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Conversation between Jambyn Batmunkh and Kaysone Phomvihane

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Summary:

In December 1979 Mongolian party and government delegation headed by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Mongolia Jambyn Batmunkh visited Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos and had held talks with the leaders of these countries on issues pertinent to the Sino-Vietnamese war of 1979, Pol Pot's regime, situation in Indochina and Chinese foreign policy in Asia.

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Mongolian

Contents:

Translation - English

RECORD OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE
DELEGATIONS OF LAOS AND MONGOLIA

Vientiane

The discussion between the MPR party and government delegation headed by the member of the MPRP Central Committee Politburo comrade J. Batmunkh and the LPDR [Lao People's Democratic Republic] party and government delegation headed by the General Secretary of the LPRP [Lao People's Revolutionary Party] Central Committee, Prime Minister of the LPDR comrade Kaysone Phomvihane took place on 5-6 December 1979 in Vientiane. [...]

At the beginning of the discussion, at the time of the protocol conversation (when the photographers were taking pictures), Kaysone Phomvihane said:

Vientiane was a small town and it expanded and became a big city during the colonial period. Thailand's territory begins on the other side of the Mekong River. In the end of 1976 and a part of 1977 relations between the two countries were very troublesome. From the historical point of view, Thailand's 17 provinces used to be a part of the Laos Kingdom. The British and the French colonialists cut off that part of our territory and established the border on the Mekong River.

When we have discussions with Thailand's delegations, nothing needs to be translated, we understand each other freely. I visited Thailand. And I did not use an interpreter. We were given an opportunity to meet with Thailand's population. They spoke the same language as us. Generally, there are many people of Laotian origin in Thailand. [...]

[Here Batmunkh recounts the history of the Sino-Mongolian relations, talks briefly about the Laotian-Mongolian friendship and reminds that Mongolia supplied aid to Laos.]

[Kaysone Phomvihane:] We were moved when you said that your country decided to provide aid to us again. This testifies to the benefit of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism.

We would like to express gratitude again to the MPRP Central Committee and the MPR government for providing such fraternal aid to the people of Laos. [...]

The LPDR has the peculiarity of being located at the front line of the socialist camp in Southeast Asia. In the last four years our enemies have conducted activities to break up our state. Our main enemies are the imperialists, Chinese great power hegemonists, other reactionary forces.

Our enemies carry out hostile activities by various means. First of all, they are pursuing a policy of economic and political pressure. They concentrate military forces along our border, build military strategic sites and conduct similar activities.

The development of the LPDR has several peculiarities. The first peculiarity is that before the Laotian revolution, we came up against two basic tasks that had to be carried out. One basic task is to defend our country, to satisfy the [needs of] state security.

The second task is to organize a new society in the motherland.

The defense of the motherland is now the most important task. The second task is also very important, key point. These two tasks are intricately connected.

Another peculiarity of our development is that the people of Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos have one common enemy. Imperialism and neo-colonialism are the main enemies of our people. Beijing hegemonists are our direct enemies.

To defeat the common enemy, we and Vietnam and Kampuchea must fight together.

Likewise, Beijing hegemonists are a common enemy of our two countries. This shows the necessity of strengthening the militant unity of our countries with the Soviet Union and other fraternal socialist countries. [...] This is our strategic line.

In terms of strategic goals we must not waver. But in tactical terms, we should be flexible. For example, when the group of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary was in power, although Thailand pursued a provocative policy against our country, we took the position that we would not worsen the situation. We tried to stay out of conflict with the regime of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary.

At the time when Beijing reactionaries committed an armed aggression against the SRV a task was set to mobilize every [resource] for the struggle to defend against enemy invasion. At the time we paid care not to worsen relations with Thailand, Burma and other states. If we did not pursue a flexible policy, we would have ended up in a difficult situation. It is evident that we pursued a correct policy.

Our state has a 370 km long [border] with China, over 200 km long [border] with Burma, over 1600 km long border with Thailand. There is a 400 km long border with Kampuchea. It is clear what kind of difficult situation we would end up in if we did not pursue a flexible policy and the enemy surrounded us from three sides.

