

THE COMMUNIST ADVANCE TOWARDS POWER IN LAOS

Techniques and Methods Used by the Pathet Lao to Achieve
a Favorable Agreement with the Royal Laotian Government

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ERRATA

There are several typographical errors in the various parts of this study, as noted below:

SUMMARY:

- p. 2, paragraph 4, line 8: for "misguided borthers" read "mis-guided brothers".
p. 3, paragraph 8, line 6: for "insited", read "insisted".

CHRONOLOGY:

- 1949: for "joing", read "join"
1956, 5 August: for "Pathat", read "Pathet"
1956, 10 August: for "Pathat", read "Pathet"

THE COMMUNIST ADVANCE TOWARDS POWER IN LAOS:

- p. 1, paragraph 1, line 13: for "led", read "fled".
p. 8, paragraph 15, line 9: for "Lao", read "Laos".
p. 9, paragraph 16, line 6: add final quotation mark after "Pathet Lao"
p. 10, section title: for "Impassee", read "Impasse".
p. 21, paragraph 36, line 6: add "on" between "dependence" and "eventual. ."
p. 22, paragraph 38, line 21: for "pruely", read "purely".

TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS BY WHICH THE COMMUNISTS BROUGHT ABOUT THE AGREEMENTS OF AUGUST, 1956:

- p. 3, paragraph 4, line 5: for "concession" read "concessions".

THE INDIAN ROLE IN THE ICC:

- p. 1, paragraph 1, line 8: for "reasons for an implications, " read "reasons for and implications."
p. 3, paragraph 6, line 7: for "is", read "has".

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Summary

1. The French return to Laos after the defeat of Japan in World War II was opposed by an indigenous nationalist movement. This group, which called themselves the Lao Issara, went into exile in Bangkok after the reestablishment of French rule in Laos. They included present leaders of both the Royal Laotian Government (RLG) and the Pathet Lao (PL) or Lao-Viet. When the French, in 1949, decided to grant independence to Laos and set up the Royal Government, a majority of the Lao Issara decided to accept this offer and returned to Laos. A minority group which had earlier been expelled from the Lao Issara because of its contacts with the Vietminh, rejected the offer as inadequate, and were promptly offered the support of the Communist Vietminh of North Vietnam, who found them a most useful instrument.
2. Under Vietminh direction, these Laotian dissidents were organized into the Pathet Lao, a resistance movement against the RLG. Vietminh propaganda made much of the existence of this movement and the paper governmental structure set up in its name. During the later stages of the war between the Vietminh and the French in Vietnam, the Vietminh, ostensibly as "volunteers" with the Pathet Lao, extended their operations into Laos. As a result, when fighting ended after the fall of Dienbienphu, the Pathet Lao/Vietminh held most of two northern provinces, Sam Neua and Phong Saly which bordered on Vietnam.
3. At the Geneva Conference of 1954, the Communist negotiations succeeded in securing for the Pathet Lao a sort of quasi-recognition when those two provinces were designated as regrouping areas for the Pathet Lao forces. This provision was qualified by a statement that the sovereignty of the RLG in the provinces was to be recognized, a qualification which was promptly ignored by the Pathet Lao who proceeded to treat the provinces as their own territory. The Conference also provided that elections should be held in Laos and a political and military settlement negotiated between the Pathet Lao and the RLG. For this purpose, from early 1955, Pathet Lao delegates met

with RLG representatives to seek agreement on the basic issues. One of these concerned the foreign policy of Laos. The RLG was accepting military and economic aid from France and the U.S., although not permitted by the Geneva Agreements to join SEATO or make any formal alliances. The Pathet Lao, in accordance with Communist policy, regarded this as unneutral and as evidence that RLG independence was only nominal. Other issues involved the status of Pathet Lao adherents after settlement and guarantees of their rights and liberties, the status of Pathet Lao military forces, and the question of the restoration of RLG authority in the two provinces.

4. It soon appeared that there were irreconcilable differences. In spite of the directive of the Geneva Conference, the Pathet Lao refused to recognize RLG rights in the provinces and would give no assurances as to their future attitude in this respect. In this they were supported by Vietminh radio propaganda. The RLG made this restoration a condition for negotiations on the other issues. In consequence, negotiations dragged along without appreciable progress. The Laotian Prime Minister, Katay Sasorith, after apparently at first regarding the Pathet Lao as "misguided borthers" and genuinely expecting that their ties with the Vietminh could be severed and that they could be brought back into the national fold, became disillusioned and abandoned for the time the attempt at settlement. The elections, which had been postponed from mid-1955 in hopes of agreement, were held in December with the Pathet Lao refusing to participate.

5. Neither the Pathet Lao nor the RLG desired the indefinite continuance of this stalemate. A change in the RLG in March 1956, by which Prince Souvanna Phouma replaced Katay as Prime Minister, was in part caused by pressure in the RLG for a quick settlement of the Pathet Lao problem. It also offered the Pathet Lao an opportunity, which they quickly seized, to seek reopening of negotiations without loss of face by making a distinction between the old and new governments. From late 1955 also, the new Communist line stressing legality, abandonment of armed struggle, and concentrating on overt political action was making itself felt. For the Pathet Lao this created greater pressure for ending their insurrection and securing a legal status for their party, while the RLG leaders could now point to the new Communist attitudes and hope that negotiations might be more successful in the new atmosphere than they had been in the old.

6. Outside Communist diplomatic assistance was furnished to the Pathet Lao when Communist journalist Wilfred Burchett paid a visit to Vientiane and secured a written interview with Souvanna Phouma. It appears plain

that his mission was to find out what sort of reception would be given proposals from the Pathet Lao for reopening of negotiations and what sort of terms the RLG might be willing to consider. This device avoided the risk of an embarrassing snub and loss of face by the Pathet Lao.

7. Souvanna Phouma's replies were apparently satisfactory. Peiping and Hanoi radio propaganda urged negotiations. Pathet Lao leaders approached the RLG and in August 1956, new talks were begun. Out of them, in the form of two joint communiques, came agreements in principle which largely followed the line of the Pathet Lao proposals. The Pathet Lao received guarantees that they would enjoy full rights as citizens, including the right to organize a political party and contest elections, assurances that Laotian policy would follow a neutral line, and somewhat ambiguous provisions for supplementary elections and the formation of a coalition government. The Pathet Lao agreed to integrate its military and administrative personnel into the government and to order a cease-fire. The extent of the RLG defeat in these agreements may be measured by the fact that in return for these concessions to the Pathet Lao, they got no assurances, in fact not even a mention, of the question of restoration of government authority in the two northern provinces. Mixed military and political commissions were to work out the details and presumably the question of the provinces was to come up there.

