

# Souvanna Phouma Seems Optimistic on Laos Peace

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VIENTIANE, Laos, Aug. 6 — Premier Souvanna Phouma said in an interview today that he was more optimistic about the possibility of peace talks with his half-brother, Prince Souphanouvong, leader of the Pathet Lao.

The Premier indicated that his optimism was based on two factors.

The first, which he appeared to consider more important, was the failure of Prince Souphanouvong's envoy in two meet-

ings so far to raise the issue of a halt in American bombing in Laos as a precondition for peace negotiations. Previous attempts to talk peace faltered on this point.

The second factor the Prince said he found encouraging was the person of the envoy. He is Tiao Souk Vongsak, a nephew of the Queen, a prince in his own right and an important Pathet Lao personality.

The Premier considers Prince Souk Vongsak as a man empowered to carry on preliminary negotiations and not

merely the bearer of a message from Prince Souphanouvong.

In a meeting with the envoy today, Prince Souvanna Phouma asked him for a proposed agenda for a possible meeting between the two half-brothers.

The Prince tempered his optimism by stating that the envoy had restated the Pathet Lao's familiar conditions for a settlement, which include a bombing halt. The only difference is that so far the Pathet Lao appear ready to talk about peace while the bombing continues.

The Premier, looking relaxed and confident with a long cigar instead of his usual pipe, restated his willingness to reach a limited truce that would exclude the region of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, along which North Vietnamese men and supplies move south.

"As I said to the North Vietnamese ambassador some years ago already, what happens along the Ho Chi Minh Trail is something between the Vietnamese and the Americans," the Prince recalled.

If the Pathet Lao said they were ready to make peace if all bombing, including on the trail stopped, the Premier said he would reply: "On condition that all Vietnamese troops leave Laos. But if they use the Ho Chi Minh Trail I cannot prevent the Americans from bombing."

Premier Souvanna Phouma said he hoped he would continue to have the support of the United States in his effort for peace, particularly since the United States wanted to withdraw its troops from South Vietnam as soon as possible.