

MARCH ii-18, 1961

A. LAOS. - Outbreak of Civil War between Right-wing and Left-wing Forces. - U.S. and Soviet Aid to Rival Governments. - Efforts to revive International Commission. - Breakdown of Laotian Political Talks.

by the Prime Minister of Laos, Prince Souvanna Phouma, for the formation of a Government of national union we accepted on Nov. 17, 1960, by the pro-Communist Pathet Lao but rejected by the right-wing "Revolutionary Committee" at Savannakhet, which opened an offensive against the Government forces on Nov. 29. Prince Souvanna Phouma escaped by air to Cambodia on Dec. 9, and after heavy fighting the rebels occupied Vientiane, the administrative capital, on Dec. 10. A right-wing Government headed by Prince Boun Oum was formed on Dec. 25, with the approval of the King and the support of the majority of the National Assembly. That section of the Army supporting Prince Souvanna Phouma, however, continued its resistance under the command of Captain Kong Lae (leader of the coup of tag, in alliance with the Pathet Lao, and established control over the northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua, part of the province of Xieng Khouang, and much of the centre and south. A rival left-wing Government was set up on Jan. 31 at Xieng Khouang, which claimed to derive its authority from Prince Souvanna Phouma (who had not resigned) and to have the support of the minority of the Assembly which had escaped from Vientiane.

The civil war in Laos gave rise to considerable international tension during December and January, the Soviet and U.S. Governments accusing each other of intervening in Laotian internal affairs by giving military aid to the opposing forces. Prince Boun Oum's Government also asserted that North Vietnamese and Soviet troops were fighting with Captain Kong's forces, but subsequently admitted that this allegation had been made for internal propaganda purposes. An Indian proposal for the revival of the International Supervisory Commission was accepted in principle by both Britain and the Soviet Union, and subsequently by the United States; its implementation, however, was delayed by differences on procedure, as the U.S.S.R. continued to recognize Prince Souvanna's Government and also favoured the reconvening of the 1954 Geneva Conference to define the Commission's

Internal developments in Laos since November, and their international repercussions, are described below under cross-headings.

Luang Prabang seized by Rebels. - Prince Souvanna Phouma's Proposals for Government of National Union. - Soviet Aid accepted by Souvanna Phouma Government.

The garrison of the royal capital, Luang Prabang, lost control of the city on Nov. 11, 1960, and its commander, Major Boupheun Insisiengmay, announced that he no longer recognized the authority of Prince Souvanna Phouma's Government. The Chief of Staff, General Ouan Rattikone, arrived in Savannakhet on Nov. 16, and announced his support for the Revolutionary Committee. These defections were believed to reflect the views of a section of the Army which supported Prince Souvanna's neutral foreign policy but opposed his negotiations with the Pathet Lao. Following these developments the area under effective Government control was virtually confined to Vientiane; the Revolutionary Committee held most of the major towns in the south and the two largest centres in the north, Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang, while the rest of Laos was controlled by the Pathet Lao or cut off by their activities.

Prince Souvanna Phouma announced on Nov. 14 that preparations were being made for the recapture of Luang Prabang, and stated that the Government could not accept any decision by King Savang Vatthana imposed on him under duress. The U.S. State Department led Prince Souvanna on Nov. 15 not to use force to regain control of Luang Prabang, as this would "further exacerbate the situation." In reply, the Prime Minister accused the U.S.A. of supporting the Pathet Lao against his Government and claimed that the Laotian question was "no longer an internal but an international problem," the solution of which depended upon the United States.

The Government announced on Nov. 17 that, as a result of the negotiations with Pathet Lao representatives which had been in progress since Oct. 11, it had been agreed (1) that

cease-fire orders should be given to all commanders of Government and Pathet Lao forces; (2) that a coalition Government should be formed as soon as possible from members of all classes and parties, including the Neo Lao Haksat (the political wing of the Pathet Lao); (3) that Laos should accept aid "without strings" not only from Britain, France, and the U.S.A., but also from China and North Vietnam and establish "good-neighbour" relations with both countries. Prince Souvanna flew to Sam Neua on the same day for talks with his half-brother, Prince Souphanouvong (the leader of the Pathet Lao). On returning to Vientiane on Nov. 20 he stated that the latter had agreed to support a neutral foreign policy and the inclusion of representatives of the "Revolutionary Committee" in the Government "if that is possible"; in a further statement on Nov. 22 he said that his Government would accept economic or financial aid from Western, Communist, or neutral countries, but would not immediately establish diplomatic relations with China or North Vietnam.