8. While negotiations were going on, Peiping, through the Indian chairman of the ICC in Vientiane, invited Souvanna Phouma to pay a visit to China. He held that he could not go until the Pathet Lao issue was settled. However, he accepted the above agreements as meeting his condition, and with a RLG delegation made the trip in late August, stopping in Hanoi on the way home for talks with the DRV. The Prime Minister insisted on his return that he had made no commitments to either the Chinese or the Vietminh concerning diplomatic relations, economic aid and missions and so on, but Communist radio propaganda exploited the trip and the Prime Minister's friendly expressions in his speeches to create a general impression that the RLG had gone a long way toward alignment with the Communist bloc.

9. The Communists had shown a good deal of skill and careful planning in the way in which they had maneuvered the RLG into these agreements. The political influence and latent military threat of the DRV and even of the CPR had been utilized. The International Control Commission (ICC) with its Polish member and its Indian chairman had been used to urge the RLG into

concessions to the Pathet Lao. The international machinery had been invoked to extricate the Pathet Lao from the stalemate in the negotiations. Internal opposition to the RLG, from possibly Communist-manipulated elements, from sincere seekers for peace and reunification and from opportunistic politicians had been mobilized to support the Pathet Lao aims. The result was an agreement which gave the Communist side most of what they wanted and from which, no doubt, they expect to go on to their final goal, the Communization of Laos.

CHRONOLOGY

1946	Formation of the Lao Issara.
1949	Independent Kingdom of Laos established. Souphanouvong and followers joining the Vietminh.
1949-1953	Souphanouvong and followers form the Pathet Lao and undergo training and indoctrination in the DRV.
1953	Vietminh military invasion of Laos.
1954, 7 May	The fall of Dienbienphu.
1954, 23 April- 21 July	The Geneva Conference
1955, January	Beginning of negotiations between the Pathet Lao and the RLG.
1955, April	The Bandung Conference
1955, August	General elections in Laos scheduled according to the Geneva Agreements.
1955, December	Katay suspends the negotiations and holds elections without Pathet Lao participation.
1956, January	RLG proposal to the ICC concerning the restoration of RLG authority in the two northern provinces. ICC resolution calls for restoration of RLG authority in the two northern provinces.
1956, 28 April	Souphanouvong makes formal proposal to RLG for reopening of negotiations.
1956, 6 May	Communist journalist Wilfred Burchett has inter- view with Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma.
1956, 1 August	New talks between the Pathet Lao and the RLG begin at Vientiane.

1956, 5 August	First joint communique issued by Pathat Lao and RLG.
1956, 10 August	Second joint communique issued by Pathat Lao and RLG.
1956, 19 August	Souvanna Phouma leaves for Peiping and Hanoi.
1956, 8 September	Souvanna Phouma leaves for Saigon and Paris.
1956, 25 September	Mixed commissions representing Pathet Lao and RLG begin discussion.

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I. Review of the Pathet Lao Movement and the Problem

The Pathet Lao Born Out of Laotian Opposition to French Rule

1. Prior to World War II, Laos was a part of the French protectorate in Indochina. As in other parts of the colonial world, a small indigenous nationalist movement had developed even before the war. The defeat of France in Europe left her unable to protect her Asiatic possessions and Laos, with the rest of Indochina, fell before Japanese aggression. The defeat of Japan in 1945 and the withdrawal of Japanese forces from Laos brought the prospect of a restoration of French rule. Laotian nationalists prepared to resist this restoration. They organized a resistance movement and government under the title Lao Issara or Free Lao.

For a time the Lao Issara were able to maintain themselves as the government of the country. However, before long, increasing French military strength drove the Lao Issara government from power. Part of the nationalist group led in 1946 into exile in Bangkok, while other elements remained in Laos to carry on active resistance against the French sponsored (and controlled) Laotian government.

2. The group in Bangkok carried on as a government in exile and exercised direction over the anti-French resistance within Laos. The membership of the exiled Lao Issara included Prince Souvanna Phouma, the present Prime Minister of Laos, his half-brother, Prince Souphanouvong, now one of the chief leaders of the Pathet Lao, and other members of both the Royal Laotian Government and the Pathet Lao. Also a member was Prince Petsarath who has in recent years been trying to function from Bangkok as a sort of Deus ex machina in Laotian politics.

By 1949 the French had come to recognize the necessity of conceding a large measure of independence to the states of Indochina and conceived the idea of the Associated States of Indochina within the French Union. In July, 1949, Laos was recognized as one of these Associated States.

3. The Lao Issara did not present an entirely united front to these developments. One split in the movement had already occurred. Some months prior to the French proposals, a minority faction of the Lao Issara led by Prince Souphanouvong, had been expelled from the movement as a consequence of their contacts and associations with the Communist Vietminh of North Vietnam. (Lao Issara resistance forces in Laos had engaged in hostilities with the Vietminh along the northern border.) Souphanouvong's Communist associations apparently dated back at least a year or two prior to 1949.

Most of the remainder of the Lao Issara found the French proposals acceptable and returned to Laos to participate in politics and eventually to rise to the top positions in the new government. Prince Petsarath however, chose to reject the policy of cooperation with the French and remained in exile in Bangkok.

The Exploitation of the Pathet Lao by the Vietminh

4. Following their expulsion, Souphanouvong and his followers went to North Vietnam, where they were promptly taken in hand by the Communist Vietminh. Under Communist direction and guidance they organized a new anti-French, anti-Royal Laotian Government resistance movement under the title of Pathet Lao.* Until 1953, the Pathet Lao remained in Vietnam undergoing thorough training and indoctrination. Whatever the Communist sympathies or convictions of the Pathet Lao leaders before 1949, it would scarcely be credible that they could emerge from such a training period anything other than reliable Communists. Equally certain, so far as such things can be proved, is the fact that their "nationalist" movement is the creature of the Vietminh Communists.

