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Hungarian Embassy in the DPRK, Report, 1 May 1975. Subject: Visit of a Laotian delegation in the DPRK.

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Summary:

The Hungarian Embassy in the DPRK provides an overview of relations between Pyongyang and Vientiane and summarizes a recent visit of a Lao delegation to North Korea.

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On April 8-18th, a 10-member delegation of the National Political Consultative Council of the Kingdom of Laos, headed by Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak, the vice-chairman of the National Political Consultative Council, visited the DPRK. We managed to obtain information about the delegation's visit in Pyongyang from Soviet and Vietnamese sources, and on April 30th, Bae Yong-jae, the deputy head of the 2nd Main Department of the FM [Foreign Ministry], received Comrade Taraba, and summarized their experiences.

The DPRK only recently established relations with Vientiane. [In the past], it had maintained contacts of substance solely with the Pathet Lao. About 10 years ago, there was an occasion of contact between Pyongyang and Vientiane, but this was just of an accidental nature. The current path of relations can be traced back to July 1974. Due to the establishment of [diplomatic] relations at that time, in September 1974 a DPRK embassy was opened in Vientiane, and later, in 1975, they also received two Laotian (coalition) delegations in Pyongyang. The first was an economic delegation, while the one mentioned above was a political delegation.

The political delegation headed by Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak that visited Pyongyang had been composed on the basis of the present situation of the Laotian domestic political coalition, though the delegation was sent to the DPRK, the GDR, and the Soviet Union specifically at the suggestion of Souphanouvong, the chairman of the National Political Consultative Council. In the delegation, the Laotian right wing, the Patriotic Front, and the center (neutrals) were represented by seven, one, and two persons, respectively.

Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak is a rightist politician, a cousin of the king. (His mother is a sister of Souphanouvong and Souvanna Phouma.) In earlier times, he had been very reactionary; in 1955, he was arrested by the Pathet Lao. In the 1960s, he held the position of Minister of Postal Affairs in the first coalition government. Following the establishment of the new coalition government, from September 1974 on, he became the vice-chairman of the aforesaid National Political Consultative Council. The FM in Pyongyang is of the opinion that the political attitude of Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak has undergone a positive change; he has moved closer to us, which can be explained primarily by the changes that occurred in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and last but not least in Laos. They stressed that the experiences he gained in the DPRK, and his conversation with Kim Il Sung, made a great impression on him. He has a medical diploma. He did not visit the socialist countries before; he had been preoccupied with the affairs related to France, and knew only the West.

The delegation's visit in Pyongyang was aimed at conducting an exchange of views for the sake of the friendship of the two countries, establishing a new personal contact, and gaining political experiences that would enable [the government] to solve the Laotian domestic political situation and economic chaos in a quick (!) way. In essence, the delegation represented Souphanouvong's line. The most significant episode of the talks of substance was the fact that Comrade Kim Il Sung received the Laotian delegation. They provided each other only with general information about political matters. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that Comrade Kim Il Sung highlighted the Laotian "grand national cooperation," the solution based on compromise and coalition. By highlighting this issue, he also sought to draw a parallel between the situation in Korea and Laos, for he said that one should accomplish such a "grand national cooperation" in Korea, too. Kim Il Sung sent his greetings to the king, Souphanouvong, and Souvanna Phouma. The negotiating partner of Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak was Deputy Premier Pak Seong-cheol, a member of the Politbureau. However, their talks lasted only one hour, if the other conversations are discounted. These [talks] were also confined to the discussion of general political issues.

It was difficult to negotiate with the Laotian delegation, because they sought to avoid adopting any concrete political position, and wherever such a situation arose, they formed a unanimous standpoint on the basis of preliminary discussions between the

delegates. This went so far that even after a visit in a theater, they first discussed their impressions, and only after that did they express their opinion about the play they had seen.

In terms of protocol, it was remarkable that the king was never addressed alone, but if several names were enumerated, he was mentioned first, followed by Souphanouvong and Souvanna Phouma. At the airport, a small crowd welcomed the Laotian delegation.

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(ambassador)