

April 25, 1961

**Conversation between Prince Souphanouvong and
Vice Premier Chen Yi while in Hangzhou**

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Conversation between Prince SOUPHANOUVONG and Vice Premier CHEN Yi while in Hangzhou

Discussion on the matter of forming a coalition government in Laos

Date: April 25th, 1961

Location: Hangzhou

[Prince] SOUPHANOUVONG: When I met with Chairman MAO yesterday evening, I had so much to say to him but PHOUMA's presence made it inconvenient to speak. Please give my respects to Chairman MAO and the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

[Vice Premier] CHEN: I certainly will [pass it on]. Thank you. You should know that during Chairman MAO's speech yesterday evening, his emphasis on the struggles the Chinese Party experienced during negotiations was primarily directed towards you.

[Prince] SOUPHANOUVONG: Understood. I've taken note of the words Chairman MAO said. On my return this time, the battle ahead will still be a great challenge. Our main task at hand is to win over PHOUMA. On the entire trip over I've discussed with PHOUMA the prospect of organizing an interim coalition government. We're already in agreement that the coalition government should be organized in approximately the following way:

- PHOUMA's side: 6 to 7 persons
- [The Lao] Patriotic Front Party [Pathet Lao]: 4 to 5 persons
- [The] Rebel Battalion: 1 to 2 persons

PHOUMA group members [will] include PHOUMA and 3 ministers from the legitimate government in Xiangkhouang [Province] for a total of 4 members:

- the current Minister of Finance from Phnom Penh, Yenpung SURYADHAY, though quite fickle, has still expressed his loyalty to PHOUMA.
- a minister arrested by rebels who's attitude towards the struggle yet remains unyielding.
- in addition, the current "Strive for Peace and Neutrality for Ethnic Harmony and National Unity Committee" chairman, Peng Phongsavan.

We plan to recruit these 3 people into the coalition government.

From the Patriotic Front side, I [originally did not] intend to [welcome to] join the coalition government. The matter will be addressed later on. What's important now is to concentrate efforts to establish and expand the armed forces. Of the 4 to 5 people joining the government, 1 or 2 of them are Central Committee Party members. The others are military [men].

As for the aforementioned issue of government personnel, I intend to once again discuss [this] with PHOUMA.

On the matter of establishing the previously mentioned interim government, please pass along [to] Chairman MAO and the Central Committee that we'd really like to hear some of their suggestions. [If they have any suggestions], they can pass the

information on to us via your ambassador in Vietnam.

[Vice Premier] CHEN: That's fine. I will certainly pass on [the message]. As far as you personally taking part or not [taking part] in the interim government, you [should] consider [the] specifics based on the situation at that time. It will be important for you to concentrate your efforts when organizing the military. You must [make all reasonable] effort to consolidate a few primary bases. No need to dilute your strength [by] scattering them. It would be good enough if you could increase your current forces to 10,000 troops. Outside of your [current numbers], how many troops does KONG Le have?

[Prince] SOUPHANOUVONG: KONG Le and Khammouane have about 4 to 5 thousand troops combined.