

May 9, 1961

**Transcript of the Meeting Between Premier Zhou
Enlai and Soviet Ambassador Chervonenko**

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai says that countries must band together to ensure the neutrality of Laos and isolate the United States. He also reviews the various political leaders and groups in Laos in the context of the Geneva conference on Laos.

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Transcript of the Meeting between Premier ZHOU Enlai and Soviet Ambassador [S.V.]
CHERVONENKO

1. Regarding the Soviet Union Providing [Our Country/China] with Wheat and Flour
2. Regarding Issues in Laos

Time: 10:00am; May 9th, 1961

Location: [Beijing] Capital Airport VIP Room

[...]

ZHOU: And there is another issue. You gave Comrade ZHANG Hanfu a memorandum on the Soviet view of the Geneva Conference. Our party and our government both have carried out research and have drawn up a written response [which was] handed in person to Foreign Minister GROMYKO by Foreign Minister CHEN. [Further to which Foreign Minister CHEN] explained our position in detail [at that time]. Today the translation will be corrected and tomorrow [I will] give you an additional copy. (The Soviet Ambassador said: greatly hope to receive [a copy of] this document) This time we are meeting to [discuss and] resolve the problem of Laos. Between the Soviet Union, China, Poland, Vietnam, and the Laos Patriotic Front [the Pathet Lao] (a total of four governments and five [Communist] parties) it ought to be [possible] to proceed towards excellent cooperation. [At] our first meeting in Geneva it was done just like that. Currently the situation is better than it was then. And both the overall international situation and the Laotian situation has [provided favorable] advantages for us.

CHERVONENKO: Yes.

ZHOU: [In] this morning's news, the Vientiane rebel group has confirmed [that they will] send Phoumi NOSAVAN to attend the meeting in Geneva. Yesterday evening we published the news that two Laotian representative groups will be at the meeting in Geneva. One is the Kingdom of Laos government delegation led by Quinim PHOLSENA. The other is the Lao Patriotic Front delegation led by Phoumi VONGVICHIT. In this way, Laos will have three representative delegations.

PHOUMA and Quinim PHOLSENA are both in opposition to Phoumi NOSAVAN's attendance at the Geneva meeting as a representative of Laos. And [they are also against] Phoumi NOSAVAN's participation in the Laos coalition government [or] Laotian military. Phoumi NOSAVAN one-hundred-percent stands with the Americans. He is the cousin of the Thai Prime Minister Sarit THANARAT. This is an American puppet operated in Laos via Thailand. Last time Phoumi NOSAVAN went to Phnom Penh, it was to [try to create] popular support for PHOUMA. The Americans no longer want Boun OUM. He also knows there is already no hope.

Sihanouk saw him in Vientiane [and] said he was not an active [and positive] person. Phoumi NOSAVAN wants to force his way into the Laos delegation and Laos coalition government. After the Captain Kong le's coup, when PHOUMA formed a cabinet, Phoumi NOSAVAN's attitude was unclear. At that time he wanted to draw PHOUMA over to his side to fight together against the strength of the Patriotic Front, then exclude Kong le and prevent PHOUMA from establishing diplomatic relations with China and the Soviets. After failing to do this [only then did he] engage in rebellion. This man is a dangerous man. America is very interested in him. When the US ambassador to the Soviet Union Thompson saw Comrade KHRUSCHEV, he said

Phoumi NOSAVAN is a very promising figure. Therefore this issue is first [and most prominently] a struggle. Yesterday evening I had a conversation with Quinim PHOLSENA, Phoumi VONGVICHIT, and the Vietnamese Foreign Minister Ung Van Khiem. They all are firmly in opposition to Phoumi NOSAVAN participating in the coalition government or attending the delegation [in Geneva] Our Charge d'Affaires in United Kingdom, our Ambassador in Poland, Soviet Union, and I personally all discussed with Phouma about our [mutual] opposition to Phoumi NOSAVAN participating in the coalition government or attending the delegation [in Geneva]. Afterward, this issue was discussed with Chairman Mao in Hangzhou. PHOUMA stated to me that Phoumi NOSAVAN is not only [the puppet] listening to the word of the Americans but also has regularly helped Thailand to victimize Laos. The two other delegations from Laos are against Phoumi NOSAVAN. We should stand by their side. This is this morning's news so we didn't cover this in the written response to the memorandum on the Soviet view of the meeting in Geneva. Hereby, I state this news and our opinions regarding this. Please tell the Soviet Government and [Soviet] Foreign Minister GROMYKO

CHERVONENKO: What are your thoughts on this meeting and [its likely conclusion]?

