

# LAOS CHIEF ORDERS ARMY NOT TO FIGHT

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Premier Says He Wants to  
Prevent Civil War—Big  
U.S. Withdrawal On

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VIENTIANE, Laos, May 23—

Laos's Premier said today that, in an effort to prevent a new civil war here, he had ordered right-wing Government troops not to resist when Pathet Lao forces moved into their territory.

"Why fight when we are all together?" the Premier, Prince Souvanna Phouma, said in an interview this afternoon. "We must live together side by side."

At the same time, the United States began a large-scale evacuation of aid program personnel and their dependents, using chartered Royal Air Lao jets.

## Gives Views in Interview

In the interview, the 73-year-old Prince ranged over a broad variety of subjects—his view of a socialist rather than a Communist Laos, of the continuation of the coalition Government, of his desire for continued friendly relations with the United States and, above all, the continuation of American aid.

Within the next several days,

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all 170 employees of the Agency for International Development and their dependents will have been evacuated, according to American officials, as well as most employes and dependents of the Defense Attaché's Office, which has administered military assistance.

Embassy workers and many private contract workers, including Fulbright program instructors and others not officially attached to the embassy have been told to leave on the chartered flights that will depart twice or three times a day for Bangkok.

Today, the first flight was delayed by more than five hours by demonstrators and Pathet Lao policemen who blockaded the gates of the American residence compound on the outskirts of Vientiane.

## Buses Held at Gate

Despite the personal order of the Premier that the Americans be allowed to leave, the buses that were to carry 80 of them to the airport were held up all afternoon by the soldiers at the gate.

"I give an order and it is to be obeyed," the Premier said in the interview. But he shrugged in apparent agreement that at times now, his orders are no longer being obeyed by a Pathet Lao hierarchy that is becoming increasingly independent of the coalition Government itself.

Earlier this week, a Government spokesman announced that the United States and the Laotian Government had agreed to withdraw American officials from the provincial areas and to begin negotiating a withdrawal from Vientiane as well. Today, the American chargé d'affairs, Christian A. Chapman, said that he had received orders from Washington to close down the Agency for International Development in Laos entirely "as soon as it

may possibly be done in an orderly manner."

It was on the question of unification of Laos and the preservation of a neutralist government that the Premier was most insistent.

"It is I who am the head of the Government," the Prince said, "and nothing has changed in the Government. In Washington, perhaps, they are deciding whether the Government has become Communist. But we are socialist. I, I am socialist. Everyone is socialist in Laos. Not yet Communist, but socialist."

## Pathet Lao Welcomed

His decision not to allow any more fighting between the forces of the Pathet Lao and the right-wing Government troops came after sporadic clashes north of Vientiane early this month. Late last week, when Pathet Lao forces began moving into town after town in the southern panhandle, filling the vacuum created by the flight of large numbers of right-wing officers and politicians, the remaining royalist troops welcomed the Pathet Lao with flowers and smiles.

At Savannakhet the commanding general of the military region III helped the Pathet Lao commander down from his tank as he stepped into the welcoming throng in Laos's second largest city.

It would appear, in light of the Premier's statements as well as the Pathet Lao action in the field, that the concept of territories carved out for each side, as envisioned in the accords that established the coalition Government more than a year ago, is dead.

"It is necessary at some point to have one nation, a unified country and not separate sets of territories," the Premier said.

"We must integrate the army, we must integrate the bureaucracy," he said. "That takes much time." The Prince added that perhaps in two years there would be a national

election and that he would step down as Premier.

There has been considerable speculation on the future of Prince Souvanna Phouma, who last year suffered a heart attack and who is believed remaining in office solely to keep the country together and to hold onto the coalition concept.

Today, as he talked in staccato French punctuated with jabs of a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles he held in his hand,



All Nuh

Prince Souvanna Phouma

he was forceful and energetic. Occasionally as he pondered a question he would stare off into the corner of the large living room of his villa where there were photographs of Presidents Johnson and Kennedy.

He had, he said, already named the replacements for four right-wing ministers who resigned nearly two weeks ago but was awaiting the approval of the King before announcing his decision. They were, he indicated members of the Vientiane side of the coalition, although he repeatedly avoided characterizing this as a distinctive side. The Government, he said, was no longer two-sided, but becoming one.

And, he said, what the Government particularly wanted, was continued good relations with the United States and, particularly continued American financial assistance.

The Premier said there would be continuing discussions with the United States about providing aid as it has been provided by other nations—without foreign personnel throughout Laos administering the program.

"We are prepared to have advisers within the various ministries," he said, who would oversee the application of American aid money but not the large numbers of Americans and other foreign nationals, particularly Filipinos, who work on these programs "depriving Laotians of these jobs."