

**April 23, 1961**

**Record of Conversation between Prime Minister  
Souvanna Phouma and Crown Prince  
Souphanouvong**

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Record of Conversation between Premier Zhou [Enlai] and Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, Crown Prince Souphanouvong  
- On the Topics of the State of Laos and Sino-Laos Relations

(Has Not Been Reviewed)  
Time: 9:30 am April 23rd 1961  
Location: Xihua Hall

Zhou [Enlai]: Let's ask his highness to speak first today.

[Souvanna] Phouma: First I'd like to thank you again for your invaluable help. If it weren't for the aid provided by you and the Soviet Union, we would have been overrun by the forces supported by the Americans. For this we are extremely grateful.

Zhou: It's our responsibility to our neighbors. Peace is not only beneficial to Laos, but to us as well. We will continue to provide you with as much aid as is within our power according to your needs.

Phouma: Mr. Premier is already clear on the current situation in Laos. In the beginning, America wanted to avoid holding the Conference of 14 Nations [International Conference on the Settlement of the Laotian Question] and reviving the International Committee's work, and urged the King of Laos to put forth the suggestion of organizing a committee of three neutral nations. Afterward, because this suggestion was not accepted, they had no choice but to give way on the matter of holding the Conference of 14 Nations. You could say that America has already given way in a number of matters, and now we can enact a cease fire in Laos. The Soviet Union and Britain are about to call for a cease fire.

Of course, until the Conference of 14 Nations is held, we cannot let our guard down, especially against Thailand. From the very beginning Thailand has been helping Phoumi Nosavan. In the beginning of 1960, when I returned home from Paris, there were already Thai staff in Vientiane. The captain of the Thai staff came to see me once and said that Marshal Sarit Thanarat still wanted me to act as an advisor to Phoumi Nosavan. Since Thailand consistently helps Phoumi Nosavan, we need to pay particular attention to them and be on guard. They could attack us at any time. There is a Thai airbase in Udon Thani. Right now, the International Committee doesn't have any real power and is incapable of supervising what happens in Thailand. This International Conference should enable the International Committee to supervise everything that goes on both sides of the border. I already told Mr. Premier yesterday that the reason Thailand has taken such actions against Laos is because Thailand does not wish for Laos to be a peaceful country. If Laos becomes a peaceful country, then the 7 million Laotian people living in Thailand will request to return to Laos. It is because of this that not long after the Geneva Conference, Thailand sent a team to assassinate our Defense Minister Kou Voravong. Mr. Premier may have seen him during the 1954 Geneva Conference. When I was in Vientiane, some Laotian people who lived on the other side of the Mekong River expressed disagreement with Sarit Thanarat's policies, which is something that Sarit Thanarat is aware of. In 1957, a Thai newspaper opposed a large number of Laotian people living in Thailand returning to Laos. Sarit Thanarat is not very comfortable with the road that Laos is on right now, particularly with the idea of Laos healing and becoming peaceful. He's not even comfortable with Laos developing its underground resources.

After the return of peace to Laos, we hope that China will help us develop our natural resources. However, before that, under conditions that call for it, we must continue the struggle and preserve our independence, winning victory for neutrality. Now, transportation in Northern Laos is very inconvenient, and we especially need China's help on this matter. Colonel Khammouane of Phongsaly Province has already contacted you about this. Aside from that, if we do not have enough weapons, we hope that China can provide us with military assistance to help drive the Nationalist Party militants in Northern Laos.

Zhou: Have you given a call to Kunming?

Phouma: We have. In order to make it easier for China to provide us with aid, I have agreed to have the Economic and Cultural Delegation we mutually established through Quinim [PHOLSENA] exchange information with the Chinese side. As for the matter of us establishing diplomatic relations, I said yesterday, this can only be decided by the King of Laos. However, we can raise in the Joint Committee that we have already established an ambassadorial relationship. This will put China in a better position to lend us aid.

Zhou: What his highness has just said is very clear. Our opinions on these matters are very easily unanimous. First of all, on the development of events in Laos, I'd like to say a few things to add to what his highness just said.

America and its footmen have seen that they cannot support Phoumi Nosavan and they have no choice but to agree to the suggestion the Soviet Union put forth to Britain. This is for certain. However, this is just one side to the issue. The other side is that, just as his highness just said, Laos will not easily achieve nationwide peace, national unity, and peaceful neutrality. The reason is that America consistently subverts the government lead by his highness and supports Phoumi Nosavan's espionage. It is only after suffering defeat after defeat and being put in a position where they have no choice that they have given way. However, in reality, America's support for Phoumi Nosavan will not die. They believe Phoumi is the only of the many powers in Laos that they can rely on. America's secretary of state did not hide this in his conversation with the Soviet Union's foreign minister. Just as we do not hide that we support a government lead by his highness and including the two Nationalist powers in Laos. We support his highness's government and policies of peaceful neutrality. This is something that can be made known to the world.