When the regime of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary was overthrown, the situation on our southern border became quite. Along the 560 km of the Laotian-Thai border the situation is not quiet now. The situation in the regions bordering China is even more troubled. [...]

Now I would like to talk about internal questions, above all about the question of defense. In the last 4 years our country's situation has been troubled. Our enemy is resorting to various means. Mainly, the enemy elements are trying to change our situation by peaceful means. They set the task of destroying our country from within. For this, they are trying to create an atmosphere of distrust among nationalities and ethnic groups, cause them to quarrel [literally, throw a bone between them]. They are trying to secretly organize a force to carry out an uprising.

Reactionary elements are intensifying their activities particularly in the regions where awareness has weakened. The Chinese reactionaries are concentrating forces on our northern border. There is one full army there. Likewise, they are concentrating an immigrant force. The Chinese recruit youths from among the deserters in Thailand to widen the ranks of their reactionary army. They have prepared parts of the remnants of Wang Pao and Kong Le [forces] for war against us, and send them to our country to organize a secret force against our revolution.

The main question now is whether or not they will commit an armed aggression against us. We cannot rule out that they will commit an armed aggression. The reason for this is that the elements that are in power in China will not turn away before anything. Therefore we must be on our guard. When the Chinese militants are

thinking to launch another attack against Vietnam, the question remains whether or not they will commit an aggression against Laos. If they commit an aggression against Vietnam, they could also commit an aggression against us. It is also possible that having committed an aggression against Vietnam they will not commit an aggression against us. That's because their possibilities are also limited. It would not be easy for them to invade on many fronts.

Besides, an aggression of 900 million strong great power China against Laos with its 3 million people would cause an international censure of China. The Chinese people will resist this. Moreover, the Chinese leadership in itself has internal contradictions.

The main point is that they use the immigrants. By Chinese incitement, the immigrants are carrying out activities against our state. They are pursuing a policy of sowing mistrust between nationalities and ethnic groups, of organizing an uprising, they are trying to cut off a part of our territory and set up a puppet government. They are also trying to throw a bone between Laos, Vietnam and Kampuchea and between Laos and the Soviet Union. Now the Chinese are paying a lot of attention to the region in the northern part of our country called the "golden triangle." They are trying to create chaos in the northern part of Laos and in Vietnam.

Another field for the Chinese aggression is near Vientiane city. It is understandable that they will not leave the capital Vientiane in peace. But the main forces are being concentrated in the northern part of the country. If they are able to organize an immigrant government and cut off a part of our country, there will be of course a puppet government there, and that government will ask for help from China to "liberate" the city of Vientiane.

The situation is troublesome. The Laotian situation is directly connected with Thailand and Burma. Therefore we must carefully observe the situation. Now the dry season is beginning. The enemy elements intensify their activities at exactly this period.

We achieved a big success in defending our motherland and satisfying [the needs of] state security.

We suppressed the attempt at an uprising, destroyed the remnants of Wang Pao's army. The main point is that by using political and diplomatic measures we were able to expel Chinese workers from the northern part of the country. We think this is a big success. If the 20-30 thousand Chinese workers were not expelled from the country, Maoists could use them to attack Vietnam or to conquer our northern part. The number of officials at the Chinese Embassy was reduced to 12. This is another great victory for our policy. Besides being important for the defense of the country, this is a matter of realization of our internationalist obligations before the Vietnamese brothers and comrades. We are not talking about this openly in a loud voice. The main point is that without using a single bullet, [we] dealt a great blow to the Chinese intentions. This blow caused much harm to China. Therefore we made our contribution to the security of Southeast Asia.

The Thais are themselves afraid of the Chinese in our country. China constantly sends spies and informers to our northern provinces. We uncover and arrest them in a timely manner.

We are organizing great work to explain the policy of the Chinese rulers to our people. Now our people are more united than ever. They are fully resolute in defending the motherland. The numbers and quality of our army have increased a lot. There are more than 100 battalions in our northern provinces. We are receiving aid from the Soviet Union to strengthen the regular and the provincial armies. We are stronger than we were at the time of struggle against America. [...]

