

Letter to Aust. P.M.

24.3.61

"Herald" 3.6.59 - (Mr. Dennis Warner) - "Until a few months ago painless Communist acquisition of Laos seemed a near certainty. The Lao Hak Sat Party, the political front for the Pathet Lao participating in the coalition Government, threatened to overwhelm all opposition at the General Election."

"Herald" 26.2.59 - (Richard Hughes) - "The Pathet Lao won sweeping democratic successes at the ballot box and that response was angry and effective ... if hardly in accordance with the high st principles of democracy. Chief of Staff Rathikoun made it clear that any democratic Communist expansion would be followed with a military coup."

"Age" 19.12.60 - "There is only one grass-roots political movement in Laos, and that is the left wing Pathet Lao."

THEN THE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT WAS DISMISSED. Pathet Lao representatives of the people in Parliament including Prince Souphannouvong were placed under house arrest. A new Government was formed under Phoumi Sananikone.

The first job of the Government of Phoumi Sananikone was to renounce the Geneva Agreement and its obligations and to restrict the work of the International Supervisory Commission, and finally to dismiss the Commission.

"Age" 19.11.60 - "The U.S. has pumped 300,000,000 dollars into Laos since 1954 to keep the strategic Buddhist Kingdom in the anti-communist camp."

"Age" 28.4.60 - "The U.S. strategy in Laos, as in other Asian countries such as Thailand, Sth. Vietnam and Sth. Korea, is to secure in power an anti-communist Government ... The U.S. intervention is to aid development as a safeguard against democratically elected communist or left wing governments. This looks good on paper, but there are two snags. One is that the safest anti-communist government is not necessarily the one dedicated to an awakening of the nations human and national resources. Mildly radical elements are sacrificed to the anti-communist cause and democracy is forgotten in the corrupt scramble for power, and so much U.S. support is given to military security that the name of America and the West is associated with force rather than with the humanitarian values the military power is supposed to secure."

The added difficulty is that America in a country means a heightening of tension.

These conditions caused Captain Kong Lee to carry through a coup-d'etat and invite Prince Souvanna Phouma to assume the reins of Govt. with the object of ending all foreign intervention, corruption and pursue a policy of strict neutrality.

"Age" 17.8.60 - "On Aug. 8, Captain Kong Lee staged a coup and obtained a quorum in the National Assembly."

The Laotian coup d'etat committee stated: "U.S. intervention against Laos has been increasingly intensified. Americans are stationed everywhere This is keeping our country in a state of decline wantonly and brutally killing the people, arrest and imprisonment of Laotian patriots ... and Laotian troops ordered to suppress and persecute peace loving compatriots, burn their houses and granaries."

The Committee's new policy is: "Eliminate the evils of bribery ... respect the democratic system and human rights ... immediately ABOLISH FOREIGN MILITARY BASES; oppose foreign intervention drive foreign troops out of Laos, pursue a policy of neutrality and establish friendly and good neighbourly relations with all countries."

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This policy was supported by a mass meeting of 15,000 at Vientiane. After this statement the New York Herald Tribune Aug. 11, stated

"If Kong Lae consolidates his revolution, a neutralist wedge will have been driven right through the S.E.A.T.O. area America is hardly likely to allow themselves to be EVICTED by a new regime."

Captain Kong Lae called on Prince Souvanna Phouma to become Prime Minister Prince Souvanna Phouma proclaimed neutrality for Laos and set up a "Peace and neutrality committee."

The Government's policy supported by the majority of Laotians was overthrown by Nosaven who is supported by the U.S. to the last bootlace and placed in power. Prince Boun Oum "who has been established in power by the American backed General Phoumi Nosavan" - "Age 20.12.60."

AUSTRALIAN TROOPS MAY BE INVOLVED

We note with concern "Age" 21.3.61 - "Australian Troops could, if the necessary political decisions were taken, by S.E.A.T.O., begin moving into Laos within a matter of hours, Vice Admiral Sir Roy Dowling said today." Sir Roy Dowling goes on to say, "As far as military people are concerned, the Laos situation is serious and we are crossing our fingers and hoping a solution will be found."

It is precisely this solution that we are concerned about.

The Governments of both Laos and Cambodia have called for a fourteen nation Geneva like conference to solve the problems of Laos. This Conference is backed by Burma, U.S.S.R., China and other countries.

The Australian Peace Council supports the idea of calling 14 nations together in conference to preserve peace in Laos, indeed the peace of the whole world.

We urge you, Mr. Prime Minister, that your deliberations in Bangkok will be guided by the principle of a just and peaceful solution with no intervention by S.E.A.T.O. in the internal affairs of South East Asia which would certainly involve Australia.

Yours faithfully,

AUSTRALIAN PEACE COUNCIL

(Signed) Rev. F.J. Hartley
Joint Hon. Sec.

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