

USIS Library in Laos Returned to Americans

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Washington Post Foreign Service

VIENTIANE, July 4—Occupation of the U.S. Information Service library by anti-American demonstrators ended today when the Laotian Foreign Ministry, responding to an official U.S. protest, asked the student demonstrators and Pathet Lao soldiers to leave. They had occupied the library since Saturday.

The break in the diplomatic impasse is seen as an indication that the Laotian government, which is now controlled by the pro-Communist Pathet Lao, wants to maintain diplomatic relations with the United States. The embassy feared that the occupations and petty harassments going on since May would continue until the embassy would have to evacuate. This last U.S. embassy in Indochina has been pared down from a staff of more than 800 persons two months ago to 22.

In a note to the embassy this afternoon, the Laotian government recognized the U.S. right to run the information service as long as it did not make propaganda detrimental to the "tranquility" of the country or the national culture.

The fate of two other embassy properties, a housing compound and a maintenance supply depot that have also been occupied by demonstrators since Saturday, is still in doubt.

A Foreign Ministry official accompanied the acting USIS director here, Lawrence Daks, to the library, and the soldiers and students left shortly afterwards. Yesterday, after the government announced that the occupation was at an end, Daks found the library still filled with protestors, and a Pathet Lao soldier threatened his life if he did not leave.

Daks tore up a hand-painted sign on the front gate which said that the last day of the American imperialists and the CIA had come. The demon-

strators had not destroyed anything and, except for a few pop bottles left around, no damage was apparent.

Student demonstrations began in May against the U.S. Agency for International Development mission, which was heavily involved with running the war in Laos before the cease-fire of 1973. The Americans agreed to dismantle the AID mission and turn over its property to the Laotian government by June 30. Despite the closing of the AID mission, the students occupied the USIS library and other installations on June 30. The Americans saw this as a sign that the amputation of the AID mission was not going to be enough to save the American presence here. The students took the view that since the USIS was involved in the war the building ought to be handed over to the Laotian government.

The Americans protested Monday and the Cabinet took up the question Wednesday. It is understood that Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, a neutralist, said that if the government wanted the Americans to leave it should say so rather than letting the situation continue to deteriorate. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Phoumi Vongvichit, a Pathet Lao member, is understood to have affirmed the right of the Americans to run their information service, just as the French and Soviets were allowed to maintain their cultural centers.

The left-wing Pathet Lao have rapidly taken power here since the fall of Vietnam, and most of the right-wing ministers have left the country. The Americans wanted an indication of Pathet Lao intentions on continued diplomatic relations. The Americans now believe they have an indication that the Pathet Lao want the embassy to remain.

At a July 4 reception, diplomats noticed that the Pathet

Lao were well-represented and appeared friendly.

Laotian Rightists

To Be Reeducated

Reuter

VIENTIANE, July 4—All senior officials of the former rightist government side have been ordered to take a one-month reeducation course starting next week, Laotian Interior Ministry sources said today.

About 170 officials of the rightist cause have been told to attend a seminar in a nearby teachers' college.

Seminars have already begun in some parts of the country and are to include all rightist civil servants, soldiers and policemen.

News services reported these other Indochinese developments:

The North Vietnamese news agency announced an agreement June 30 under which Iraq will supply free oil to South Vietnam, where a fuel crisis is complicating economic recovery efforts. No details were offered on the agreement, signed by Foreign Minister Nguyen Thi Binh during her eight-day visit to Baghdad.

• In Geneva, U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim said both North and South Vietnam are seeking full U.N. membership. The moves appear to indicate the two have no plans for early reunification. Waldheim told a news conference he had been sounded out by representatives in informal talks at Mexico City and Geneva and said he is waiting for "formal applications."

• Thousands of Bangkok students marked the American independence day with peaceful demonstrations against the presence of U.S. troops in Thailand. They confined their rallies to their campuses to prevent trouble.

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