After a meeting with Mr. Alexander Abramov (the Soviet Ambassador to Laos and Cambodia), Prince Souvanna announced on Nov. 23 that the Soviet Union would fly 220,000 gallons of petrol and also sugar, milk, and flour to Vientiane from Hanoi (North Vietnam). The Soviet airlift to Vientiane, which was suffering from an acute shortage of foodstuffs because the Siamese Government had placed an embargo on goods crossing the frontier, began on Dec. 3. The U.S. State Department spokesman (Mr. Lincoln White) had announced



(Reprinted, by permission, from The Times) on Nov. 22 that the U.S. Government would continue to give military aid both to Prince Souvanna Phouma's Government and to the forces of the anti-Communist rebels under General Phoumi Nosavan.

A parliamentary delegation headed by Tiao Somsanith (president of the National Assembly) flew from Vientiane to Savannakhet on Nov. 30; on its return to Vientiane the following day it announced that the Revolutionary Committee had agreed to join an all-party Government. A large crowd of left-wing supporters demonstrated outside the Assembly and the Prime Minister's palace on Dec. 2 in protest against the proposed inclusion of right-wing representatives in the Government, but dispersed peacefully after Prince Souvanna Phouma had warned them that an all-party administration was the only alternative to civil war.

### Flight of Prince Souvanna Phouma. - Vientiane captured by Revolutionary Committee. - Government formed by Prince Boun Oum.

The Revolutionary Committee launched an offensive on Nov. 29 against the Government forces on the River Nam Ca Dinh (a tributary of the Mekong), about 100 miles east of Vientiane. They opened an intense artillery barrage which caused heavy casualties among Government troops, and for the first time since fighting began in September used helicopters to direct the firing. During the night of Dec. 6-7 rebel troops crossed the Mekong in the rear of the Government positions at several points between the Nam Ca Dinh and Paksane and between Paksane and Vientiane, while on Dec. 8 rebel paratroops were dropped within six miles of Vientiane. In two other sectors *Pathet Lao* guerrillas began operations against the Revolutionary Committee's forces; during the first week of December they were reported to have encircled Luang Prabang and, in the south, to have captured the town of Phiafay, about 30 miles south of Pakse.

The successes of the Revolutionary Committee, in contrast to their earlier defeat at Paksane in September, were attributed by the correspondents of *The Times* and *Le Monde* to the increased foreign military aid which they had received in recent weeks, especially from Siam. In a Note on Dec. 3 to the U.S. Ambassador (Mr. Winthrop G. Brown) Prince Souvanna Phouma called on the United States to stop supplying arms to the rebels immediately; he also lodged a complaint with Dr. Edouard Zellweger, the representative in Laos of the U.N. Secretary-General.

The approach of the Revolutionary Committee's forces led to a political crisis in Vientiane. Troops commanded by Colonel Khouprasith Abhay (son of the former Premier, M. Kou Abhay) entered the city on Dec. 7, and the following day fighting occurred between Colonel Khouprasith's troops and parachutists commanded by Captain Kong Lae, the latter being forced to withdraw. Prince Souvanna subsequently announced that he had appointed Colonel Khouprasith commander of the garrison in place of Captain Kong, and appealed for a cease-fire and peace negotiations between the Government, the Revolutionary Committee, and the *Pathet Lao*. On Dec. 9, however, Captain Kong Lae's troops succeeded in reoccupying the city and expelling Colonel Khouprasith's forces.

Later on Dec. 9 Prince Souvanna Phouma, together with six of his Ministers, flew to Pnom-Penh after delegating his powers to General Sounthone Pathammavong, General Ouan Rattikone's successor as Chief of Staff; on his arrival in the Cambodian capital the Prince stated that he had left Vientiane in order to avoid bloodshed.

