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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP

INTELLIGENCE REPORT

COUNTRY French Indo China - Siam

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SUBJECT Opinions Expressed by a Native Leader on the Current Situation in Laos and Vietnam

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SUPPLEMENT

1. Tao Don, (leader of the Peoples' Party of Laos), writes that the French continue to use a strong hand against the Vietnamese and show no signs of discontinuing this policy. Lao youths are recruited as soldiers and are sent to Cambodia and Vietnam. Many others emigrated to Siam to escape conscription as they did not want to fight their friends the Vietnamese and the Khmers. Recruiting and conscription are administered by the military, the same ones who collaborated with the Japanese.
2. General discontent is spreading daily in Laos because the French partisans among the Laos are deceived by the failure of the French to fulfill their promises and because of Prince Savang's actions, which are always according to French wishes, even to the detriment of his own people. These actions have but one goal: the throne. (Washington comment: Prince Savang Vatana is the profligate son of the King of Luang Prabang and is the present Prime Minister of the incumbent Lao government. He has in succession collaborated with the Japanese, with the Free Laos and with the French.)
3. In Bangkok the Lao princes are becoming more and more dictatorial. Prince Souphanavong works against Tao Oon and Tieng Sirikhan (Siamese Deputy Minister of the Interior) and Prince Petsarath believes everything his brother Souphanavong tells him. Both princes hope to achieve the independence of Laos with the aid of the Vietnamese and are now attempting to prepare the people to send them from Siam to Laos. The princes oppose Tao Oon because they believe he is working in the interests of Siam, but have no proof of what they say. Vietnamese troops have entered Laos from Annam at Kiang Khouang (19-19:103-02), Sam Neua (20-28:104-02) and Tehepone (16-41:106-14). Other points in Laos will possibly be occupied by Vietnamese soldiers.
4. At the present time the situation in Laos is as follows:
 - a. Prince Savang works for the French while aspiring to the throne.
 - b. The people of Laos who have remained in Laos are against him, but the French support him against the people.

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- c. The people of Laos await with impatience the return of the Free Laos.
 - d. There are two factions of Free Laos: the princes and the people. Among the princes only Souphanavong maintains his individuality, but he leans too heavily on Annam. He has the characteristics of the Annamese. He is a partisan of the struggle to the death. He does not know Lao mentality which is peaceful and asks only to remain tranquil.
5. Prince Souvana Phomma tried to make contact with the French in an attempt to reach an agreement to reestablish the French Protectorate over Laos with Petsarath as King. Petsarath waits and sees. Between these two brothers, Souphanavong's policies seem to be in the ascendancy, because Souphanavong was able to present Souvana Phomma with a secret pact with the Annamese. However, Souvana Phomma does not abandon hope of reaching an agreement with the French so as to maintain a balance of power. The three princes, who are brothers, do not appear to be on very good terms with each other.
 6. The mass of the Free Laos, of whom Phya Kam Mao is the leader, made contact with Laos remaining in their country. The Free Laos hate no one and desire only the integral independence of their country. They are sympathetic with the Vietnamese but not to the point of abandoning Laos to their domination. Neither do they want a revolution only to change kings. They wish to create a situation where no one will in the future have the power to cause as much damage as Savang has done with his Modus Vivendi with the French. Free Laos want an agreement with the French on a solid basis which would prepare them for independence in a period not to exceed five years.
 7. Petsarath and Souphanavong are now trying to exert political pressure on Tao Oon and Phya Kam Mao. They are using princes to contact Khmers and Burmans, but the latter always come to Tao Oon. Tao Oon is afraid of one thing: that when the French desire to enter into conversations with the Laos they will address themselves solely to Petsarath and Souvana Phomma, who would accept any conditions just so they have the throne. If this came to pass, another revolution would occur in Laos. It appears that the French would be ready to remove Savang from the throne to the advantage of Petsarath. This concerted treason of the French and the princes is more to be feared because of the policy of the United States; the United States still need the French for their policy in Europe. If this hypothesis is correct, the dreams of the Free Laos will be destroyed and it will be very unfortunate for several million inhabitants of south Asia.
 8. Germaine Krull (French ex-war correspondent in Bangkok with leftist sympathies) works actively for the Free Lao cause and has won the sympathy of the United Press correspondent, Miss Emily Brown. Germaine has come to hate Prince Souphanavong.

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