5. It is scarcely necessary for the purposes of this study to recount in any detail the successive stages in the exploitation of the Pathet Lao by the Vietminh. From time to time the Vietminh radio announced the formation of a Laotian Resistance League, or a Coalition Resistance Government, or some other largely "paper" organization, referring to Souphanouvong variously as "Premier", "Chairman", etc. For instance, in September 1950,

* The RLG has on some occasions labelled the Pathet Lao as the "Lao-Viet" to point up its connection with the Vietminh. However, since the name Pathet Lao is more commonly used, it has been employed throughout this paper for the sake of clarity and consistency.

the Vietminh radio announced the formation of a Lao Resistance League and referred to a National Assembly of the Pathet Lao. Along with this was mentioned a Neo-Lao Issara Front with an Executive Committee and a Coalition Resistance Government. Souphanouvong was described as the Premier of the Government and the Chairman of the Front. In March 1951, at a conference of the Laotian National Front, held in Vietminh territory, the Laotian movement was integrated into a Vietminh coalition called the Lien-Viet Front, "under the leadership of the Lao Dong Party"; thus making the Vietminh direction of the Laotians crystal-clear. The Pathet Lao were now described as the Laotian branch of the Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos Alliance Bloc. Pathet Lao leaders, of course, insisted that this association was voluntary on their part and that they were, in fact, independent. The Vietminh also reiterated the view that the Pathet Lao were an indigenous nationalist movement by simultaneously publicizing the united front of Vietminh, Pathet Lao and "Khmer" (Cambodians). In due time, the Vietminh said, these would be united to form a single Communist Party.

It is obvious that the Vietminh were endeavoring to create an impression of an independent, nationalist, indigenous Laotian movement, which nevertheless, they took care to keep under firm control, and at the same time to set up the facade of a Laotian resistance government which could, at the appropriate time, receive the recognition and assistance of the Communist bloc. Little support for these efforts at actual resistance activity appeared, however, in Laos itself.

Communist Exploitation of the Pathet Lao Takes a Military Form

6. In 1953, with the intensification of the war against the French, the Vietminh forces extended their operations to Laotian soil. Under the color of an indigenous Laotian resistance force, strong Vietminh forces, accompanied by their handful of expatriate Pathet Lao, made several incursions into Laos. The Pathet Laos, now on native soil, succeeded in recruiting some forces, although it is difficult to say first, which portion of these recruits were Laotian-speaking Vietnamese domiciled in Laos, which portion were voluntary recruits or which were impressed forcibly. The military forces of the new Laotian government were unable to control these incursions which at one point brought the Vietminh-Pathet Lao forces to within a few miles of Luang Prabang, the royal capital. The invading forces also captured and occupied for a time the town of Thakhek just across the Mekong River from Thailand. In addition to the operations of the Vietminh forces themselves, guerrilla forces of Pathet

Lao accompanied by Vietminh cadres as "advisers" began activity throughout Laos. Prince Souphanouvong announced himself as the President of the Laotian Resistance Government which he described as the only legal government in Laos and in that capacity welcomed the Vietminh "volunteers" to Laotian soil. The Royal Laotian Government (RLG) protested unavailingly to the U.N. against this violation of its territory.

7. This move on the part of the Vietminh was, of course, part of their overall military strategy in their war with the French. It would be a diversion from the main front in Vietnam and if Laos could be overrun or brought to the Communist side by the establishment of a Pathet Lao government, one flank of the Franco-South Vietnam forces would be exposed. Further, when a territorial settlement came to be made, Laos would be part of the area in Communist hands. In this respect, the campaign fell short of complete success. Laos was neither overrun nor subverted and the fighting in Vietnam ended before the Vietminh-Pathet Lao forces could pose a threat to the main Franco-Vietnamese armies.

But the Communist motives undoubtedly went deeper than the above and they gained considerable advantage from these moves. For one thing, they tested their puppet Laotian forces. They had already created, as we have seen, the facade of an indigenous, anti-Western, Laotian resistance government, securely under their control. Now they were in a position from which, were they to achieve anything less than a complete Communist military victory and takeover in Indochina, they could provide their creature with a secure territorial base in the two northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua and with the nucleus, at least, of an underground organization for subversion and resistance in the rest of Laos. From this point of view, their campaign must be judged successful.

Effect of French Defeat at Dienbienphu

8. The military stage of the struggle for Indochina ended after the French defeat at Dienbienphu. The French were weary of the profitless struggle. The Communists, on their side, were perhaps apprehensive that if they continued the military push for complete victory, they might bring down the massive Western or American intervention which some had believed imminent before the fall of Dienbienphu and which would have made Indochina into another Korea. The result was the Geneva Conference of 1954 and the Geneva Agreements.

Geneva Gives the Pathet Lao Quasi-Recognition

9. The Vietminh government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) was, of course, present at the Geneva Conference even though it had not received recognition from any Western Power. The DRV sought also to secure official representation for the Pathet Lao, but in spite of the support of both Moscow and Peiping for this position, the Conference refused to go so far and denied recognition to Souphanouvong's "government". The clauses of the agreement which applied to Laos and the Pathet Lao, however, took a considerable, if implicit, step in that direction. Ignoring the fact that the Pathet Lao were in rebellion against a legitimate government and that they owed what position they had in Laos to a foreign military intervention, the Conference took the view that the Pathet Lao and its military forces had a standing which was subject to negotiation and instructed the RLG to negotiate this position with them, at the same time extending certain guarantees to the Pathet Lao.

10. The agreement in effect accorded a certain legitimacy to the Pathet Lao military forces by giving them as "regrouping areas" the two northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua (adjacent to the DRV). The Communist negotiators, including Molotov and Chou En-lai, appreciated the value of a territorial sanctuary in which the scattered Pathet Lao forces could be assembled, secure from RLG attack after the withdrawal of the Vietminh units. (It could correspond to Mao Tse-tung's territorial base from which he expanded power.) However, the Conference insisted this did not constitute a grant of territorial status to the Pathet Lao, since the sovereignty of the RLG in these provinces was specifically recognized.

The agreement directed a ceasefire between the forces of the Pathet Lao and the RLG. But it was not left at that. Negotiations were then to be carried on between the two looking to the settlement of the issues between them and the reunification of the country with general elections to be held before the end of 1955.

Specific issues between the Pathet Lao and the RLG, other than the connections of the former with the Communists, had developed since 1949. Domestically, the question was one of the terms on which the guerrilla war could be ended, the authority of the RLG restored throughout the country, and the Pathet Lao brought back into the community and their people integrated into the military and political structure of the country. The issue of Laotian foreign policy had also developed since the original RLG/Pathet Lao split. The RLG insisted that its foreign policy was a

neutral one--that it belonged to neither bloc. But to the Pathet Lao, and in Communist terms, the continued presence of French and American advisers, the dependence upon French and American economic and military aid, the French military base at Seno, even though authorized by the Geneva agreement, RLG acquiescence in SEATO protection, even while rejecting membership, the absence of diplomatic relations with Communist countries constituted violations of neutrality and evidence of the illusory nature of Laotian "independence". It was to be expected that Pathet Lao negotiators would insist upon revision of these policies.