General Sounthone Pathammavong formed a military committee in Vientiane on Dec. 10 to exercise full civil and military powers, Captain Kong Lae being second vice-president. On the following day, however, the General dissolved the committee and handed over his powers to the two Ministers remaining in the city—M. Quinim Pholsena (Information) and M. Kham Sing Gonvorarth (Public Works). M. Quinim, who is the leader of the neutralist *Santiphab* (Peace) Party and had acted as political adviser to Captain Kong, told the Press that he regarded himself as still in office, since Prince Souvanna Phouma had not resigned; he added that even if a royal decree were issued dissolving the Cabinet he would ignore it, as King Savang Vatthana was a "prisoner" of the revolutionary committee's "forces" in Luang Prabang.

Six Soviet transport planes which landed in Vientiane on Dec. 11 were reported to have unloaded four howitzers, and on the following day 20 Soviet aircraft arrived, most of them carrying artillery and ammunition. According to unconfirmed reports, M. Quinim had secretly flown to Hanoi on Dec. 10 to ask the North Vietnamese Government for military aid with which to defend the capital. Vientiane Radio claimed on Dec. 12 that the Revolutionary Committee was known to have received medium artillery, N.24-type tanks, and Sikorsky helicopters from the United States.

About 20 members of the National Assembly left Vientiane on Dec. 9 and fled to Savannakhet, where a number of other deputies had already rallied to the Revolutionary Committee. The deputies, constituting a majority of the National Assembly, voted on Dec. 11 to dissolve Prince Souvanna Phouma's Government, and on Dec. 13 called on Prince Boun Oum, head of the Revolutionary Committee, to form a new Government. The new Government, which received the King's mandate on the same day, was recognized on Dec. 14 by the United States and Siam, and subsequently by Britain and France; the Communist countries and India, however, continued to recognize Prince Souvanna Phouma as the legal Prime Minister.

The forces of the Revolutionary Committee under the command of General Phoumi Nosavan (the former Defence Minister) opened their attack on Vientiane on Dec. 13, being

joined by a section of Colonel Khouprasith's troops; they fought their way to the city centre during the afternoon, and during the following night Captain Kong Lae's troops, reinforced by *Pathet Lao* guerrillas, succeeded in driving them out. On Dec. 15 General Phoumi's troops again recaptured the city centre; and the left-wing forces withdrew to the airport, 10 miles to the west, from which they bombarded the city, but were driven out on Dec. 16. Captain Kong Lae, who retreated northwards with his troops, proclaimed himself *Chief-in-Chief* on Dec. 18 and announced that he recognized only Prince Souvanna Phouma's Government.

The battle for Vientiane largely took the form of artillery bombardments by both sides, with no hand-to-hand fighting; indiscriminate shelling of the city by Captain Kong Lae's forces continued after they had evacuated it and retreated to the airport. While only about 30 soldiers lost their lives, about 150 civilians reported to have been killed and some 320 wounded. Fires raged throughout the city; many buildings were destroyed or seriously damaged, including the U.S. and French Embassies, the Australian Legation, and the Army headquarters; and thousands of people were left homeless. Large numbers of people had previously fled across the Mekong River to Siam. Four Britons, including a doctor and a nurse, were reported to have braved the artillery fire, and the wounded in the streets, and taken them to hospital, where the French doctors constituted the sole medical staff.

Prince Boun Oum announced the membership of his Cabinet on Dec. 25 as follows: General Phoumi Nosavan—Deputy Premier and Defence; M. Khampham Panya—Foreign Affairs; M. Leuam Insisiengmay—Interior; M. Phouangphet Phanaret—Finance and Planning; M. Touby Lyfoung—Transport; M. Ngon Sananikone—Economic Affairs; M. Bouavan Norasing—Justice and Information; M. Sisouk Si Champassak—Posts and Telegraphs; M. Nhouy Abhay—Education.