[Here Kaysone Phomvihane discusses economic and other issues, in particular, the work of co-operatives in Laos, questions of agriculture and industry.]

Now let me talk briefly about the Laotian-Chinese relations.

Previously, we had good relations with China. During the period of struggle, we received aid from it. Although we knew early on that the Maoists were retreating from the Marxist-Leninist theory, our party abstained from criticizing them openly. This question was discussed in narrow circles. We had a special tactic during this period.

Although China said that if America attacked Laos it would help with its own planes and its military forces, in truth it did not keep its promise. At the time Nixon visited China [in February 1972], the Shanghai communiqué was published. We understood the hidden meaning of this communiqué. Also we did not support the Chinese "Cultural Revolution". We knew that this revolution was hostile to Marxism-Leninism.

After we took power [in 1975], the Chinese cut aid sharply, even began to refuse to carry out what they had previously agreed to and promised.

Most dangerously, they had the aim of causing a split in our party relying on a part of recruited people from our party ranks that supported Maoism and of cutting off our southern part. They had the aim of using this group of people against me.

They asked me why there was no request to take aid in soldiers and weapons from China. I explained to them the line of my own party. At the time Chinese experts worked in our centre, next to us. Those Chinese experts went to the southern part of our country.

They planned to cut off the southern part of our country using the force assembled from the Chinese workers in the northern part of our country as well as the so-called "Thailand Communist Party" and relying upon the regime of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary. To this end, they also thought to use the forces of the "Thailand Communist Party" in the southern part of our country. This is how they planned to cut off the southern part of Laos. Beside this they tried to use their own force under the anti-Vietnamese banner to the effect that Vietnam used its own force to commit aggression against Laos. But in the end these evil plans and activities completely failed.

As the Chinese organized so-called "people's revolutionary party" in the northern part of our country, there we of course did not lose our guard. When they organized this party, they used people who were undergoing [medical] treatment in China. We also frustrated these vile plans. At the time of the "Cultural Revolution" they tried to use some people who had become their arm and leg to intensively propagate Maoism in our country. For example, they thought to use Situn Kumadam's son for this. We carried out a resolute struggle against this.

When we put this question to the Chinese side, they replied that as every Chinese person respected Mao Zedong, this [issue] could not be touched. The Chinese planned to kidnap Situn Kumadam's son and used him for their purposes. We clearly told the Chinese that because Laos was an independent state we must solve problems of the Laotian people ourselves. They carried out lots of different activities against us. We did not openly talk about this. The reason for this is that at the time we had to direct all our forces towards the struggle against America. Also, at the time we had to take the Chinese aid.

Speaking about the road construction in the northern part of our country, as the problem of road connections was severe here, we needed that road. Zhou Enlai told me many times that we needed to have a road built to the southern part of the country, through Sailbur [Xaignabouri?] to Thailand. Then I gave him the following answer. I agree to the construction of a road to Monghim [Muang Houn?]. But we will build a road to Xiangkhoang and the Plain of Jars ourselves. I replied that the road to Thailand would only be constructed up to Mekong and Pakbeng. It now seems that they needed that road for their aggressive aims. The Chinese wanted to put a road through to the city of Phongsali. But they said that they would not go beyond it. If the Chinese sent their forces by this road, they [the Chinese] would completely close it [Phongsali?] off (he clearly explained this on the map).

After we came into power, they said they would help us build a railroad to the southern part of our country. I replied that [we] could think about this.

Under the banner of helping Laos they tried to pursue their own aggressive policy. They helped build a radio station in the northern part of the country, and after the Chinese left this radio station stopped working. The printing industry built in the northern part is also not working now. Recently we organized work to explain all of this to the entire country, especially to the northern part. At the time of this work, our workers and local people spoke about many facts of this Chinese policy. In particular, the Chinese tried to recruit our army officials, persons of responsibility in the party committees and representatives of minority nationalities. After this explanatory work, people understand Maoism well. In the middle of 1978 this work began across the entire country.

