

# How Pathet Lao Is Taking Over in

## Na Sai Village, Laos

The village police chief was nervous behind the microphone yesterday as a tropical sun blazed down on 700 people who came to hear his confession.

"The imperialist Ameri-

cans taught me how to be rich, how to get money from the villagers, how to go to the night club," he muttered under the gaze of rifle-carrying pro-Communist Pathet Lao soldiers.

"I am wrong . . . I am the

running dog of the imperialist Americans and a reactionary."

The police chief, in his 40s, was not shot. In the end he walked away, although uncertain about the future.

This drama is going on all

over Laos, an Indochinese kingdom rapidly tilting to the control of the leftist Pathet Lao.

Theoretically the Pathet Lao is just one element in a coalition government — the National Union — formed of

## Laos

rightist, leftist and neutralist elements.

But CIA-backed rightists who fought the Pathet Lao for years are fleeing the country now as the Pathet Lao units expand their influ-

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## PATHET LAO

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ence throughout the country.

The takeover, village by village, is peaceful. Pathet Lao forces are moving in to occupy farms, buildings and other property once owned by rightists or the powerful U.S. aid program now in its last days in Laos. The Vientiane side is not resisting the encroachment.

The new rulers of Na Sai, an agriculturally rich district just a few miles from the Mekong River, are farmers handpicked by the Pathet Lao. But the Pathet Lao will be making all the major decisions.

Many members of the audience, bored and boiling in the shadeless yard of the Na Sai district headquarters ten miles northwest of Vientiane, tried to walk away when the rally began to fail.

Some muttered that they had better things to do, that it was the rainy season now

and there was farm work to attend to. But an early departure wasn't in the script.

"Brothers, come back: The ceremony is not over," blared a sound truck speaker. "Just one more speech."

Na Sai district is the closest to Vientiane to "rise up," as the Pathet Lao like to say, and throw out Vientiane-side functionaries who are branded as "corrupt, decadent" and "lackeys of the Americans."

One of Na Sai's new rulers said:

"We have to denounce these reactionaries without pity. . . When we asked for justice they said we opposed them. Even when we attained a high level of education we could not be officials. They tried to confiscate our rice fields and took money from the villagers to buy cars. The government gave us fertilizer for the fields and they intercepted it and sold it to us."

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