In a policy statement on Dec. 20 Prince Boun Oum said that his Government would be "one of reconciliation rather than of vengeance" but that no coalition with the *Pathet Lao* could be envisaged, adding that Prince Souvanna Phouma "could be put the same sack as Souphanouvong." On his foreign policy he said that "neutrality is only a word," but that his Government did "not intend to go to war with anyone" and would continue to recognize the Soviet Union.

The new Government received a unanimous vote of confidence from the National Assembly at an extraordinary session on Jan. 3, 1961, which was opened by King Savang Vatthana. A majority of over two-thirds of the Assembly's membership—41 out of 59 deputies—attended the session. The rest had either fled the country or joined M. Quinim Pholsena, who was known to be in northern Laos; among those absent was the Assembly's deputy president, M. Pheng Phongsavan, who had escaped to Rangoon with M. Khamsook Keola, Health Minister in Prince Souvanna Phouma's Government.

### Fighting in Northern Provinces. - Rival Government formed at Xieng Khouang.

Meanwhile Captain Kong Lae's forces and the *Pathet Lao* allied with him had launched a powerful offensive in several sectors on Dec. 31, 1960.

Xieng Khouang (about 100 miles N.E. of Vientiane) fell after an eight-hour bombardment, and Captain Kong Lae's troops occupied the Plain of Jars (so called because of the shape of ancient tombstones found there) west of the town. Although the Government claimed on Jan. 3 that its parachutists had recaptured Xieng Khouang, Captain Kong Lae's radio (the "Voice of Laos") said that the parachutists had been surrounded and wiped out; the French military mission in Vientiane confirmed on Jan. 11 that Xieng Khouang was still held by the left-wing forces. Hanoi Radio claimed that Phong Salj (in the extreme north-east, near the border with North Vietnam) and Muong Xui (20 miles west of the Plain of Jars) had also been captured on Dec. 31.

On Jan. 1, 1961, the left-wing forces opened artillery fire on Luang Prabang; the commander of the city, General Boun Leuth, sent a message to General Phoumi Nosavan describing the situation as "catastrophic," and appealed to him to send reinforcements and take charge of operations personally. The town of Nong Et (near the North Vietnamese border, east of Xieng Khouang) fell on Jan. 1 and the garrison withdrew to Ban Ban (30 miles to the west), which in turn fell on Jan. 5; elsewhere it was reported that telegraphic communications had been cut between Paksane and Vientiane and that *Pathet Lao* guerrillas had cut the Vientiane-Savannakhet road. The post of Nam Bao (65 miles N.E. of Luang Prabang) was captured by left-wing forces on Jan. 8.

During the second half of January the forces of Prince Boun Oum's Government attempted to carry out a triple offensive—one column advancing north from Paksane towards Xieng Khouang, and two others driving north from Vientiane and south from Luang Prabang against Captain Kong Lae's troops in the Plain of Jars. The offensive, though preventing any further advance by Captain Kong Lae's forces, failed to achieve the objective of driving them from the Plain of Jars.

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By Jan. 17 the Government's offensive in the Xieng Khouang had also been brought to a standstill, and Captain Kong Lae's army was reported to be threatening the Government's advanced positions at Tatong, 25 miles S. E. of Xieng Khouang. Captain Kong Lae's troops captured on Jan. 20 the important road junction of Ban Khoun (110 miles N. of Vientiane), the meeting-place of the main roads Unking Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and Xieng Khouang, which had been held by a reinforced battalion of Government troops, nevertheless, after heavy fighting the Government's columns from Vientiane and Luang Prabang made contact and recaptured Pou Bom on Feb. 2, whilst the Government claimed on the same day that its troops had also captured a village seven miles south-east of Xieng Khouang.

During these operations the Government forces were assisted by four T-6 Harvard trainer aircraft, armed with machine-guns and rockets, which had recently been supplied by the United States; one of these was shot down in the Pou Khoun area on Jan. 18, and another on Feb. 18. Captain Kong Lae's forces, on the other hand, were reported to be receiving large-scale arms supplies, including anti-aircraft artillery, by a regular airlift of Soviet aircraft operating from Hanoi; a Soviet spotter plane was sighted on Jan. 12 directing artillery fire near the Plain of Jars. After the capture of Pou Khoun there was a lull in the fighting, no important operations being reported by either side during the remainder of February.

