

(Separate article by William Beecher pasted separately.)

## Laos Fails to Reach Pact; U.S. Steps Up Air Raids

### Issues Dividing 2 Sides Appear to Harden— Americans Faulted

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VIENTIANE, Laos, Feb. 15—

The Vientiane Government and the Communist-led Pathet Lao failed today to reach agreement on a Laotian cease-fire, and there were indications that the issues between them had grown more serious.

Prince Souvanna Phouma, the Laotian Premier, said last week that a cease-fire would go into effect at the latest by today. But his prediction has been thwarted by an evident hardening of the positions of both sides.

"It's all your fault," a principal Government negotiator, speaking of the Americans, said today. "We had worked out an agreement which was virtually ready until the Americans began insisting on all kinds of other things. Now, the Pathet Lao have dug in their heels, demanding all kinds of other new things—even guarantees that American bases in Thailand will be closed down."

#### American Aides Silent

American officials themselves refuse to disclose the smallest detail about the present Laotian situation.

But in the meantime, William H. Sullivan, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and a former ambassador to Laos, who accompanied Henry A. Kissinger to Hanoi, arrived here this afternoon for a 24-hour stay, including a dinner at which Prince Souvanna Phouma was to be the main guest.

The Laotian Premier is be-

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lieved by any of his associates to be in favor of a quick cease-fire, but under enormous pressure from Washington and also from the Pathet Lao.

General agreement had reportedly been reached between him and the Pathet Lao on a vaguely worded cease-fire document that would presumably have skirted most of the really important political issues in the interest of stopping the fighting quickly.

#### Issues Worrying Americans

Among a number of issues on which the Americans are now reportedly seeking clarification is the exact role of the old International Control Commission as the Laotian peace-keeping agency. According to the best available accounts, major unresolved issues include the following:

¶The two sides have not agreed whether Prince Souvanna Phouma neutralists or the pro-Pathet Lao neutralists are the real neutralists. The decision on this issue will determine which side controls a future coalition government.

¶The Pathet Lao side refuses to accept the present Government as anything more than the administration of the city of Vientiane.

¶The composition of a future coalition government remains in dispute.

¶The Pathet Lao side insists that the United States be named as the aggressor in a peace accord. Vientiane is willing to label both North Vietnam and the United States as foreign forces in Laos, but not the United States alone.

¶The Pathet Lao side now insists on assurances that United States bases in neighboring Thailand will be closed.

#### Fear of Laotian Rightists

Meanwhile, the neutralists loyal to Prince Souvanna Phouma are expressing increased anxiety about the Laotian right, which includes many military leaders. The right has grown more restive each day, complaining that American pressure on the Premier toward a speedy settlement could result in a de facto victory for the Pathet Lao.

And the fighting continues, although apparently at a reduced level from the intense combat of recent weeks. Despite an official news blackout on military activity, Gen. Thongphan-Knoksy, the Laotian armed forces' spokesman, said today that the military situation had markedly improved during the last week, with the recapture of several strongpoints from the Communists.

He listed Government casualties during the week as 48 dead, 144 wounded and 28 missing. Several hundred North Vietnamese and "Laoviets," as the army has begun calling the Pathet Lao, were said to have been killed, principally by air strikes.

The Laotian spokesman said that American bombers were still supporting his Government's forces where required.