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Cable from the Chinese Embassy in the Soviet Union, 'Preliminary Views on the Soviet Union's Attitude at the Geneva Conference'

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Summary:

The Chinese Embassy in Moscow assess the Soviet Union's positions at the Geneva Conference on Laos, and concludes that the Soviet Union's policy is "to protect the patriotic democratic forces of Laos."

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From the Embassy in Moscow

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Preliminary Views on the Soviet Union's Attitude at Geneva Conference (Top Secret)

To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

Our preliminary views on the attitude of the Soviet Union at the Geneva Conference are reported below for reference purposes only:

At this 14-nation Geneva Conference, the Soviet Union was anxious to make the meeting a success and to reach an agreement. On the one hand, the [Soviet Union] wanted to consolidate the fruits of victory of the patriotic struggle of the democratic forces in Laos. [However,] at the same time, [the Soviet Union] also wanted to peacefully reconcile the Laotian problem. [With regards to] the overall international situation, [this is] a new starting point in Soviet-American relations.

At present, the fundamental challenge concerning Laos is facilitating peace and neutrality in Laos. In the future, the authority of the new regime will reflect the current changes [being made in] the balance of political power between various Laotian parties. More favorable conditions [are being put in place] so as to further consolidate and develop the strength of the Laotian democratic forces. By centering on these [matters] during this Geneva Conference, an acute focus may be used to consistently argue a wide range of issues concerning, for instance:

- [What is] the source of Laos's current crisis?
- Who is to represent the legally recognized Laotian Government?
- How will the implementation of the armistice and Laos' neutrality be assured?
- [How should] the International Control Commission be authorized and structured?
- Which representatives of Laos [should] attend the Geneva Conference?

From the current situation it can be seen [that] the Soviet Union's [take on] this Geneva Conference [is] basically to protect the patriotic democratic forces of Laos. [The Soviet Union also] seeks to reach a policy agreement with the Western forces on this basis. Thus, the Soviet Union is simultaneously grasping the banner of peace, [while also] insisting that that the United States stop interfering [with Laos, and insisting that the United States stop] transporting weapons. [The Soviet Union is insisting] that American military personnel retreat; that the legitimate government of Prince Phouma be supported; that some restrictions are made to the terms of reference of the International Control Commission; that the Lao Patriotic Front should send representatives to the Geneva Conference. [The Soviet Union is] wary of how much the United States [may] play tricks at the meeting. At the same time [the Soviet Union] wants to make this Geneva Conference be linked to the 1954 Conference.

All of the above clearly indicate that the Soviet Union is inclined to take into account the interests of the Lao people, [as well as] taking into account the views of both China and Vietnam. [The Soviets] affirm and defend gains by patriotic democratic forces and [seek to] strengthen conditions currently in our favor. [In this way a] stable situation that is beneficial to us [can happen]. At the conference, when engaging with the United States confrontation cannot be avoided. China and the Soviet Union are of the same view on many points.

However, the Soviet Union is unduly apprehensive that the situation in Laos will remain tense, causing the U.S. to act rashly, potentially undermining future Soviet-American talks and causing sharp opposition between the two sides. Based on these factors, an agreement reached about Laos [can be seen as] moderate steps to improve the overall situation and [to create a new] starting point in Soviet-American relations. Looking at the Soviet Union's struggles at the meeting, it can be seen that the Soviet Union's approach has some places that are incomplete or unclear.

For example:

- [The Soviet Union] shows a strong interest in an "Austrian" form of neutralization, but hasn't given adequate consideration to specific plans that strongly reflect what's beneficial to China. [This] demonstrates [that] room is being left open for certain compromise. For example, on the issue of fighting, to have the Patriotic Front attend the Geneva Conference, undue emphasis was placed on Britain's [clearly displayed non confrontational] stance. On the matter of reorganization of International Control Commission, there's perhaps a bit of apprehension towards India.

- The Soviet Union is delighted with the notion of an "Austrian" form of neutralization as expressed by Phouma and [as was] formerly [expressed] by the United States, but [the Soviet Union is] also fearful that the Patriotic Front's influence will be [seen as] overbearing by the West, hindering the path to an agreement. Thus, the Soviet Union may compromise the future political position of Laos in exchange for Phouma's recognition by the West.

- [The Soviet Union] hasn't sought to fully utilize this meeting to expose and attack the United States. And yet they didn't propose using confrontation as a means to exert pressure on the United States, from the onset, they've paid attention to the appeasement of critics from all sides. It's necessary to strive for [the banner of] peace, but they haven't combined this with a strong attack on the United States.

- Britain's effectiveness seems overvalued and the United States' scheme to sabotage talks is likely [to be] inadequately ignored. Under these circumstances, the Soviet Union may feel that if we are not too demanding, reaching an agreement is most probable. Thus, their expected outcome from the conference is naive and the potential to be confronted with an upstream battle is underestimated.

As can be gathered from above, the Soviet Union, while defending the welfare of the people of Laos and confronting the United States to a degree, displays weakness by leaving a large area open for compromise. Their motivation behind this approach is still to minimize complications and achieve an agreement with ease. Having the central focus of the entire strategy rest on realization of perpetual neutrality sought by Phouma, [they] may at most prevent increased complexity on the matter, assist in gaining neutrality, [ease] coming to an agreement with the West, and guarantee perpetual neutrality for Laos.

During Nikita KHRUSHCHEV's speech on the 6th at the commemoration of the 40 year establishment of the Armenian Soviet State and Party, he cautioned and condemned the United States and the Kennedy Administration. On the eve of the Geneva Conference, [Comrade Khrushchev] exerted some pressure on the United States, but his speech still placed emphasis on hopes to adopt a reasonable policy of easing U.S.-Soviet tensions on the issues of Cuba, Laos, and disarmament. What's noteworthy is that while he expressed high regard for the policy of neutrality sought by Phouma, he also implied that for the Geneva Conference to run smoothly, no more would be needed than to have the West halt interference in domestic affairs of Laos and forgo attempts to establish a military base. This reflects the Soviet Union's basic premise during the Geneva Conference. However, as promoted by Vietnamese, Laotian and [Chinese] revolutionary forces and [as a foundation for] confronting the

United States, this premise may still be altered.

Chinese Embassy in the USSR

8 May [1961]