It was estimated at the end of January that nearly half of the 28,000 men in the Royal Army were either supporting Captain Kong Lae or outside effective Government control. Captain Kong Lae and the *Pathet Lao* controlled the whole of the northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua, and most of Xieng Khouang province; in addition the *Pathet Lao* guerrillas (variously estimated at 4,000 to 8,000 strong) were extremely active in the south.

A military committee headed by Captain Kong Lae was formed at Xieng Khouang on Jan. 11 on the instructions of M. Quinim Pholsena, who claimed to act as Prime Minister in the absence of Prince Souvanna Phouma. A provincial Government for Xieng Khouang, consisting of representatives of Prince Souvanna Phouma's Government, the *Neo Lao Haksat*, and "other personalities supporting the policy of peace and neutrality," was formed on the same day.

Three former members of Prince Souvanna Phouma's Cabinet formed a Government at Xieng Khouang on Jan. 31—M. Khamsouk Keola (acting Premier), M. Quinim Pholsena (Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Finance), and Tiao Sisoumang (Interior, Social Affairs, and Economic Affairs). The "Voice of Laos" claimed that the new Government derived its authority from instructions issued on Jan. 25 by Prince Souvanna Phouma, that the latter would soon return to Laos to resume his duties, and that a number of members of the National Assembly had been present when the three-man Government was formed.

Meanwhile two emissaries from Prince Boun Oum had invited Prince Souvanna Phouma on Jan. 10 to enter the Cabinet. The Prince, however, refused to return to Laos until peace was restored, although he offered to act as an intermediary between the two sides; he subsequently stated that he would not join either Prince Boun Oum, whose Government he described as "illegal," or Prince Souphanouvong. M. Bouavan Norasing declared on Jan. 20 that Prince Boun Oum's Government would not enter into further negotiations with the Prince, whom it regarded as "a rebel."

M. Nhouy Abhay nevertheless stated on Jan. 27 that Prince Boun Oum's Government would discuss the possibility of giving Prince Souvanna Phouma a Cabinet post, on condition that he ceased to associate with the left-wing rebels and that he was not opposed to the formation of an all-party Government, if the *Pathet Lao* were prepared to prove that it was truly national and not under alien control by ceasing to maintain its own administration in villages and provinces. M. Bouavan Norasing said on Feb. 9 that the U.N. Secretary-General, Dr. Hammarskjöld, had proposed the formation of a coalition Government, including the *Pathet Lao*, as a first step towards solving the crisis, and that the Government would consider this together with other possible solutions.

Prince Souvanna Phouma suggested on Feb. 3 that negotiations should take place between the three sections of Laotian opinion—the neutralists, the *Pathet Lao*, and the pro-Americans—with a view to forming a coalition Government, and that all foreign military aid to Laos should cease. He said that genuine Communists were only a small minority in Laos, and that many left-wingers were not even pro-Communist but merely opposed to the policy of the United States. The Prince added: "I want to save Laos from Communism by bringing about the unity of the people, thus isolating the real Communists. To show the world what Laos wants, we must organize a plebiscite

for or against neutrality; 95 per cent will vote for neutrality." He dismissed as "ridiculous" the allegation that he was pro-Communist, saying that "we are Socialists in the same way as Cambodia."

#### Soviet and U.S. Allegations of Intervention.

Soviet allegations in December 1960 of large-scale U.S. arms supplies to Prince Boun Oum's Government were rejected by the U.S. Government, which in turn accused the Soviet Union of aiding Captain Kong Lae's forces and charged North Vietnam with aiding the *Pathet Lao* guerrillas.

In a Note of Dec. 13, the Soviet Government lodged a strong protest against the military aid which, it alleged, the United States had given to the "Revolutionary Committee" [i.e. Prince Boun Oum's Government]. The Note alleged that the U.S.A. was openly supplying the "rebels" with weapons which the Laotian Army had never had before, including 105-mm. howitzers, 120-mm. mortars, heavy tanks, military aircraft, helicopters, and gunboats; that Sikorsky helicopters were regularly flying in from Siam to direct the "rebels'" artillery fire; and that American military advisers were training the "rebels" and directing their operations against Prince Souvanna Phouma's Government. Pointing out that Prince Souvanna Phouma had asked the U.S.A. to discontinue the delivery of arms to the "rebels," the Note accused the United States of violating its undertaking under the Geneva Agreement to refrain from interference in internal Laotian affairs.