11. The Pathet Lao were quick to provide their own interpretation on the Geneva agreement. The agreement had designated the northern provinces as "regrouping areas" for the Pathet Lao, but specified that RLG sovereignty continued there. The RLG therefore prepared to re-establish its administration in this area. The Pathet Lao, however, aware of the value of a territorial base, interpreted the agreement as giving them the right to rule and administer the two provinces pending a settlement and treated the government attempt to restore its authority as a violation of the Geneva Agreement. Coordination of this stand was evident as the Hanoi radio announced on March 5, 1955, that "All encroachments upon the territory of the two provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua are at utter variance with the Geneva Armistice Agreement in its letter and spirit. The Pathet Lao forces are determined to oppose these acts of violation." It was plain that the Pathet Lao had no intention of giving up its "secure base" except on terms satisfactory to itself.

Pathet Lao/RLG Negotiations Prove to be Desultory and Inconclusive

12. Under the circumstances it is not surprising that for some time the negotiations begun in January, 1955 for the political settlement enjoined by the Geneva Conference made little progress. A Pathet Lao delegation established itself in Vientiane and conferred from time to time with RLG officials. This mission took advantage of its privileged status in Vientiane as had the Chinese Communist group led by Chou En-lai in Nationalist Chung-king in World War II, to make contacts, win friends and spread propaganda. The Pathet Lao were determined to hold on to the secure territorial base in the two northern provinces and would agree to no arrangement which would endanger their control there. On the other hand, for the RLG the essence of any agreement was naturally (1) the genuine unification of the country under its authority and (2) the end of the guerilla war. These aims being irreconcilable, the elections planned for the middle of 1955 could not be held. A top-level meeting between the

RLG Prime Minister Katay Sasorith and Prince Souphanouvong in October on the neutral soil of Rangoon made no better progress towards agreement. Sporadic outbursts of guerrilla fighting still occurred in spite of the ceasefire order.

13. In order to cloud the issues and to work against any possible hardening of the attitude of the Royal Government, the Vietnamese Communists were able to take advantage of several types of emotional ties between the leaders of the Royal Government and the Pathet Lao leaders. Not only is the Pathet Lao leader Prince Souphanouvong a half brother of the present RLG Prime Minister but the Pathet Lao, like Communists everywhere, have taken full advantage of the common ties of nationalism created by their common participation with the RLG leaders in the patriotic resistance against the French.

The effect was to cause many Royal Government leaders to doubt the clear evidence that the insurgents had become converts to Communism and were directed from Hanoi. This resulted in a mistaken feeling that the dissidents could not have placed loyalty to the Communist movement above national loyalties--the Pathet Lao were regarded as "misguided brothers", and apparently Prime Minister Katay felt the dissidents would prove amenable to persuasion if the intervention of the Vietnamese Communists in Laotian affairs could be ended.

The Chinese and Vietnamese Communists were quick to arrange the assurances needed. Taking advantage of the conciliatory atmosphere and the emotional effects of the policy of Asian unity engendered by the Bandung Conference of April, 1955, the Chinese, aided by the Indians, persuaded Katay to issue a joint statement with the DRV Foreign Minister, Pham Van Dong. (The joint action was in itself a diplomatic gain for Hanoi.) In this statement, Pham Van Dong blandly pledged "good neighborly relations" between his government and the Royal Government and with complete cynicism undertook that the DRV would regard the settlement between the Royal Government and the Pathet Lao as a purely domestic concern of Laos. In spite of these words, however, DRV support and direction of Prince Souphanouvong and the Pathet Lao continued.

14. Although, in accordance with the Geneva Agreements, the Vietminh troops had been withdrawn from Laos, numbers of both political and military advisers had remained. Strong Vietminh forces remained just over the border, in a position to intervene again, should the DRV so order, in the event that the RLG undertook strong military measures against the Pathet Lao.

The DRV continued to insist that its policy towards Laos was in all respects "correct", but also continued active military and propaganda support of the Pathet Lao. The Pathet Lao was described as the rightful government of Laos which had "liberated" the country from the imperialists; the U.S. was accused of aggressive aims and blamed for all the troubles in Laos. The RLG was charged with being the tool of the western imperialists. This propaganda was softened somewhat during the October, 1955 meeting between Katay and Souphanouvong, but stepped up again after its failure.

The Chinese Communists made clear their support of the Pathet Lao as propaganda from Peiping followed the same line as Hanoi, although somewhat more restrained. They emphasized the danger for Asian and world peace from the situation in Laos, placing the blame upon the United States.* The Kwangming Daily of Peking on December 24, 1955, stated that "the CPR will never allow the U.S. imperialist schemes to succeed." Such hints of the possibility of Chinese intervention were no doubt calculated to increase the pressure upon the RLG for concessions to the Pathet Lao. The Soviet Union maintained a "correct" attitude and in its few comments on the Laotian situation emphasized only the importance of settling the issue by peaceful means.

Communist Efforts Receive Setback as Katay, Disillusioned, Suspends Attempts to Reach a Settlement

15. In spite of the intransigence of the Pathet Lao leaders, spasmodic efforts at negotiations continued and proposals and counterproposals bounced back and forth. The Pathet Lao continued to insist stubbornly upon retaining control of their base in the two northern provinces. An RLG proposal, for instance that a temporary solution be adopted by which each party would appoint the governor in one province and the deputy governor in the other brought forth only a Pathet Lao demand for a "Joint Political Council" charged with guaranteeing democratic liberties throughout Lao and having the powers to intervene in any question involving Pathet Lao partisans, to revise the electoral laws and to guarantee the formation of a true "national government" after the elections. All this was to come before any consideration could be given to the question of control of the two provinces. Hanoi and Peiping propaganda continued to support this intransigent attitude and sporadic guerrilla warfare continued.

* The People's Daily warned in July, 1955 that the war in Indochina might be rekindled unless the "direct aggression by the SEATO countries against Laos" were thwarted.

16. The attitude of the International Control Commission,* established under the Geneva agreements, was of use to the Pathet Lao, as it failed to act decisively to resolve this impasse. The RLG was irritated by the tendency of the ICC, and especially of the chairman, to treat the RLG and the Pathet Lao as having comparable status and even "bending over backwards" to be "fair to the Pathet Lao. The Commission made no effective effort prior to January, 1956 to enforce the Geneva agreement that RLG authority should be restored in the two provinces, while urging the RLG to make concessions on political issues to the Pathet Lao.

17. The Communists had two additional advantages which weakened the hand of the Royal Government. The emphasis in the current international Communist line on the peaceful solution of differences created a climate of world opinion which acted to deter the Royal Government from a resort to arms to settle the dispute. The continued presence of Vietminh advisers with the Pathet Lao and the maintenance of strong DRV military forces just over the border also made it plain that the DRV would not acquiesce in the destruction of the Pathet Lao by military force and that such an attempt would in all likelihood result in a new Vietminh intervention. The memory of the pre-Dienbienphu invasion of Laos no doubt helped to impress this upon the minds of the RLG leaders.

