

convincing, a number of the facts mentioned are undeniably true. Among them was the pressure to which China undoubtedly subjected the Vietnamese delegation at the Geneva Conference. Vietnam had to agree that neither the Pathet Lao nor the Khmers Issarak would be represented at the Geneva Conference, that Vietnam would be divided in two and that there would be a wait of two years before general elections would take place in South Vietnam.

François Joyaux, who has verified these claims by obtaining access to the French archives has described the situation as follows:

Was it not China that persuaded Vietnam at the Geneva Conference in 1954 that it should withdraw its troops from Laos, that it could not obtain a sanctuary in Cambodia for the Khmers who had supported the Viet-Minh, that the two kingdoms must remain strictly neutral and that the RDVN itself could not play the role it had wanted? Furthermore it was China which persuaded the Viet-Minh to accept the partition of Vietnam along the seventeenth parallel; this left colonial route 9, which was the only road connecting Laos to the outside world and which provided the economic link between Vientiane and Saigon, in the territory allocated to the South.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, even from the time of the Geneva Conference, China devoted a good deal of effort to keeping Laos and Cambodia neutral; in so doing it was acting more in keeping with its traditional policy of keeping Indochina fragmented than with that of showing solidarity with other Socialist states. After the second Geneva Conference of 1961-1962 China chose to maintain a neutralist government in Laos in opposition to the Pathet Lao, and in 1963 President Liu Shao Qi in the course of an official visit to Phnom Penh, expressed Beijing's support for the neutralist policy of Prince Norodom Sihanouk. For the Chinese communists Sihanouk's neutrality was not only a guarantee that the US would not intervene but above all it was also the most suitable way of thwarting Hanoi's hegemony.

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<sup>33</sup> François Joyaux, "Réflexions sur la politique chinoise en Indochine," in P. de Beauregard et al., *La politique asiatique de la Chine*, Paris: Fondation pour les études de défense nationale, 1986, page 213. See also by the same author *La Chine et le règlement du premier conflit d'Indochine, Genève 1954*, Paris: Publication de la Sorbonne, 1979, 468 pages.