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SOUPHANOUVONG COMMENTS ON LPLA 'VICTORIES,' POW ISSUE

AFTONBLADET Interview

PATHET LAO NEWS AGENCY (Clandestine) in English 0630 GMT 11 Apr 71 D

[Text] Sam Neua April 11 (KPL)--Prince Souphanouvong, chairman of the Lao Patriotic Front Central Committee, has granted an interview to Erik Eriksson, correspondent of the Swedish paper AFTONBLADET on the great victory won recently by the Lao patriotic forces on the (Highway 9) front. Following are the questions and answers:

Question 1--How do you evaluate the importance of the recent victory of the Lao patriotic forces in defeating the U.S.-Saigon invasion of southern Laos?

Answer 1--By conducting the operation "Dewey Canyon II" (later dubbed "Lam Son 719") against the Highway 9 area in southern Laos with over 20,000 U.S. and Saigon puppet troops as reserve force on the other side of the border under the cover of massive U.S. Air Force and artillery logistic support, the U.S. imperialists and (their henchmen) hoped they could save the "Vietnamization of the war" plan in South Viet Nam from bankruptcy. This was also aimed at weakening the Indochinese peoples' war of resistance against U.S. aggression, for national salvation and change the war situation in Indochina to their advantage. They wanted to test the effectiveness of the Nixon doctrine on using Asians to fight Asians, and Indochinese to fight Indochinese in the interest of the neocolonialist policy of the U.S.

The U.S.-Saigon operation in southern Laos has ended in complete defeat. The Lao patriotic forces and people, with the close cooperation of the fraternal armies and peoples of South Viet Nam and Cambodia and enjoying the assistance of the people of the D.R.V.N. have won complete victory. The southern Laos exploit bears a very important significance. It is the biggest victory ever known in the history of the Lao people's resistance to imperialist aggression; we have wiped out tens of thousands of enemy troops, seized or destroyed a larger quantity of war materials than in any previous military campaign, foiled all tactics of the enemy and caused them to fail to attain any objective. The Lao patriotic forces and people have firmly defended the liberation zone, proved their strength, and pushed ahead their resistance in all fields. This success of strategic significance has opened bright prospects for our war of resistance against U.S. aggression.

It has upset the U.S. strategic design in Laos and helped drive the U.S. and its quislings on all other fronts in Indochina into a more serious passive and losing position. It is also a hard blow dealt at the Nixon doctrine and the "Vietnamization of the war" policy, as well as the neocolonialist formula "puppet army plus maximum U.S. air and logistic support".

It can be said that this victory is a common victory of the three Indochinese peoples. It is the victory of the solidarity, combat coordination, mutual support and assistance of the Indochinese peoples in their resistance to the common enemy--the U.S. imperialist aggressors.

For all efforts of the Nixon clique to hide their defeats, there is no doubt that our great victory in southern Laos will affect the political situation in the U.S., and strongly stimulate the progressive forces in the U.S. to stand up against the policy of war and aggression pursued by the Nixon administration and to demand Nixon to quickly get American troops out of the Indochina war.

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Question 2--Do you think the U.S. will escalate its war in Laos?

Answer 2--The U.S. imperialists, stubborn and bellicose by nature, still have not renounced their aggressive schemes. They are plotting to massively dispatch Thai combat forces and Saigon puppet troops to Laos to coordinate with the rightist army and the C.I.A.-commanded Vang Pao "special forces" in new military adventures. Tens of thousands of Thai troops are now present in Laos. Many other Thai units have been mustered along the Thailand-Laos border, ready to enter and fight in Laos.

The Lao patriotic forces and people are resolved to heighten further their vigilance and get ready to smash all new military adventures of the U.S. and its stooges.

Question 3--Since April 1970, the cooperation between the Indochinese countries has strengthened. How is this cooperation at the present time?

Answer 3--In the light of the joint declaration of the Indochinese Peoples' Summit Conference in April 1970, the combat solidarity and mutual support and assistance among the three Indochinese peoples have strengthened with every passing day. The southern Lao victory, as I have said, is a splendid expression of that close relation. Each step of war escalation taken by the U.S. in Indochina will certainly make the Indochinese peoples unite still more closely, struggle more powerfully, and deal harder blows at the enemy.