We will not allow foreign countries to interfere in the domestic political affairs of Laos, we respect Laos's national independence, national unity, and peaceful neutrality. Furthermore, America has been forced to accept the suggestion put forth by the Soviet Union. On the surface they appear to accept it, but in reality they will continue to look a power that they can support to destroy Laos's peaceful independence, national unity, and peaceful neutrality. Recent events prove this. Just as negotiations for a cease fire and holding the Conference of 14 Nations began, and on the eve of the Cuba Incident [Bay of Pigs Invasion], America announced that they would send a team of military consultants to the Phoumi Nosavan group. Their goal was to control this rogue power and give it a position of legality.

Originally, your highness was about to come to a cease fire agreement by convening a meeting of all the major powers, but America stuck its fingers into the matter with the intention of gaining control of the rebel power and thereby gaining a legal foothold to interfere in Laos's domestic political affairs before the convening of the International Conference. The Vietnamese government has already issued a statement opposing this, they believe it is a violation of the Geneva Convention. We also oppose this.

Second, just as you've just said, Thailand will not let matters in Thailand go. Not long

after the agreement at the last Geneva Conference [1954] was made, they assassinated the Laos National Defense Minister [Kou Voravong]. Thailand is constantly taking action to interfere and ruin things. Now that your highness's government has dispersed from Vientiane, Thailand, under America's support, has put forth the most effort. Phoumi has a close relationship with Sarit Thanarat and they have been collaborating together. There is the Mekong River between Laos and Thailand, and across that river is an airport. Up until the previous few days, the Thai government maintained that it would not attend the Conference of 14 Nations. Of course, if America attends, then Thailand will also attend. However, this shows that they will maintain a position of trouble-making. Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam is not excited about the Conference of 14 Nations, because he is not willing to see Laos achieve peaceful neutrality. Just as we discussed yesterday in the car, if Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos become a region of peaceful neutrality, then South Vietnam will be isolated, so, under America's support, they want to destroy Laos's policies of peaceful neutrality. I agree very much with what you just said, that we should be wary of them, not just in cease fire negotiations, but even after. After the resolution was reached at the 1954 Geneva Conference, America, Thailand, and South Vietnam repeatedly toppled your highness's government and ruined Laos's policy of peaceful neutrality. After our experiences during the peace negotiations during our own civil war, we must take several steps to prevent America's interference whether it be during peace talks or the Geneva Conference. The two leaders may issue their call for a cease fire on the 24th. We believe that your highness's Nationalist military power and the Lao Patriotic Front will answer the call. We have always supported a cease fire in Laos so of course we will also answer. We are very willing to see peace in Laos.

Phoumi Nosavan might also respond to the cease fire, but they may also put forward a number of conditions that will make it easy for America to control Laos in order to ruin the cease fire. We estimate that they might raise the following 2 condition: (1) Take advantage of the American military consultant group to expand Phoumi Nosavan's military and consolidate their position, provoking the Laos Nationalist armed power at the first opportunity to reignite the war. (2) Suggest that the cease fire talks be held on territory they control, for example Luang Prabang, because at the moment the king is under their control, therefore they can "use the king to command the lords" to make your highness go to Luang Prabang for the cease fire negotiations. These two conditions put together will make Phoumi Nosavan's group legally legitimate and make your highness illegitimate, forcing your highness to follow them. There is no way this can produce real peaceful neutrality. I expressed this point to you already yesterday. These negotiations must be centered around your highness and the policies set forth by your government because they are based on the Geneva Convention. The Geneva Convention has the most ability to ensure Laos's independence, neutrality, and peace. We are participants in the Geneva Conference and we support your government. At the same time, Phoumi's power must be limited, he must not be allowed to develop or change. Phoumi's power must be subject to your highness's guidance, and the American military consultant group must not be allowed to exist, otherwise, the cease fire negotiations will not be guaranteed. It is for this reason that we agree with your opinion that the Nationalist power under your highness's leadership must be strengthened during the time of the peace talks and the Conference of 14 Nations.

If you need, we can provide you with all the aid in our power, because this can ensure the realization of the policies your highness supports. As for the Conference of 14 nations, holding it will not be easy. America has its own plans and they are shared by Thailand and South Vietnam. Canada also tends to follow America, something that they have shown in the International Committee. Therefore, during the Conference of 14 Nations, we must prevent America from directing Phoumi Nosavan to break the cease fire during the period of the conference. At the same time, as we also participate in the Conference of 14 Nations, we will ensure that your government and the independence, racial unity, and peaceful neutrality it supports will not be ruined. The Conference of 14 Nations should not only guarantee Laos's position, but it should also ensure that the agreement reached at the last Geneva conference is brought

into effect. Prince Sihanouk is very concerned by this matter because his own neutral policies are frequently ruined by the two neighboring nations. Everybody must sign onto this Conference of 14 Nations. Neither America or Vietnam signed at the previous Geneva Conference. France did, but since they'd already left South Vietnam at the time, they were not able to sign for South Vietnam.

