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**Record of Conversation between Soviet Union
Deputy of Foreign Affairs Pushkin and Ambassador
Liu Xiao**

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Record of Conversation between Soviet Union Deputy of Foreign Affairs [Georgiy Maksimovich] Pushkin and Ambassador Liu Xiao

—Concerning the Soviet Representative Group Attending the Geneva Convention and Similar Issues—

Time: 11:00am May 5th 1961
[...]

[Georgiy Maksimovich] Pushkin: [...] First we believe that in practice, Beijing, Hanoi, and Warsaw are actually in agreement that during this conference, we should take advantage of the situation in Laos in order to come to a conclusion that best benefits the consolidation and development of the power of the Laotian people. If we approach it from this angle, we believe that we will be able to reach an agreement with the Western powers.

Second, the Laos problem involves issues of two nature: domestic and international. Issues that fall under the domestic category should not be discussed at this conference. These issues include: those concerning the organization of the Laos government, the reorganization of its military, the power of representation of three political parties, elections, etc. We cannot discuss issues of that nature at the Geneva Conference; rather we can only put forth effort in the areas of promotion and aid. Issues of an international nature include: the neutrality of Laos, the insurance there of, the removal of foreign military and military personnel, prevention of interference in Laos' internal politics, etc. There are many issues of this nature. Of course, those that fall under the jurisdiction of the International Supervision and Control Commission do sometimes fall into this category and can be discussed.

However, there are some issues that fall under both categories simultaneously. If they come up, then we can discuss them. For example, issues concerning a ceasefire. This is a domestic problem because it requires negotiation and a resulting agreement among related parties in Laos, but the International Supervision and Control Commission should be provide supervision over the execution of the treaty. Another example is issues concerning an election. This should be a domestic problem, but if all parties express a desire for an international commission to supervise the election, then we can discuss and set the responsibilities of such a commission. There is a whole host of issues related to this.

As for the question of Laos' neutrality, we hope that we will be able to pass a document ensuring Laos' permanent neutrality during the conference, to be signed not only by Laos but by all of the participating nations. However, we have also anticipated another situation, one that [Souvanna] Phouma has expressed before. Laos may not be willing to be forced into a treaty of neutrality, but would rather, issue its own statement of neutrality. He hopes that Laos will be able to declare neutrality in a document similar to that published by Austria. However, we believe that under these circumstances, we must include their declaration of neutrality and related documents in those resulting from the Geneva Conference. This way, not only will Laos be charged with maintaining its own neutrality, but all participating nations will be forced to respect their neutrality. This way they won't have to issue a declaration of neutrality themselves.

As for some military affairs, there are several issues of this nature. In reality, they are related to the insurance of Laos' neutrality, for example the elimination of military

bases and removal of foreign militaries. On this side of things, we think that some resolutions should be passed and a document made up, a portion of which should include a definition of the scope of the International Supervision and Control Commission's jurisdiction in this matter.

Aside from this, there are also a number of issues of a procedural nature.

According to the opinions put forth by our Chinese comrades, we believe that this conference should be linked to the previous one. The 1954 Geneva Convention was a foundation for the consolidation and development of the power of the Lao people.

We think that, concerning the question of who will chair the conference, we can agree with England's suggestion that the conference be chaired by them and by the Soviet Union. If we change the number of chairs this time, then there will certainly be those who call for a neutral nation to be added, and they will suggest India. While India flaunts neutrality, in reality they are not at all politically neutral. At the same time, if this is brought up, we cannot conveniently oppose it as we have pushed for third neutral parties to be added to the Chair of several international organizations and unions. We also feel that Britain remaining as one of the Chairs is fitting and advantageous for us because Britain's stance on the Laos issue conflicts with that U.S. and some other Western countries. Britain is more willing to resolve the problem. They have expressed dissatisfaction with America's unseating of Phouma's government, believing that they created an even worse situation for Western countries by unseating him. They frequently grumble about America over this. British suggestion has some wisdom to it as Britain is not always willing to listen to America on some issues. From my personal conversations with the British ambassador, I believe that the British tend to be more flexible, easier to convince and more willing to give way. Sometimes, on issues that he could discuss with America first, he instead agrees immediately. Judging by such situations, Britain will sometimes act independently out of its own interest rather than discussing it with America first. Perhaps after they have expressed agreement and go back to discuss it with America, they will emphasize their own difficulties and reasons for agreement.

As for the question of the International Supervision and Control Commission, we have been thinking over whether or not it would be worthwhile to change the members of the commission, whether or not it would be better to consider another side: Limit the jurisdiction of the commission and make it impossible for them to interfere in the domestic government of Laos under any circumstances. This is a formidable task, and we think that our decision will be beneficial for the development of the power of the people of Laos. If this issue is brought up, we can suggest two courses of action: the commission can be made up of two members from each socialist, imperialist, and neutral countries or representatives from socialist and imperial nations can each nominate two people and Neutral nations can nominate one. Related problems can still be discussed.