Question 4--What is the policy of the Lao Patriotic Front towards captured enemy soldiers and American pilots?

Answer 4--The L.P.F. has made public a concrete policy towards enemy soldiers or agents captured or giving themselves up including U.S. All the American pilots engaged in bombings or toxic chemical sprays on Lao territory are considered criminals and enemies of the Lao people. But, once captured, they have been treated in accordance with the humane policy of the L.P.F.

The question of enemy captives including U.S. pilots will be settled immediately after the U.S. stops its intervention and aggression in Laos first and foremost, ends the bombing of Laos territory.

Question 5--The U.S. bombing level in Laos has of late increased considerably. What damage have the bombings caused? What difficulties have the people in the bombed areas met in attending to the wounded following air strikes? What is the present economic situation in the liberated zone in view of these bombing raids?

Answer 5--In defiance of all international law, the U.S. imperialists have since May 1964 employed its air forces to attack the Lao territory in a most barbarous manner. They have also spread various kinds of toxic chemicals on vast liberated areas. The U.S. has committed heinous crimes against the Lao population. Many hospitals, pagodas and temples, and schools...have been destroyed. Many villages and district towns have been razed to the ground. In one district town, hundreds of civilians, mostly old persons, women and children, were massacred in a U.S. bombing raid. You have visited several places in the liberated zone and could see many villages, district towns and provincial capitals destroyed or damaged, and many innocent civilians maimed by U.S. bombs and shells and noxious chemicals.

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Over recent months, U.S. attacks in Laos have been brought to an unprecedented level. Each day, U.S. aircraft including B-52s have released an average of more than 3,000 tons of bombs on Lao territory. In other words, the destructive power of the bombs released on Laos in a week is equal to that of an atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945.

In spite of the losses and difficulties they have caused to our people in the liberated zone, U.S. bombs and shells can in no way shake their fighting will and high determination. With the spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance and the spirit of self-reliance and the great and all-round support from the fraternal countries, the people in the liberated zone have overcome all difficulties and stepped up production in the light of the practical conditions of each region. You can see for yourselves the statistics on economic building and cultural development in the liberated zone already published in the newspapers and documents of the L.P.F. This you could have also seen in the activity of a number of economic establishments you have visited.

Question 6--Some papers have speculated on the possibility of the U.S. using tactical nuclear weapons in southern Laos. Do you have any comments on this matter?

Answer 6--The time when the U.S. could threaten mankind with its "nuclear bogus" has definitely gone. The U.S. no longer has the monopoly of nuclear weapons. If the U.S. war maniacs recklessly use nuclear weapons, be it only tactical nuclear weapons, in an attempt to stave off their defeats, this will be an act of suicide. Certainly, he who sows the wind will reap the whirlwind.

The American people and the peace-loving people of the world will never allow the U.S. war maniacs to have things their own way. Certainly, they will rise up to stay the latter's hands and prevent their foolish acts.

Question 7--What is the L.P.F.'s stand regarding the talks with Prince Souvanna Phouma in Vientiane?

Answer 7--On March 6, 1970 the Lao Patriotic Front made public its five-point political solution for the Lao problem. That solution remains the correct basis for the settlement of the Lao issue. The L.P.F. stand is that the Lao problem must be settled by the Lao parties concerned, on the basis of the 1962 Geneva agreements on Laos and the realities of the present situation in Laos.

Over the recent past I have twice sent my envoy to Vientiane to discuss with Prince Souvanna Phouma the preparations for the meeting between our and his plenipotentiary representatives at Khang Khay aimed at creating favorable conditions for the parties concerned in Laos to meet and settle the Lao issue. But under the pressure of the U.S. and the extremists in Vientiane, Prince Souvanna Phouma has many times changed his mind, thus landing the talks into a complete deadlock.

At present, if the talks are to resume and achieve positive results, the U.S. must stop its intervention and aggression in Laos, withdraw all U.S. troops and troops of the Saigon puppets and Thai mercenaries from Laos, and end the bombing of Laos territory without setting any condition whatsoever.

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