18. Prime Minister Katay, in spite of lingering sympathies for the "misguided brothers" of the Pathet Lao and his reluctance to perpetuate the division of Laos, was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the Pathet Lao and aware of their determination to hang on to their base and their intention of eventually taking over control of the country. In December, 1955, eighteen long months after Geneva, he declared the negotiations to be futile and abandoned for the time the attempt to reach a settlement. Elections were held throughout the country except in areas under Pathet Lao control, without the participation of the Pathet Lao. Katay stated that he regarded these elections as the "constitutional settlement" enjoined by the Geneva Conference and that therefore the ICC would have little more to do in Laos. Pathet Lao leader Prince Souphanouvong denounced the elections in a letter to Eden and Molotov, the co-chairman of the Geneva Conference.

* The International Control Commission, established by the Geneva Conference to oversee the implementation in Laos of the Geneva Agreements, was composed, as has been typical of such international agencies, of one member from each side, in this case a Canadian and a Pole, and a "neutral" to serve as a balance between them. Since this last post was, in this case, held by an Indian whose view of the issues involved often paralleled that of the Pathet Lao, the majority in the ICC frequently seemed to favor the Communist side.

Interlude

19. With the elections over, the RLG without reopening talks with the Pathet Lao, manifested its continuing interest in unification in a letter to the ICC, dated January 7, 1956. It proposed that the Pathet Lao surrender their arms under ICC supervision by March, 15, with Pathet Lao personnel then being integrated into the Laotian community. An ICC resolution of the same date (with the Polish delegate abstaining) called for a prompt restoration of RLG control in the northern provinces, but no effort was made to compel the Pathet Lao to comply.

It also became apparent early in 1956 that the Communists hoped to tie the Pathet Lao question together with the problem of a settlement in Vietnam. It was suggested from their side that the Pathet Lao question should be taken up by an international conference together with the question of elections in Vietnam with the implication that concessions might be had on the Pathet Lao question if the United States, particularly, would agree to early elections in Vietnam.

II. The Renewal of Negotiations and the Agreement

The Impasse Proves Uncomfortable for Both Sides

20. Neither the Pathet Lao nor their Vietminh masters were entirely happy with this stalemate. The Pathet Lao still held control of their northern base, but without further Vietminh aid their prospects of extending their control over the rest of Laos appeared remote. The RLG guerrilla campaign against them was a continual threat and it was not inconceivable that the ANL might mount a full-scale offensive against them which, without major Vietnamese Communist aid, they were probably not capable of repulsing. A prolonged stalemate might also be very damaging to the Pathet Lao cause in the political field. If the RLG were in the meantime to stabilize the situation in the other ten provinces, to solve some of its economic problems and to cement its close ties with Western powers, the Pathet Lao hopes of winning mass support in the rest of Laos would fade almost into nonexistence. There were strong indications in the early part of 1956 that Pathet Lao morale was declining.

The Vietnamese Communists, on their part, were well aware of the weaknesses of the Pathet Lao position. They knew that RLG successes against the Pathet Lao, either of a military or a political nature would pose a dilemma for themselves. If they did not intervene to save the Pathet Lao they might see a principal base for future subversion or conquest of the rest of Indochina go down the drain, their investment in the Pathet Lao movement lost, and Laos, whether reunified or composed only of the ten non-Pathet Lao provinces, more and more firmly committed to the West. If they did intervene, the Pathet Lao movement would be exposed to the world as a DRV creature, a fact which the DRV had assiduously sought to conceal. Intervention would constitute an undeniable violation of the armistice, antagonize neutral opinion and perhaps turn even India and the ICC to a more unfavorable attitude. Communist claims to fulfillment of armistice terms for elections in Vietnam would become even more untenable. A negotiated settlement which would avert the necessity of facing this dilemma was much to be preferred.

21. The RLG on its side had reason to be unhappy with the continuance of a stalemate. No government can view the division of its country with complete equanimity. Should the stalemate continue indefinitely, the RLG feared, the division of Laos into North and South might come to be generally accepted as semi-permanent on the model of Korea and Vietnam. The Communist side could count on this desire for unification of the country to work in their favor.

The Pathet Lao establishment in the northern provinces would continue to be a base for subversion and possible renewed attack. It could always serve as a pretext for a new Vietnamese Communist intervention against which the RLG military resources would be inadequate. Western military support in that event might make Laos the battleground of another war. These dangers would at least be minimized if the separate Pathet Lao territorial status and military force could be eliminated in an agreement.

22. The Communists also made use of internal forces in the RLG to exert pressure for further negotiations. They were aware of and encouraged the lingering regret on the part of some RLG leaders over the chain of events which had set Laotian against Laotian and capitalized on the reluctance of certain RLG leaders to believe that old comrades in the Pathet Lao movement were really Communists. The sentiment among the people for an end to civil war and guerrilla fighting which was concerned more with getting an agreement of some kind than with the terms and implications of such an agreement made them vulnerable

to Communist propaganda. The RLG could not but be responsive in some degree to this feeling among the people. The excessive expenditures upon the army which the guerrilla war entailed crippled the budget and handicapped the RLG economic program. Complex factional power rivalries within the government also played a part, and Communists are old hands at exploiting such rivalries. There was always a temptation for the group or individual out of office to attack the one in office for being either too hard or too soft toward the Pathet Lao. For example, Katay had to consider how his hardening attitude could provide fuel for charges by ambitious opposition politicians that he was standing in the way of a much-wanted settlement.

Although up to early 1956 neither party had been willing to make real concessions on any vital points and the above described stalemate had developed, it is apparent that both sides had valid reasons for new attempts to find a basis for agreement.

The New Line of International Communism As It Applies to the Pathet Lao Issue

23. The attitude of the Pathet Lao had been perfectly in accordance with the international Communist line for dissident Communist groups. Their insistence upon retention of the secure base in the northern provinces, adjacent to a friendly Communist country, is according to doctrine, particularly the Maoist version.* The creation of a Communist "government", maintaining its own military forces, claiming to be the "true" national government and able to give, through its invitation, a certain legitimacy to an invasion of Communist "volunteers" are part of the familiar pattern for wresting State power from a non-Communist government. The Pathet Lao refused to recognize that independence secured by a gradual cooperation with the former colonial power was real independence; they denounced all ties or cooperation with the West as unneutral; characterized the regime as an imperialist tool; and insisted upon joining the "socialist camp". These stands all identified the Pathet Lao movement as a follower of the old international line.

