has warned the United States and the world community at large has condemned and will continue to oppose the United States. We will leave it at that for now. As far as everything we've discussed, you'll have a better understanding of the situation once you've reached Hanoi. Once you've returned to your motherland things will be much clearer.

[Vice Premier] CHEN [Yi]: Dinner has been prepared. We may continue the discussion over dinner.