

Exodus from Laos , Red Rule Looms
 Examiner News Service

VIENTIANE — More than 2,000 persons, including high-ranking government officials, were reported by border police to have fled across the Mekong River from Laos into Thailand yesterday as fear of a Communist takeover spread in Laos.

Premier Souvanna Phouma's coalition government formally announced that four right-wing cabinet members signed. The resignations opened the way for a takeover of cabinet control by the Communist-led Pathet Laos.

The official radio also announced that two military commanders had been replaced and the deputy commander-in-chief of the army had resigned.

All who resigned were among rightists whose ouster had been demanded by the Pathet Lao and leftist street demonstrators last week: Defense Minister Sisouk Na Champassak; Finance Minister Ngon Sannanikone; Deputy Foreign Minister Tiene Thone Chantharassy; and Deputy Public Works Minister Houmphanh Sansayngasith.

Immigration police said Chantharassy was one of those crossing the Mekong at Ahadeau, along with the commander of national military police, Col. Goun Sisoun, and the deputy leader of the neutralist faction in the Laotian government Somphe Sossavanh.

Thousands more were believed to have crossed at other towns along the river, particularly in the south where there have been anti-rightist demonstrations in the past week.

The first was a small-scale Pathet Lao military

push on Highway 13 about 65 miles north of Vientiane, which military analysts said involved about 300 men and maybe a tank or two. Rumors spread in Vientiane that a tank column and troops were heading for the capital, although Western sources said there was no evidence of this.

In the second development, students attacked the U.S. Embassy Friday with stones and hauled down the flag after demanding the withdrawal of the United States from Laos and the resignations of five top rightist ministers in the coalition government.

Many of Vientiane's 10,000-member Vietnamese community, panicked by the fall of Saigon and apprehensive about their status under a government dominated by the Pathet Lao, also have gone. So have many Chinese, who have been told their Taiwan passports will no longer be recognized.

The two ethnic communities dominated Laos' business life.

So far the Pathet Lao, who have about 2,000 troops and police in Vientiane under the terms of the 1973 cease-fire agreement, have remained silent about their plans.

Diplomats say they doubt

the Pathet Lao will attempt a military takeover, but don't rule it out.

Troops of the Vientiane or rightists faction have been ordered by Phouma not to fight.

In military developments, the Loyalist-held town of Vang Vieng, 65 miles north of Vientiane on Highway 13, remained isolated. Pathet Lao troops were in control of the road.

Loyalist troops garrisoned at Van Vinh issued a communique Friday (night) saying they would no longer take orders from the military command, only directly from the government headed by Souvanna.



NGON SANNANIKONE
 Laotian Finance Minister



NA CHAMPASAK
 Laotian Defense Minister