* "Thus, just as the Chinese people have done, all or at least some of the colonial peoples in the East can hold for an extended period big or small base areas and revolutionary regimes, carry on a protracted revolutionary war to encircle the cities from the countryside, and proceed gradually to take over the cities and win nation-wide victory in their respective countries." Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, p. 304.

The new line, becoming apparent after Stalin's death and after the 20th Congress of the CPSU entailed some changes in the Pathet Lao program. Recognition that some formerly colonial countries; such as Laos, were now, in fact, independent even though misguided in their ties with the West, that neutrality was not a device of the imperialists, but an acceptable foreign policy, that there are more roads than one to socialism, enabled the Pathet Lao to make previously impossible concessions to the RLG in the fields of both foreign and domestic policy for the country. Even more important is the emphasis of the new line upon legality, the abandonment of armed struggle in favor of political action, the importance of the tactics of united fronts, "leftist" and "national" unity, coalition governments, etc., none of which could be implemented by the Pathet Lao while they were still illegal and in insurrection. It was to be expected that, in obedience to the new dictates of the international Communist movement, the Pathet Lao would endeavor to reopen negotiations looking towards a legal status for the party. Some observers even felt that if it appeared necessary as part of the price for an end to the guerrilla war, coming out of the jungle and being permitted to function as a legal political party, the Pathet Lao might even, as a last resort, give up their claim to rule in the northern provinces. As it seems to have worked out, they have successfully maneuvered events so as to be able to gain the one without surrendering the other.

Changes in the RLG Facilitate the Reopening of Negotiations

24. The Pathet Lao's problem of finding a basis for new talks with the RLG without loss of face, was simplified by a change in the government which took place early in 1956. The resignation of Prime Minister Katay on 14 February was in part due to opposition to his suspension of negotiations with the Pathet Lao. This opposition was led by Bong Souvannovong, an opportunistic politician who was also motivated by personal ambition. Bong had consistently favored a negotiated settlement with the Pathet Lao and criticized the government for failing to come to terms with them.

There was some reason to believe that the morale of the Pathet Lao forces was low, following the suspension of the talks and the withdrawal of most of the regular Vietminh troops from Laos. Nevertheless, as will be seen, when the talks were renewed the Pathet Lao demanded terms highly favorable to their side and displayed a high degree of confidence. Whether or not they were in a position to manipulate or direct the activities of any of the opposition politicians, they were undoubtedly aware of them and counting on their weakening effect on the RLG position.

25. The new Prime Minister was Prince Souvanna Phouma, a member of a cadet branch of the royal family and a half-brother of Pathet Lao leader Prince Souphanouvong. While personally anti-Communist, he could not ignore the desire in the country for a quick settlement of the Pathet Lao problem and the implications of the pro-Pathet Lao opposition. Besides the possibilities of constitutional overthrow of the government over the Pathet Lao issue, there were rumors of an opposition plot for a coup d'etat in cooperation with the Pathet Lao forces.

Between the internal pressures and the external threat of the DRV and the CPR, plus the softening in the general climate of opposition to Communism which followed Geneva, Souvanna Phouma was placed in a position in which he felt himself unable to avoid concessions to the Pathet Lao.*

26. On 28 April, 1956, Prince Souphanouvong made a formal proposal to the Prime Minister that they meet again to discuss the situation in Laos. There were increasing contacts between the Pathet Lao and the RLG and an exchange of correspondence between the two half-brothers. All the indications in the next few months were of a reassessment by the Communists of their position with respect to Laos and of a new approach to negotiations.

Burchett Interview Signals New Negotiations

27. On 3 May, 1956, the Communist journalist Wilfred Burchett, arrived in Vientiane, travelling on a Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) passport.

* Another factor in the situation was the attitude of Prince Petsarath, another half-brother of the Prime Minister, in Bangkok. As a member of the anti-French resistance, but one who had neither accepted the French terms and joined the RLG in 1949, nor gone over to the Communists with Souphanouvong, he possessed influence with both sides. Petsarath did not believe, or would not admit, the Communist nature of the Pathet Lao movement. He urged the RLG to regard the Pathet Lao as fellow patriots and to endeavor to bring them back into the fold.

It was widely believed that Petsarath's influence could bring the Pathet Lao and RLG together. Many Laotians felt that a new government, headed by Petsarath, might have more success in dealing with the Pathet Lao. Petsarath's position has undoubtedly helped to influence the RLG toward a more conciliatory attitude in negotiating with the Pathet Lao.

His visit had been arranged and his visa secured with the assistance of Samar Sen, the Indian chairman of the ICC. He was ostensibly in Laos as a special correspondent for Radio Peiping, but it soon became clear that he was also carrying out a mission for the international Communist movement.*

Burchett's request for a personal interview was turned down by the Prime Minister who apparently had not been informed of the visit in advance. He spent some time with the Polish member of the ICC. The Prime Minister then softened his refusal sufficiently to receive a set of written questions from Burchett and to furnish written answers.

The questions foreshadowed what the Pathet Lao position would be in future negotiations. They were concerned with the RLG attitude on negotiations, the position of Pathet Lao forces after a settlement, the right of former Pathet Lao to engage in legal political activity and guarantees of their rights and liberties. A series of questions dealt with RLG relations with the DRV and the CPR on the one hand and with the Western powers on the other, including one of the relationship between Laos and SEATO. This unorthodox Communist diplomatic move was successful in that it brought about a revealing response from Souvanna Phouma, to the effect that the RLG was willing and even anxious to resume talks looking to a settlement of the Pathet Lao problem. The Pathet Lao, after a settlement, he said, would be citizens of Laos, possessing the same rights and freedoms guaranteed by the constitution to all citizens, and with the same obligation to obey the laws. Laos desired to maintain friendly relations with all countries. She had no difficulties with the CPR, but deplored the violations of her territory by the DRV. The Prime Minister said relations with the latter might be normalized if the DRV would withdraw her cadres and the arms and ammunition which she had supplied and give up the training and indoctrination of Laos on DRV territory. He explained Laos had no military obligations other than those included in the U.N. charter and the Geneva Agreements, and that Laos was forbidden by the latter to join such alliances as SEATO and would request SEATO aid only in case of imperious necessity.

* Burchett had played a similar role during the Korean truce negotiations where he served as a channel for calculated "leaks" of information from Communist sources.

28. It seems clear that Burchett's mission was to find out, in such a way as to avoid any loss of face by the Pathet Lao and the DRV if the results should prove unacceptable, what the RLG attitude to reopening of negotiations would be and what terms it would be willing to consider. It is significant that Burchett's questions included no mention of either the political or military situation in the northern provinces--an area in which the Pathet Lao did not want to make any concessions.