ZHOU: It is hard to say. The situation still is [not clear] and in [holds the possibility of] change. One possibility is that America will attend this meeting [and by attending the meeting will] again [disrupt and] damage [the course of the meeting, before finally] causing the meeting to miscarry. Recently, the Americans are engaged in two-faced tactics—on one hand they do not oppose the meeting, on the other hand [they have] again put forward the [concept of] “verifiable cease-fire”. Of course, [we also] have to prepare for them not attending the meeting. [But,] if they don't come, the two chairmen of the Geneva Conference [will have the] responsibility of inviting them to attend. Vice Foreign Minister ZHANG Hanfu, of China's representative delegation [to Geneva] will go to Geneva [earlier] so as to express our support for this conference. Comrade CHEN Yi will wait in Moscow [for a while] and see whether or not Rusk is going. In my estimation, [I feel] they probably will [eventually make the decision to] go. Today they sent Phoumi NOSAVAN. [This strongly] implies he will be there. The Americans seem to be supportive of the meeting, while [simultaneously trying] to destroy it from behind. HARRIMAN's travel in Southeast Asia is essentially the actions of a saboteur. In Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Phnom Penh, and Delhi, SIHANOUK has pointed out the travels are all sabotage. The Cambodia News said: “A traveler from some large country is fanning the flames].

CHERVONENKO: Do you think SIHANOUK's attitude will change?

ZHOU: [As] I see [it], there is currently some regression but there may be a change of attitude. The telegram I gave him stating that we hoped he would come to a meeting, he published. Princes PHOUMA and SOUPHANOUVONG both urged him to go. As long as Vientiane has that attitude, [it is a possibility] that he will go. The Soviet Premier and British Prime Minister also may consider sending a telegram to invite him to the meeting.

CHERVONENKO: That is good.

ZHOU: The second possibility is [that we will] reach a loose agreement. The [terms of the] treaty will not be very strict. Our [primary] goal in this agreement is that the US and Thailand [both become] signatories. This is the most important [thing]. As long as they have signed on, they are bound [to the agreement]. [A] less stringent agreement is also good for us because it does not bind the hands and feet of us and the Lao people. Of course it is possible that a third or fourth outcome may be reached.

CHERVONENKO: Just now you expressed yourself quite well. If the United States does

not want to participate in the meeting, what does Premier [ZHOU] estimate [the outcome will be]? What documents will we be able to produce if the Americans do not attend?

ZHOU: If the United Kingdom, France, and the Southeast Asian countries such as Burma, Cambodia, India, and us communists can work together to draw up a document ensuring the neutrality of Laos, then the United States would be isolated. It only needs the United Kingdom and France to agree with [this document] for this document to make it a [firm] rule that there shall be no interference allowed in Laos, that the sovereignty and independence of Laos shall be respected, that [Laos shall be] united, neutral, and at peace. If the United Kingdom and France assumed this obligation, it would not matter whether the United States, Thailand, and South Vietnam participate in the meeting or refuse [to attend]. Our side also has Myanmar, Cambodia, and other Asian countries attending the meeting. [However,] I estimate that the United Kingdom and France would not dare to do so. India also does not dare. Myanmar and Cambodia cannot be reassured. This plan is just the plan of an ideal solution. If the Soviet Union uses their own relationship with the United Kingdom and France perhaps the power of the Soviet Union will be [enough] to reach this agreement. [That would be] a great success.

CHERVONENKO: [It is] our hope to secure good results. The Chinese side is very strong and has a great deal of experience. The discussion our two countries have recently had about the Laos issue has been quite effective.

ZHOU: Many of the comrades in our delegation have attended the first Geneva Conference in 1954. They can also offer their opinions and advice.

[We] also must pay attention to the India issue. The United States is currently brazenly making use of India [while] India just shamelessly supports the US position. Hasn't your Literary Gazette [sic] already criticized NEHRU? This man is crafty [and] I am quite familiar with him. We have known each other for seven years. He is a very dishonest person. He can shamelessly tell lies [even in] the face of the truth. [He never keeps his word.] That which was said last time is already forgotten this time. His entire being is a bourgeois Rightist and a typical reactionary. He is a completely untrustworthy person. He would kowtow to the imperialists while still being arrogant towards us. The imperialists' farts he would treat as [the sweet] smell [of incense]. In all ways he seeks any opportunity to oppose China and fight the Indian Communist Party. He is really hostile towards our country. The only reason we do not give up on the India issue is that we hope to gain support from its people and win the trust of the neutral members of the ruling clique. The [primary] reason is not because of fighting for NEHRU.

[...]