

Laos Premier Says Red Victory Near



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SOUVANNA PHOUMA, PREMIER OF LAOS
It is necessary to reach 'an accord with history'

'Important Changes Are Here'

Vientiane, Laos

Premier Souvanna Phouma virtually conceded yesterday that the Communist-led Pathet Lao have won the struggle for control of Laos.

He said it is necessary to look at the facts and prepare to reach "an accord with history."

If the Pathet Lao win control of Laos, the country will be the third of the U.S.-backed countries of Indochina to come under Communist control in recent weeks. Cambodia surrendered April 17 and South Vietnam on April 30.

Souvanna Phouma, a U.S.-backed neutralist who has long tried to balance the right-wing and Communist sides in Laos, told a gathering of high officials including King Sisavang Vathana that 20 years of upheavals "have clearly resulted in a new situation."

"We must stop the fighting. The war has reached an end," he said.

"Important changes have taken place which some had not expected so suddenly, but they are here," he said. "It is our great chance to preserve our country from further bloodshed which surely would take place if one continued to ignore the march of historical events."

Souvanna Phouma's speech followed the resignation of four senior rightist cabinet ministers and the removal of three top rightist generals from their posts.

This amounts to the collapse of the pro-American wing of the coalition government and leaves the Pathet Lao as the only cohesive political organization in the country.

Last night the government appealed to the populace to remain calm, denied rumors

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there would be bloodshed in Vientiane and prohibited Laotian and foreign residents from leaving the country.

The orders were issued in a broadcast by the Laotian national radio.

The directives were given under the name of the mixed security forces, the security body of the coalition government of rightists, leftists and neutralists set up under the 1973 peace accord to keep peace in the capital.

They were aimed at forestalling rumors and fears that a violent transfer of power to the Communist-led Pathet Lao was imminent.

The radio urged people to obey government orders and blamed rumors that there would be bloodshed on "certain rightist groups" who were trying to panic the population.

It said the joint security

forces in Vietiane, made up of Pathet Lao and former rightist troops, would ensure the security of the city.

Although there has been an exodus of high ranking officials associated with rightist, pro-American groups, and Vietnamese and Chinese businessmen, the city has been calm.

In the coalition government set up on the basis of the peace accords signed in Paris in February, 1973, the rightists, the Pathet Lao each were given six cabinet posts and neutralists two.

Military forces of the rightists and the Pathet Lao were assigned to different areas of the country. Vientiane and the royal capital of Luang Prabang were declared neutral. However, sporadic military clashes have occurred since April.

The announcement by the 73-year-old Souvanna amounts to his concession to his 63-year-old half-brother, Prince Souphanouvong, who heads the Pathet Lao. The Paris-educated sons of a Lao prince have differed for much of their lives over the path that Laos should take.

Both favored its independence from France after World War II, but Souvanna chose to work within the existing government for gradual change while Souphanouvong went to Hanoi to join Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh. He later founded the Pathet Lao.

Diplomats expect the Government of National Union to be continued, but the replacements for the rightists who resigned will be men of less stature and power.

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