Apparently Souvanna Phouma's answers met with Communist approval. The Hanoi radio on May 7, broadcast the interview although the RLG had regarded it as secret and off the record. Presumably Hanoi's intention was to publicly commit the RLG to negotiations along the lines indicated in the interview.

New Talks in Vientiane and an Agreement to Agree

29. From 1 August to 10 August, delegations of the Pathet Lao and the Royal Government talked in Vientiane seeking an agreement which would end the civil war and the division of the country. Prince Souvanna Phouma, with a number of the principal officials of the RLG represented the government side, while Prince Souphanouvong with some of his principal lieutenants, including Phoumi Vongvitchit and Nouhak, spoke for the Pathet Lao. Most of the time in the formal meetings was devoted to speeches as much concerned with propaganda as with concrete proposals. On the second day, Souphanouvong presented a five point agenda which, as reported by the Peiping radio on August 5, included the same Communist demands as those which Burchett's questions had emphasized and which the RLG implicitly accepted as a basis for discussions.

The Pathet Lao urged first that the RLG guarantee the freedom to vote and to stand for office to all and that the rights of freedom of speech, press and association be assured, with universal suffrage which should include women. The services of the Pathet Lao to the country should be recognized. Since the election of December 1955 was invalid due to the lack of participation by the Pathet Lao, new elections should be held. After these points had been implemented, the Pathet Lao would be willing to discuss the question of the two northern provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly. In the meantime they were willing that each side should appoint the governor of one province and the deputy governor of the other. The RLG should agree to recognize the titles and positions of Pathet Lao functionaries and to accept the Pathet Lao army as a unit of the ANL under ANL command.

30. Souvanna Phouma stated the RLG positions informally at this meeting and more completely the next day. He dealt with the first two items by pointing out that all these rights and freedoms were already guaranteed by the constitution and existing law. Once the Pathet Lao had given up their illegal resistance to the government, they would enjoy these guarantees like anyone else. They would then have the right to organize a political party and take part in political activity by the same procedures as other political groups and the Prime Minister foresaw no difficulty for the Pathet Lao on this score.

New elections could not be held at this time, since the constitution specified that they be held every four years. The election had been postponed from August to December, 1955 to give the Pathet Lao a chance to participate; if they had not availed themselves of it, the RLG was not responsible. However, the government was planning an increase in the size of the Assembly which would create a number of new seats. In supplementary elections to fill these seats, the Pathet Lao could take part. No promises could be made about a coalition government. A change in government could take place only by normal constitutional processes. Such a change would undoubtedly take place after the supplementary elections and the composition of the new government would be determined by both old and new deputies.

As to foreign policy, the Prime Minister went on, his government, like that of Katay before him, was already committed to neutrality and peaceful coexistence and had joined with Nehru of India in endorsing the Five Principles. Laos had no military alliances and the only foreign base on her soil was a French base at Seno which was approved by the Geneva agreements. The incorporation of Pathet Lao personnel into the administration and army could take place only as vacancies and budgetary considerations permitted.

31. It will be noted that the agenda offered by the Pathet Lao Communists and which the Prime Minister by his answers implicitly accepted as a basis for discussion, places the question of the two northern provinces at the bottom of the list, to be considered after the other points have been implemented. That is, when the shooting is ended, the Pathet Lao legalized as a political party with a guarantee of rights and freedoms, elections held and a coalition government established and Pathet Lao personnel integrated into the army and the administration, then the Pathet Lao will be willing to talk about the basis for the restoration of RLG authority in the northern provinces.

The Pathet Lao had succeeded in focusing the negotiations upon those issues on which it had something to gain, while subordinating those on which it might be asked to give up something. This order of priority is the reverse of that held by the RLG for which the reestablishment of its authority in the north had been the first essential. Until this time, the RLG had insisted on the effective restoration of its control of Sam Neua and Phong Saly as a prerequisite to any discussion of other issues. Its acceptance of the Pathet Lao agenda represents a step back from its previous position and it may be said to have suffered a diplomatic defeat.

The above is, of course, an example of a typical Communist maneuver in negotiations. They have secured solid concessions on the points of interest to them in exchange for an agreement to negotiate on the issues which are of first concern to the other side.

32. While these exchanges were going on in the formal meetings, back-stage conferences between the leaders were working out the actual agreements and on 5 August, the first joint communique was released. It dealt with the future foreign policy of Laos and the future status of the Pathet Lao, following quite closely the line of the Communist proposals. Laos was to follow a policy of peace and neutrality. It was to have no military alliances and permit no foreign bases other than those sanctioned by Geneva on its soil. It was to maintain good relations with all countries but particularly with its neighbors. It will be noted that "neutrality" is not defined, leaving the Pathet Lao free later to demand its own interpretation in Communist terms. The "neighbors" with whom Laos is to maintain good relations can only be the CPR and the DRV and the Pathet Lao are likely to insist that "good relations" mean diplomatic relations.

The communique also included a guarantee that all Pathet Lao political organizations--the party itself as well as all of its front organizations for women, youth, labor, peasants, etc., the cadres for which were already established in the northern provinces--should be allowed to operate legally throughout Laos and that Pathet Lao cadres and "former resistance members" should be allowed to participate in both the army and the administration. This was, of course, the principal objective of the Pathet Lao in a settlement, in addition to retention of their territorial base. By this clause they were assured of their right to organize as a legal party to carry on legal political action.

A second joint communique on 10 August dealt with more specific points. Supplementary elections were to be held throughout the kingdom

by free and secret ballot. A government of national union with Pathet Lao participation was to be formed. Mixed political and military commissions were to meet to work out the application of the agreements.

33. This is obviously more an agreement to agree than a concrete settlement of the issues involved. The RLG has been driven from its previous stand on several points.

a) Souvanna Phouma had repeatedly argued that RLG policy already included peace, neutrality, guarantees of rights and freedoms, absence of military alliances and bases, etc., and that there was no need to restate these. In the communique, he has apparently yielded to the Communist view, and, by restatement, implicitly acknowledged that these items needed further guarantee.

b) The RLG had insisted that any coalition government could only be established after the elections and that even then it would depend upon the result of the elections. The communique pledged a coalition without reference either to the date or the result of the election.

c) The RLG had also insisted that the integration of Pathet Lao personnel into the army and the administration would be subject to the development of vacancies and to budgetary considerations. The communique pledges such integration without qualifications.

In exchange for these commitments, the RLG received no assurances whatever about the status of the northern provinces, although presumably this would be one of the questions to be discussed by the mixed political and military commissions.