Vice Minister Zhang [Hanfu]: America sending a military consultant group to Laos shows that it is not a Geneva Convention signatory country.

Zhou: Exactly, that is excellent proof. If America does something like that again, then they will still be able to ruin things. Therefore, it's not that we're biased against America, rather through experience we've learned that their methods tend to make a lot of trouble for us and we will not take it anymore. We have experience in fighting against the Americans and in negotiating with them. After the surrender of the Japanese Imperialists, I was the one who negotiated with the Americans. I've had dealings with President Roosevelt's special envoy Hurley during the War of Resistance Against Japan when we worked together with America. After the Japanese surrendered, President Truman sent Marshall to mediate the Chinese civil war and to improve relations between the Communist and Nationalist parties. We organized a "Group of Three" made up of Marshall, myself, and Jiang Jieshi's representative Zhang Zhizhong (He is currently part of our government). The "Group of Three" was in negotiations for a year in 1945 and achieved a cease fire, a peace agreement, and an agreement to reorganize the military. Both sides signed these agreements and Marshall signed as a witness. However, in the end, Jiang Jieshi and Marshall broke the agreements, first attacking the liberated region controlled by Marshall Chen Yi, a conflict that lasted for three-and-a-half years. Even with all the aid America gave Jiang Jieshi, they still failed. Your highness is familiar with what happened in North Korea. We were in peace talks with America for 2 years before coming to an agreement. Originally, we'd both agreed to pull out our respective troops after the end of the war. The People's Volunteer Army of China took the initiative to leave North Korea, but the American troops are still there now. Negotiations with America gave us a lot of experience. Needless to say, they're still occupying our territory Taiwan. It's encroachment. We support your government and the policies it's taken under your leadership. We must be on guard against the subversive actions of Phoumi Nosavan's government supported by America and its henchmen limiting the development of your highness's power. If their power expands, then your highness's government and its policies will be toppled and Laos will be unable to obtain peace. Our region, then, will also never see stability, and the peace in Southeast Asia will be ruined. We've had this experience before, so we hope that these peace negotiations, led by your government, will be able to produce an agreement that will give Laos independence, peace, and neutrality. We also hope that the Conference of 14 Nations will provide insurance and not allow America to have its way. America's policy is that when they need to be peaceful, they're peaceful, when they want war, they wage war, when they fail, they cover it up with peace talks, and when they're strong again they attack. We should not allow their plans to be realized. These are our opinions, we hope your highness and your government will take them into consideration.

Phouma: Thank you for your trust and opinions. We will certainly stay on guard, particularly during peace talks. There's a problem right now that will be difficult to resolve, namely: South Vietnam may take advantage of the Conference of 14 Nations to bring up the issue of Vietnam. If South Vietnam gets its way, the conference will be drawn out, so this conference must be limited to the problems in Laos. If we need to solve the problem in Vietnam, then we can hold another conference later on.

Zhou: Right, this conference should be focused on solving the problem in Laos. Once an agreement has been reached and signed, then if they want to discuss Vietnam, then we can discuss Vietnam

[...]

Zhou: If your highness thinks that our opinions are worth considering, not only in terms of our two countries' relationship but during the Geneva conference, please feel free to stay in contact with our foreign minister Chen Yi so that we can use the conference to ensure the realization of your highness's government's policies. Concerning the military and material aid that Laos requires, we will begin researching the things your highness brought up. We are willing to provide you with anything we can produce or already have. If there are weapons and ammunition that we are still unable to produce or don't have, then we won't be able to help. As for Mr. Khamphay BOUPHA's discussion with Kunming concerning the movement of Khammouane troops across the border to Houeisay, we hope that they will take action quickly. We will help in any way that we can on this matter. If they can act quickly, then attacking the Jiang bandits will be beneficial to your highness's government. We can also achieve peace, just like the agreement that we reached with Myanmar. We don't currently know the number of people who will cross the border, and we hope that you will tell us as quickly as possible so that we can more easily provide weapons and ammunition etc.

Phouma: They have already provided the approximate number to Kunming.

Zhou: That's good. We will go by the number they provided then. As for the equipment and supplies they need urgently, we're providing them now. The supplies that aren't needed as urgently can be supplied during the second phase. Things should always be done in proper order. Second, the issue of building a highway that your highness just raised has already been brought up to our ambassador in Hanoi by his highness Quinim [PHOLSENA]. The request is for us to build a road going North to South from Yunnan toward Phongsali, (Asking Quinim [PHOLSENA]) is that right?