Now the border situation is troubled. China is putting the government of Thailand under great pressure. They are putting Kriangsak's government under economic and other pressure. In particular, when Kriangsak wanted to visit our country, the Chinese attempted in various ways to prevent him from coming. We recently invited Thailand's Minister of Internal Affairs [General Lek Naeomali], proposing to have border talks. But the Chinese Embassy in Thailand directly threatened him.

J. Batmunkh The current Chinese Ambassador in Thailand [Zhang Weilie] also used to work in our country. He was sent to Thailand for a reason.

K. Phomvihane: Now the Chinese are trying to use the opponents of the Laotian revolution and Thailand's reactionary elements in the pursuit of hostile activities against us. They are using the pro-Maoist side of the Thailand Communist Party. They are trying to use our minority Meo against us. Likewise the Chinese rulers have set the goal of overthrowing the government of Kriangsak Chomanan, and are trying to install a more reactionary government instead of him. Therefore they intend to worsen relations between our countries. We follow the tactic of maintaining normal relations with Thailand. The Chinese are trying to use the contradictions within Thailand's ruling group. Kriangsak is trying to take Thailand along the road of neutrality.

China, Japan and the USA have colluded and are trying to cause damage and harm to the Laotian revolution. But their interests and methods are different. Their interests are not to Thailand's liking. We must use this contradiction. Thailand is afraid of Laos very much. The reason is that there are 25 million people of Laotian origin in Thailand. Laos's prosperous development, the improvement in people's lives have great influence on Thailand.

Thailand is also afraid of China. But it is more afraid of Laos. In such conditions we must follow an appropriate tactic. Burmese President Ne Win cannot fully understand all of the activities. He visited us recently. From his words, everything is well with China. Previously China tried to destroy the Burmese Communist Party. It could not

do it with only military forces. During the Cultural Revolution Burma expelled the Red Guards who were in Burma. They understood they could not do anything with military forces. The Chinese are now trying to soften and repair relations with Burma. The Chinese provided Burma with 60 million dollars worth of aid, and besides agreeing to provide experts, they let it be known that they did not support the Communist Party.

Ne Win cannot understand the true face of the Chinese policy. Therefore we must follow an appropriate policy with Burma. We are basing our relations with Burma and Thailand on the principles of peaceful co-existence. In the end, we think that in strategic terms we cannot waver, while we must be flexible in tactical terms.

I think that because in other questions we stand on the same position, there is no need to talk about them.

It is important to pay special attention to several questions of strategic importance. Especially:

- It is correct to strengthen solidarity with Vietnam and Kampuchea.
- Solidarity with the Soviet Union must be strengthened, as should be reliance on other socialist countries.
- We must be ready to take help from the peace-loving and progressive forces.

The above mentioned strategic questions are very important. On their basis we must carry out a flexible policy, adjust tactics to the circumstances.

□ What we value the most is the unity within our party. This is the most decisive point. We must strengthen the solidarity of people on the basis of the union between workers and peasants.

□ Forces of all fronts must be united.

□ Our central goal is to pursue the policy and conduct activities to explain to the public Beijing's great power arrogant policy.

The Chinese population along our border is vacillating. We must also use this. [...]

As you said, we have one common enemy. These are the Chinese rulers.

Friendly relations between our countries, solidarity and militant unity should be further strengthened between our two countries. You have much more experience in struggling against the Chinese hegemonists. We think it is correct for us to exchange experience in this regard. [...]

J. Batmunkh: [...] It is clear from your talk that the tricks and harmful activities pursued by the Chinese rulers against neighboring countries are the same [everywhere].

Therefore we think that it is important for us to let each other know about the tricks and activities of the Chinese aggressive policies and exchange our experiences of struggle against them. I will pass all the points that you, comrade, talked about to the Central Committee Politburo and to Chairman Tsendenbal. [...]

Kaysone Phomvihane: [...] Tonight our Central Committee will invite you to a friendly meal. We can have fun together. Tonight we can have fun as if we were in Ulaanbaatar.

J. Batmunkh: Thank you very much. We have time. If there are questions that need to be cleared up, we can continue this evening. At this the conversation ended. [...]