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*Le chef de la délégation à la Conférence sur le Laos à Genève
au secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures*

*Chairman, Delegation to Conference on Laos, Geneva,
to Secretary of State for External Affairs*

TELEGRAM 2033

Geneva, November 28, 1961

SECRET. CANADIAN EYES ONLY. OPIMMEDIATE.

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STATE OF NEGOTIATIONS

In the final round of negotiations in which we are now engaged, we are encountering heavy going. The Conference may have reached its most critical stage since it was opened more than six months ago. You will remember that at the end of the series of restricted sessions in which the less controversial issues were resolved, it was decided to attempt reaching agreement on the non-agreed issues in (a) negotiations between the two Co-Chairmen and (b) negotiations in a working group of the Six big powers. (See our telegram 1508 September 11).

2. Due to the disastrous failures in the meetings of the Six which resulted in setbacks rather than progress, constructive negotiations have been conducted exclusively between the Co-Chairmen in consultation with their respective friendly delegations. Harriman and Pushkin have also met occasionally to negotiate directly.

3. The meetings of the working group were characterized by clashes between Harriman and Chang Han-Fu and also between Harriman and Lall. The three most contentious problems (SEATO, French presence and integration of Laotian forces) have often raised tempers to the boiling point and the consequent angry outbursts ruled out intelligent negotiations. It was hoped that a direct consultation between USA and Chinese representatives would be helpful, and that frank discussions between them would clarify issues. The relations between Chang and Harriman have deteriorated to the degree that Chang, who was anxious earlier to have talks with Harriman, now refuses to meet Harriman at all. The last two meetings of the group which took place last week almost threatened the breakup of negotiations altogether.

4. Sometime ago Harriman had raised in these meetings the issue of demobilization and integration of all Laotian forces. He did this in spite of having previously agreed, with Washington's authorization, to abandon the relevant part of USA draft protocol. He infuriates the Communists by always referring to this problem as the issue of "private armies" and makes it clear that he means the forces of the Pathet Lao. Chang supported by Pushkin maintains that this a Laotian internal affair and therefore is not repeat not the concern of the Conference. At the same time they both assert that Laotian forces are, of course, to be integrated and they point to the Zurich communiqué on this. The Communists claimed that this problem could be settled by the Laotians and they could not repeat not understand why Harriman continued to insist on discussing this issue in every meeting of the Six. Harriman paid no repeat no attention to Communist charges of bad faith and began to speak even more heatedly about private armies. Chang then shouted that he would not repeat not attend any more meetings of the Six unless Harriman dropped the subject. In the last meeting of the Six, however, Harriman again raised the question of private armies whereupon Chang threatened to leave. Harriman then said "if Chang refuses to discuss this problem there will be no repeat no agreement."