

BRCS

1. Negotiations in Vietiane between the Laotian government and the Pathet Lao, which commenced on 1 August, appear to be moving rapidly toward settlement and thusfar the Communists appear to have had things pretty much their own way.

A. 9 August press reports state that the Royal Government has agreed to formation of a "coalition" government following nationwide "supplemental" elections.

B. These elections will probably follow the royal Premier's suggested plan--to up the number of assembly seats from 39 to 50-60 (ie elect 11-21 new members).

2. On 5 August, a joint communique, reporting the progress to that date, clearly established this trend. It stated the two parties had agreed:

A. That Laos should adhere to a foreign policy of neutrality.

B. Laos should establish "friendly contacts" with neighboring countries.

C. Laos should refrain from military commitments to foreign countries.

D. The Royal Government has agreed to inform the Laotian people that they have freedom "to write, publish, travel, form political parties and to seek office."

E. The Government has agreed to integrate a yet-to-be-determined number of Pathet Lao military personnel into the 25,000 man Royal Army and still other Pathets into the civil administration.

F. The Pathets will permit the restoration of royal authority over the disputed provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly (map).

G. The Pathets will place their military forces under royal command.

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3. Throughout the negotiations, Premier Souvanna Phouma has exhibited unbridled confidence in his ability to maintain the upper hand.

A. He has assured American officials that he has not made any "real" concessions to the Communists.

B. He has indicated that he intends to be "tough" in working out details of the final agreement.

C. For example, he intends to take one or two thousand Pathet Lao personnel for indoctrination and other screening preparatory to integration into government service, but "greatly reduce" their number in the process.

D. The impending settlement will certainly improve Pathet Lao prospects for internal subversion and will probably clear the way for closer relations between Laos and the Sino-Soviet Bloc.

A. The Pathets will have liquidated their unrewarding guerrilla efforts in the remote and sparsely populated north (120,000) in exchange for ^{potential} nationwide influence.

B. The American ambassador in Vientiane comments that the communique appears to have given the Pathets what they wanted, exhausted the government's troops and placed high reliance on Pathet good faith.

C. Souvanna has stated that, with a settlement, he would have no further reason to postpone his trip to Peiping (he may depart as soon as 19 Aug).

D. Under the circumstances, it appears that Laos will feel increasingly compelled to react favorably to overtures from the USSR, Communist China and North Vietnam for the establishment of diplomatic and economic relations.

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