Phouma: Correct. We can extend a highway in China to Laos. Once the road is finished, it will make transportation between our 2 countries much more convenient.

Zhou: I went to Xishuangbanna recently and learned a few things there. There are currently two roads going toward Laos. One runs North to South toward Phongsali and it's rather long. The other one runs West to East from Mengla toward Houeisay. This road is shorter and extending it will be faster. This matter can be raised during a joint communique saying that we are willing to help your country build a road across our border. We can make more concrete decisions concerning the road next year.

Phouma: In the public announcement we can explain very simply that China will help Laos build a highway, it would probably be best not to draw attention to the matter of building a road in Phongsali.

Zhou: We'll discuss the details later. Now that we've decided to help you build the road, we need to make preparations since we only have highways in Yunnan, not railroads, so sending the road building equipment to Yunnan will take a while. Once we've built the road, the portion within your country will return to your ownership and management. Our workers will also leave once it's built. As for the matter of economic and cultural cooperation between our two countries, we can include that in the public report and later continue discussion according to the needs of your government. We will provide whatever aid you need as long as it is within our power. We have 2 standards for helping foreign countries, namely:

(1) It does not carry any political conditions or rights. We will send as few workers as possible to help construct the road, and as soon as the work is finished they will leave the country. While they are in country, they will observe your country's laws and instructions.

(2) It will be beneficial to the lives of your people and your government's income. We

will build it according to your country's resources and begin production quickly, reducing net cost. Helping this country to flourish will help in its reconstruction and establish an independent national economy so that it will not be dependent on any other country economically. Your highness saw Prince Sihanouk in Phnom Penh and he can attest to this as can Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Chen Yi: President Sukarno is also very interested in this matter. Our aid and that provided by America is a pretty good comparison.

Zhou: When Vice Premier Chen Yi visited Indonesia, he signed a non-aggression pact, and not long afterward Indonesia sent a delegation of engineers to Beijing for negotiations concerning us helping them build a textile mill. The part of the issue, as your highness just mentioned, is that we can state in a public report that our two countries have decided to establish formal diplomatic relations and send ambassadors. As for the legal portion, that can be taken care of later. This way, we can establish the relationship between our two countries and make the rest of the world believe that both of our countries are friendly. If we can come to an actionable result at the Conference of 14 Nations, then once the coalition government lead by your highness has been established, we can not only build diplomatic relations, but we can do as Cambodia and Myanmar have done and sign a friendly non-aggression pact in order to further ensure Laos's independence, peace, and neutrality. But this is in the future and we need not include it in the public report. As for mopping up the Jiang bandits still in Laos, we can consider adding that in the public report, similar to how it was stated in the public report issued by the leaders of Cambodia and Myanmar. This will be beneficial to maintaining peace along our border. The issue of the Jiang bandits is sensitive for America, they're afraid of it being touched on. The Soviet Union has asked America before what to do about the Jiang bandits in Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand. America said that they would disperse the bandits. Under this type of situation, America cannot deny its relationship with the Jiang bandits. In reality, America doesn't want to truly disperse them. U Nu understands this now, so they are attacking the Jiang bandits as much as possible. They Jiang bandits have been stirring things up in Myanmar for 11 years now and have created a lot of chaos there. They've organized the Karen people against the Myanmar government and the Shan state against U Nu, so Nu has no choice but to be determined in driving them out. Now, a portion of the Jiang bandits have fled to Laos. This problem must also be resolved at the Geneva Conference. They are not from Myanmar or Laos, they're insurgents, about 7,000 of them. These are the issues that I wanted to speak about today.

Phouma: We have things in common when it comes to handling the problem of the Jiang bandits.

Zhou: Does your highness have any other questions?

Phouma: (Souphanouvong and Phouma exchange words for a moment) My brother suggests that in the public report we include more detailed information about the aid that China has already given us, and that our two countries will continue to create economic and cultural partnerships in the future.

Zhou: The public report can also recall the exchange between Quinim [PHOLSENA] and He Wei in the joint economic and cultural group, and go on to say that we will continue to enact economic and cultural agreements in the future. Since there isn't much time, how about we appoint someone to write up a draft of the report now?

Phouma: I'd nominate Quinim [PHOLSENA] to participate.

Zhou: We'd like to ask [Vice] Minister Zhang Hanfu and Minister's Assistant Qiao

Guanhua to participate as well.

Phouma: Sisuman will help as well.

Zhou: I'm afraid that if the report can't be completed today, then Minister Zhang will be unable to accompany us to Hangzhou tomorrow, so we'd like Minister's Assistant Qiao to help as well and go with us to Hangzhou. Today we will still have 2 opportunities to meet. If there are still any matters to discuss tomorrow, we can do so on the way to and in Hangzhou.