34. The real test of what these agreements amount to will be found, of course, in what the mixed commissions are able to do to resolve the substantive questions which the communique dealt with only in principle. The Pathet Lao, having secured firm commitments in principle on legalization, coalition government, elections, etc., are now in a position to stall on terms for integration and the restoration of government authority in the north and to insist, with some justification, that the implementation of the first points is not dependent, according to the communiques, upon settlement of the latter.

The vital points in the negotiations in the mixed commissions which will indicate whether the Vientiane Agreements do in fact constitute a settlement and whether the RLG or the Pathet Lao has won the advantage are whether the Pathet Lao will accept in good faith:

- a) a political position in a new government based upon its success or lack of success in the elections; that is, to claim participation in a coalition cabinet only if they win a significant number of seats in the national assembly.
- b) the bona fide restoration of the authority and administrative control of the RLG in the northern provinces.
- c) the integration of their military and political personnel in good faith with a bona fide acceptance of ANL and RLG command including the right to assign Pathet Lao functionaries and troop units to posts and bases in other parts of Laos.

The Pathet Lao have delayed in sending their teams to the mixed commissions. This has been officially explained as due to communication difficulties. However, it has been suggested that some of the second-level Pathet Lao leaders have not approved the agreements, perhaps in the fear that with integration, their personal ambitions will suffer as a result of their failure to qualify for integration. It is also likely that the delay was to allow time for Prince Souphanouvong's visit to Hanoi where he probably received instructions from the Vietminh as to the line to be followed in the commission talks.

Prince Souvanna Phouma, who had scheduled a trip to France for medical treatment and to report on the agreements with the Pathet Lao to the King, after first announcing that he could not go until the commissions had begun their work, changed his mind and departed for France prior to their first meetings. It is not likely that any definitive solutions will be arrived at in his absence. The Pathet Lao, in any case, are probably not in any hurry to settle the details. With the commitments they have already secured, the unresolved status of the remaining issues is probably satisfactory to them.

36. A complete evaluation of the Vientiane agreement and its implications for Laos must wait upon the work of the commissions and the working out in practice of the arrangements. At this point, however, it is apparent that the Communists have made substantial gains. Having conceded this much in principle, it will be difficult for the RLG to avoid going even further in working out the details.

The Pathet Lao are in a position to insist on the implementation of elections, legalization of the party, participation in a coalition govern-

ment, etc., as long as they fulfill their end of the bargain by continuing merely to negotiate the knotty problems of the two provinces and of integration of Pathet Lao personnel. A legalistic basis has been laid for the Pathet Lao to demand, either as members of a coalition cabinet or as an opposition, the implementation of a neutral foreign policy in Communist terms--that is, a reduced dependence and eventual end to Western aid of all kinds, acceptance of Communist economic and cultural aid and missions, a public rejection of SEATO and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the CPR and the DRV. A refusal of such demands by the RLG would open the way to charges of bad faith and violation of the Vientiane agreements, when deputies drawn from the Pathet Lao group in coalition with other opposition groups might threaten to overturn the government. Acceptance of such demands, of course, would leave Laos completely dependent upon and at the mercy of the Pathet Lao, Vietnamese Communists and China.

Prince Souvanna Phouma Visits Peiping and Hanoi

37. Prior to the resumption of negotiations in early August, the Chinese Communists set in motion another device to pressure or persuade the RLG into an agreement with the Pathet Lao. Through the Indian members of the ICC, the Peiping government issued an invitation to the Laotian Prime Minister to visit Peiping. Souvanna Phouma at first took the position that he could not visit China until the Pathet Lao problem was solved. The Communists no doubt felt that Souvanna Phouma could be influenced by the red carpet treatment which they would give him and by being treated as a world statesman and also that he might be impressed with China's strength and progress. They probably calculated that such a trip, while the Pathet Lao issue was still being negotiated, might bring the Prime Minister to a more amenable frame of mind.

There was some opposition in the RLG to the acceptance of this invitation, but Souvanna Phouma apparently felt that it should be accepted. Having taken the stand that the Pathet Lao question must be settled before he could go, he may have been influenced to agree to Communist terms in the joint communique in order to achieve a settlement which would enable him to go. At any rate, he, with a delegation of RLG officials departed for Peiping on 19 August.

As soon as the Chinese invitation was announced, the DRV suggested that the RLG delegation also pay a visit to Hanoi. The RLG replied that while they could not make a formal visit under the circumstances, if their

itinerary gave them sufficient time while in transit at Hanoi, they might talk informally. Since the arrangements for the trip were in charge of the Indians and of Chinese representatives who came to Vientiane for that purpose, it was to be expected that sufficient time in Hanoi would be provided. In fact, the RLG delegation spent about 48 hours in Hanoi on their way back from China.

38. The RLG delegation was royally received and entertained in both China and North Vietnam. At luncheons and dinners, cocktail parties and inspection tours, Souvanna Phouma was called upon for speeches. Influenced by the deference accorded him and the courtesy due to a generous host, he apparently felt it incumbent upon him to speak repeatedly and at length about the friendship and historic ties between Laos and China, to pledge anew the close relationships which had existed and which should exist again and to praise what he had seen in China. Both the Peiping and Hanoi radios, from the beginning of the trip, devoted much time to it and went to every extreme, short of actual misstatement, to emphasize the Laotian Prime Minister's sometimes ambiguous and vague remarks about renewal of historic ties, the Five Principles, neutrality, the aid which China could give Laos, etc., and to give the impression that Laos was moving over to the Communist side.

Both Souvanna Phouma, upon his return to Laos, and other officials of the RLG were concerned about the effect which this trip, coming on top of the joint communiques with the Pathet Lao, might have upon Laos' relations with the West, particularly with the U.S., on whose aid Laos was so dependent. He insisted that the trip had been purely a courtesy visit, that he had not agreed to the establishment of diplomatic relations, that no discussions had been held on Chinese economic aid or missions to Laos, that he had not denounced SEATO assistance to Laos in case of need and that Laos' neutrality was of the Swiss, not the Indian type.

The RLG decided, as a counterbalance, to send a delegation to a meeting of the Colombo Powers which it had previously decided not to attend. Souvanna Phouma arranged that his stopover in Saigon, enroute to France, should be treated as a State visit to further offset his Chinese trip.

It is probable that in his insistence that he had made no commitments whatever during his trip, the Prime Minister was technically correct. However, by the nature of his speeches and the use made of

them by Communist propaganda he had created an atmosphere and an impression which will make it more difficult for him to resist when, at some future time, proposals for exchange of diplomatic representation, economic agreements and aid, and the like are made.