

April 17, 1961
**Transcript of Talks during Zhou Enlai's Reception of
Prince Souphanouvong**

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Transcript of Talks during ZHOU Enlai's Reception of [Prince] SOUPHANOUVONG

Discussion of Issues Concerning Laos

Date and Time: 17 April 1961, 22:45

Location: The Guesthouse Hotel

Also in Attendance: WU Xiuquan, Director CHEN Shuliang

Premier [ZHOU]: I've heard that Quinim [PHOLSENA] will arrive at 12:20 this evening. I'd like to pick him up.

[Prince] SOUPHANOUVONG: Let's go together. I originally planned to come with him, but with the weather being so bad in Xiangkhouang [Province], I didn't wait for him and came first.

Premier [ZHOU]: I've heard that PHOUMA is going to the U.S. on the 19th. You can both go to Moscow tomorrow to see him.

[Prince] SOUPHANOUVONG: That's fine. Though we'll only meet a few hours before he leaves Moscow, it's ok.

Premier [ZHOU]: I'm afraid his plans to visit the U.S. are already set. Perhaps it's of use to pay a visit. What do you think of your royal Prime Minister?

[Prince] SOUPHANOUVONG: He has changed to some degree, compared to before. He's seen that the United States is responsible for disrupting his lawful government and policy of peaceful neutrality. He looks to us for some level of support, the support of socialist camps to resist Phoumi [NOSAVAN] who is sponsored by the United States.

Some time ago, he witnessed the generous support provided by our socialist camps and was moved. He's quoted as saying to the ministers and kingdom army in Xiangkhouang [Province] that, "all these precious items were given to us by friends. Be sure to safeguard [them] and waste not a thing."

He'd make no such comment in the past.

But on the other hand, he's in fear of us gaining strength. In February of this year when he returned to Xiangkhouang [Province], he had it in mind to dismantle our forces or have us merge with KONG Le, with him as leader. He mentioned this matter during a meeting he held for the ministers.

At the time, I expressed to him that we are of the same patriotic force in support a legitimate government's existence and development, here to strengthen its position and spread its influence. [I also stated] that this is not a coalition government and there is no issue of [its] cohesion. The problem at hand is how to develop and strengthen it.

I again asked the three ministers: "if [you] dismantle us, will [you] be able to defeat Phoumi [NOSAVAN]?" They all expressed that it would not be possible. PHOUMA finally came to the conclusion that in order to strengthen the governments' position, our unified force should be maintained.

However, he doesn't sincerely want to see our expansion. He feels that Quinim [PHOLSENA] and KONG Le were brought over by us, so he wants to train the military of Khammouane to be his own force. [when he mentioned this] I invited him to go to Sam Neua but he wouldn't. He insisted on going to Phongsali, but because of the weather, was unable to go.

[When] he intended to return to Phnom Penh to meet with Phoumi [NOSAVAN], Quinim [PHOLSENA], KONG Le and I all disagreed [so]he chose to visit other nations to ease tensions. During his visits, India [was assumed to] accomplishing a few things in confidence. After that, he went to Yugoslavia and now wants to visit the United States. He seems to be again changing his stance and swaying a great deal.

PHOUMA [is the one who] sincerely desires [to achieve] peaceful neutrality, relying on us to resist the United States. He is also anti-communist, so he can't see that the United States is our supreme enemy. He thinks that the States is but a temporary enemy to our people.

He now has another plan. He hopes that outside forces will resist one another, allowing him to avoid asserting force. He believes this will help maintain neutrality.

Premier [ZHOU]: How many men does Khammouane have?

[Prince] SOUPHANOUVONG: An estimated 1500; there is only one complete battalion. There are also 6 or 7 scattered companies.

Premier [ZHOU]: Is Khammouane in agreement with Quinim [PHOLSENA] and your decision to send his troops to suppress the remaining Chiang [Kaishek] brigands?

[Prince] SOUPHANOUVONG: It was his suggestion.

Premier [ZHOU]: We've already invited Khamphay BOUPHA to visit Yunnan. Tomorrow, he'll enter the country. It's a rough road from that direction. [He'll] have to travel through Kunming for a few days. We're in agreement that the Khammouane military should use our borders to suppress the brigands. We could also provide assistance. Is it possible that Khammouane would want our military's assistance?

[Prince] SOUPHANOUVONG: It's possible, perhaps. Khammouane has expressed a desire to utilize my guerilla forces to suppress the brigands.

Premier [ZHOU]: Aren't you planning to use a portion of your forces after capturing the next stronghold to go west and coordinate with the Khammouane operation? Has the stronghold been taken or not?

[Prince] SOUPHANOUVONG: Not yet. I estimate it can be captured (the Souphanouvong then drew a diagram to show the terrain for this expedition).

Premier [ZHOU]: Khammouane doesn't have a large [military] force. [He] may recruit a portion of Phoumi [NOSAVAN]'s military. Do you think KONG Le's troops will be willing to cooperate with you long-term?

[Prince] SOUPHANOUVONG: It's possible that KONG Le's troops could work with us long-term, but there is certain to be a small number of officers and rouge troops that run off.

Premier [ZHOU]: I'm aware that you discussed the situation with PENG Zhen and other comrades today. Now let's go to the airport. [We can] further discuss things in the car.