

ROYAL LAOS UNITS TO GET RED AIDES

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Requests for Advisers Cited

—But This Is Disputed

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VIENTIANE, Laos, June 17—

The Royal Armed Forces of Laos have asked the Communist Pathet Lao army to supply military advisers to each of their units, from the company level up to the Defense Ministry, a high Pathet Lao official said today.

He was Dr. Kham Seng Kheo Sengstith, right-hand man of the information minister in the joint Vientiane-Pathet Lao Government.

Dr. Kham Seng Kheo, a French-educated physician who is considered the prime mover of the Information Ministry, said the request by the Vientiane half of the Government would be granted and would be the initial step toward the unification of the armies that fought against each other until the 1973 peace accord, and have on occasion clashed since then.

Asked whether the Pathet Lao forces would receive Royal Army advisers in a similar spirit of unity, Dr. Kham Seng Kheo appeared surprised and said, "it isn't necessary."

"We don't need them," he said. "We are patriots. They are not yet patriots, but they are beginning to realize that they were puppets of the reactionaries and imperialists and committed crimes against the people."

Other Requests Cited

The official said the decision to request Pathet Lao advisers had been made at a conference of senior officers of the army that the United States used to support and had the approval of Premier Souvanna Phouma. He said meetings of Royal Army units elsewhere had approved similar motions.

Dr. Kham Seng Kheo said troops at Muang Phon-Hong, north of Vientiane, for instance, had adopted a resolution begging the people to pardon them for fighting against the "patriotic forces," meaning the Pathet Lao. They said according to the official, that they had been misled by the American imperialists and their

Laotian lackeys and pledged from now on to collaborate with the patriotic forces.

In another part of the Information Ministry, a high official representing "the Vientiane side," as the former enemies of the Pathet Lao are called, said when informed of the reported request for Pathet Lao advisers, "we didn't ask for that."

The official said he thought the officers' conference had merely asked "the other side" to send senior commanders to discuss with the Royal general staff the prospects of unifying the two armies.

But he shrugged and made clear that if the Pathet Lao said that such advisers had been asked for, there would indeed be such advisers.

The prevalent attitude in Vientiane, a town that throughout the war had sided with the government, is most often expressed in a slightly vulgar French idiom for "all is lost." This phrase was heard time and again in conversations with high officials not dropped from their posts—who speak more prudently when they speak officially — with former officials already dismissed after the swift and bloodless Communist seizure of power last month, with Laotians of no discernible political persuasion, with holders of French passports who have spent their lives in this region and with foreigners of diverse nationalities.

The phrase also expresses the feeling in the American official community, a shadow now of its former state. Among American diplomats, preoccupied with the departures of many colleagues and packing their household goods and those of Americans already departed, if they have not been ransacked or "confiscated," there is bitterness over the collapse without resistance of the side the United States supported for so long.

Among Americans, the reputation of Prince Souvanna Phouma, whom officials deplored 20 years ago as a pro-Communist neutralist only to praise him later . . . many years as a bulwark against Communism, appears to be declining once more. One American said testily that in a meeting earlier this month with Assistant Secretary of State Philip C. Habib, the Premier repeated stock Pathet Lao arguments.

Many Laotians, however, consider the personality and reputation of the Premier, however weak recent events have left him, as the only remaining obstacle to full Communist control over Laos. But they do not believe there is anything Prince Souvanna Phouma can actively do.

"We don't initiate, we don't create, we don't imagine—we suffer events to take place," an official close to the Prince said sadly.