

WXP Post

DEC 8 1975

Pathet Lao Bans 'Backward' Ways

By H.D.S. Greenway

Washington Post Foreign Service

VIENTIANE, Dec. 7—Laos' new pro-Communist leaders have unveiled a "program of action" calling for removal of all "reactionary novels, books, newspapers" and abolition of "backward customs . . . that jeopardize and damage production."

The program, proposed last week at a secret National Congress of People's Representatives by the new prime minister, Kaysone Phoumvihan, maps out the course of the social revolution the Communists hope to achieve here.

The new People's Democratic Republic of Laos, created at the Dec. 2 meeting, will pursue the "elimination of the slavish, decadent, imperialist culture and the building of a national, democratic and progressive culture," the program says.

The pro-Communist Pathet Lao has stressed nationalism and the theme that Lao culture has been the victim of various imperialist masters culminating with the Americans. At last week's congress, held on the basketball court of a former American school gymnasium

a few miles outside Vientiane, the Pathet Lao sought to put an end to that.

Radio and newspapers will be "readjusted" to encourage the "propagandizing of victories and the denunciation of enemy schemes and tricks," the program says. All "reactionary novels, books, newspapers or pictures that arouse the imperialist ways of sexual passion" are to be done away with.

In addition to removing decadent Western ways, the program also promises to abolish "backward customs and traditions that jeopardize and damage production, health and the people's living conditions." Since the traditional Lao way of life has never been oriented toward "production" in the industrious Communist sense of the word, the Communists may have their work cut out for them.

Tourism is to be encouraged, the action program says, and students will be sent to foreign countries to build up a supply of experts and specialists to help Laos build the new society.

Buddhist monks are promised freedom to study their religion and to preach, but the program says that

religious and private schools will be supervised and redirected so they can "correctly follow" the direction of national education.

In the area of foreign affairs, the program denounces all efforts by American and Thai "imperialists" to subvert the new government, but at the same time promises to "struggle to demand" that the United States contribute aid to Laos in order to heal "the wounds of war."

According to the program, the government, administration and laws of the country are to be overhauled and the political reeducation programs, which Laotians have been asked to attend since May, will be continued and strengthened.

There is hardly a family in Vientiane that has not had someone attend reeducation sessions. Civil servants and police officers from the old government have been taken off to the far northeastern province of Sam Neua, where the Pathet Lao had its headquarters during the war. Some have been gone for five months and none has yet returned, but there is no evidence that any have been harmed. The program ap-

pears to consist of hard manual labor along with political indoctrination.

The action program says officials of the old government will be used in the new government once their political reeducation is complete.

On the economic side, the action program emphasizes self-reliance and an effort to improve agriculture and forestry. Tribal people will no longer be allowed to roam the hills practicing the slash-and-burn agriculture that has damaged the forests of Southeast Asia. They will be encouraged "to settle down in certain areas," the program says.

This may cause political problems, for the hill peoples of this region have always resisted attempts to end their nomadic way of life. They resist regimentation from any quarter, making it easy for the Americans to recruit some hill peoples to fight the Communists during the war.

Laos, according to the action program, hopes to cooperate with Vietnam in building a highway to the South China Sea. This would lessen the landlocked nation's dependence on Thailand.

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