Concerning the question of who will represent Laos, our position is of course that Phouma's government should be recognized as the only legal government in Laos. Only this government can represent Laos, but its representing delegation can include members of other political powers, such as the Lao Patriotic Front, or members of the rebel faction.

Speaking of legal governments, since there are several members of Phouma's government participated in the rebellion, we'd like to mention that the term "legal government" refers to Phouma and those cabinet members who are against the rebellion. We should think of what we will do if America agrees to recognize Phouma's government but insists that it must consist of the original members. This possibility is certainly not out of question. If this happens, then the Phouma government will include a large rebel faction as majority and will not have representative of the

Patriotic Front. That is dangerous for us. Under this situation, we have to maintain that there should be either the Patriotic Front members or a 3rd party involved in Phouma's government.

We have received word from Hanoi saying that our Vietnamese comrades hope we won't forget to fight for the Patriotic Front representation. They hope that the two chair nations will send an invitation. In relation to this issue, we've thought of it too. Britain will not agree to issue an invitation to the Patriotic Front on behalf of both chair nations. They will not be persuaded. However, we will still fight for it. This afternoon the British ambassador came to speak with me. In the beginning I thought of the following way to bring up this matter: If we do not allow the legal government to send its own delegation, then we should invite a 3rd political power to participate in the conference. Of course, the question of them participating in the conference will be discussed in the conference itself, but when we talk about that, these representatives should be able to wait in Geneva; otherwise their coming will be a waste of time. Aside from that, I would still like to subtly point out to the British ambassador that he should take notice of the issue of the Patriotic Front's attendance. I'm not bringing these things up with the hope that he will agree immediately, but I at least want to make him express even a little bit of agreement and then make a fuss over little things. We are aware that if we fight hard for this, we will definitely win the ability to allow the Patriotic Front to attend the conference and allow them to wait in Geneva, Prague, or Moscow. As for the representatives from the rebels, the Western powers will certainly bring them to Switzerland. It's quite convenient for them. If they do not allow the Patriotic Front representatives to attend, then we will certainly oppose the attendance of the rebels.

The International Supervision and Control Commission has already held a meeting in Germany and passed a resolution to only allow two chair nations. The British and we have already received this report and we are currently researching with the British and discussing the question of the instruction of that commission. Before the Polish representatives went to Germany I spoke with them in detail and told them which issues we must remain firm on and on which we can afford to be flexible. It appears that our Polish comrades did well there. This meeting was very well done and there were only a few places that turned out less than ideally, but that's not a big problem. The British embassy was not pleased with the report; they brought up to instructional drafts. During discussion we opposed the idea of passing two documents and they eventually agreed to pass only one. I pointed out to them that the drafts were too long and tedious and that several details could be done away with. We are going to continue negotiations today. I estimate that today we should be able to resolve the question of the commission's instructions. If so, the committee will be able to leave for Laos tomorrow. Once everything is settled concerning the commission's report and instructions, we will immediately notify Beijing.

The British ambassador asked if I know that Sihanouk has already expressed that he will not be attending this conference, and what I think of that. I answered saying that 14 countries minus 1 equals 13. I have no other opinion. I then replied, "I should ask how you feel about it, as he wasn't our guest but yours." The ambassador immediately replied saying that Sihanouk's recent behavior has nothing to do with Britain. I said, if it really has nothing to do with you, then it definitely has something to do with your allies. It appears that England is a little uncomfortable with Sihanouk and they were afraid that we would reconsider holding the conference over this.

Ambassador Liu [Xiao]: What do you think of Sihanouk's statement?

Pushkin: It's childish! His behavior isn't serious in the bit, he's playing a clown! Here's the situation: the king of Laos felt uncomfortable because the power of the Lao Patriotic Front was growing continuously. He thought up some tricks. He wanted to hold a conference on the 1st, dissolve the government, and organize a government without Phouma's participation. It appeared to also have some participants who did

not take part in the rebellion. In reality they were also his people. He put pressure on Sihanouk, and Sihanouk might have agreed to some of his suggestions, he may have done some foolish things under that pressure. However, this is unimportant; the conference can still be held on time. His refusing to participate will not affect the conference. We can save three seats for them that they can occupy if they wish.

Ambassador Liu: According to the latest information, how is America's attitude toward the Geneva Conference?

Pushkin: America has already stated that they will attend the conference. There is no newer information.

Ambassador Liu: Thank you for your notification.