

# Early Truce Pact in Laos Appears Likely

NYTimes FEB 2 1973

By MALCOLM W. BROWNE

Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, Feb. 1—Prince Souvanna Phouma, the Laotian Premier, returned here this evening from three days of talks in India and Thailand, saying both countries had promised economic aid to Laos after the war.

It appeared likely today that a cease-fire in Laos would be concluded soon, although probably not within the 15 days following the formal Vietnam cease-fire, as had been predicted by Prince Souvanna Phouma.

The first in a series of private talks between the Vientiane Government and the Communist-led Pathet Lao was held here yesterday, and informants said the session paved the way for rapid progress in the next few days.

Phoumi Vongvichit, one of

the highest-ranking Pathet Lao leaders, will arrive in Vientiane shortly and will presumably have full authority to negotiate and conclude a cease-fire as well as a political settlement of the war.

Negotiating teams of the two sides reportedly agreed yesterday to name subcommissions to deal separately with the military and political issues. This in itself was a major breakthrough because, previously, the Pathet Lao had insisted that the military and political aspects of the talks could not be separated.

Prince Souvanna Phouma said he returned from his trip "satisfied" after conversations with the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi of India and Premier Thanom Kittikachorn of Thailand.

He said he had discussed the future relations of Laos with

India and Thailand, particularly as they might affect maintaining the peace in Laos.

Laos borders on Thailand, and the Thai Government has provided thousands of "volunteer" troops paid by the United States in fighting Communist forces in Laos. Thai leaders remain extremely apprehensive about the possibility of an aggressive Communist presence along their country's borders with Laos.

India is chairman of the old three-nation International Control Commission on Laos, which will continue to have peace-keeping responsibility here after a cease-fire.

## Joint Border Posts Planned

Thai officials announced earlier today that joint border posts manned by Thai and Laotian forces would be set up along both banks of the Mekong River, which separates the two countries, presumably to curb traffic across the river by Communist agents.

Prince Souvanna Phouma said he had been promised help by both Thailand and India in rebuilding the Laotian economy.

Asked about the one-day visit to Laos that Vice President Agnew plans to make on Saturday, Prince Souvanna Phouma said he supposed that Mr. Agnew would inform him about the latest developments in Vietnam.

But discussions are likely to center, he said, on the role of American economic aid to Laos after the war. The Vice President is scheduled to stay in Laos for only a few hours.

Pathet Lao and Vientiane negotiators plan to hold their second closed meeting tomorrow or Saturday, still under the leadership of relatively low ranking delegates on each side.

Fears were expressed in some quarters today that continued American bombing of Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese strongpoints in Laos could sour the Communist negotiating attitude here.

There were also fears that the rightists in the Vientiane Government and elsewhere in the country were becoming restive and might cause real difficulties for the negotiations.

Theoretically, Prince Souvanna Phouma's government since 1962 has consisted of rightists, his neutralists led by him, and the Pathet Lao. Actually, the Pathet Lao soon withdrew and have refused all requests to rejoin the Government.