In its reply (Dec. 18) the U.S. Government denied that it had introduced any arms or ammunition into Laos since the end of November; that it had supplied heavy tanks or 105-mm. howitzers to Laos since 1957, or 120-mm. mortars, armed aircraft, or vessels at any time; that U.S.-supplied helicopters had been used to direct artillery fire; or that American military advisers had led any military actions. It alleged, in turn, that the destruction caused at Vientiane was the direct result of Soviet military aid to the "rebel forces" (i.e. Prince Souvanna Phouma's supporters), and that North Vietnam had aided the *Pathet Lao* guerrillas and moved military units towards the Laotian border.

The State Department announced on Dec. 20 that military aid to Laos, which it said had been suspended on Nov. 30 at Prince Souvanna Phouma's request, would be resumed.

Mr. Lincoln White (the State Department spokesman) alleged on Dec. 22 that the Soviet Union was supplying "pro-Communist rebel troops"; he declared that the "tendency in some quarters to equate U.S. and Soviet aid to Laos" was a "fundamental error," and described the Soviet airlift of weapons to "rebel" troops as "a new and sinister factor in the situation." On Dec. 28 Mr. White stated that the U.S. Air Attache's plane had been fired on, adding that the firing "could have come" from a Soviet plane.

Prince Boun Oum's Government alleged on Dec. 31, in a protest to the U.N., that during the previous fortnight at least five Soviet aircraft had parachuted war material to Captain Kong Lae's troops, and maintained that this constituted a violation of Laotian sovereignty and a breach of the Geneva Agreement. The Soviet Embassy in London declined on Jan. 2 and 10 to accept two Laotian Notes of protest, on the ground that the U.S.S.R. did not recognize the Boun Oum Government. The U.S. State Department alleged on Jan. 3 that Soviet and North Vietnamese aircraft had made at least 180 sorties into Laos since mid-December in order to drop war material to Captain Kong's forces, and that substantial numbers of North Vietnamese had been parachuted into the battle areas.

It was announced in Vientiane on Jan. 3 that the Laotian permanent representative at the U.N. (M. Sisouk Na Champassak) had been instructed to charge the Soviet Union in the Security Council with violation of Laotian territory by delivering "a great quantity of arms, ammunition, and heavy artillery to the rebels." The Government claimed that these deliveries had taken place after Prince Souvanna Phouma had left Laos, and asked that the Soviet Government be requested to stop "inimical, illegal, and unauthorized" arms drops to the "rebel forces."

Mr. Kuznetsov (the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister) protested to the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow, Mr. Llewellyn Thompson, on Jan. 16 against the use of American T-6 aircraft by the "rebels" (i.e. Prince Boun Oum's forces) against the "troops of the legal Government," and alleged that the U.S.A. was transferring F-84 military planes to the "rebels." Mr. Lincoln White stated on Jan. 18 that the T-6 aircraft had been supplied at the request of Prince Boun Oum's Government, which had "every right to defend itself against the Communist-led rebellion," and denied that that Government had requested the transfer of F-84 planes.

Mr. Andrew Boyle, the newly-appointed director of the U.S. Programmes Evaluation Office, stated on Jan. 23 that his organization would continue to supply the Boun Oum Government with weapons and training staff, adding that if the Russians "increased their stake" the U.S.A. would do the same; he said that 10 T-6 aircraft would be maintained in Laos, only four of which would be operational at any time.

**Boun Oum Government's Allegations of North Vietnamese "Aggression." - Subsequent Retraction of Allegations.**

The Boun Oum Government issued on Dec. 30 a communique asserting that five North Vietnamese battalions equipped with artillery had crossed the frontier and attacked Nong Et, and that two more battalions were marching on Ban Ban. The Laotian representative at the U.N. informed Dr. Hammarskjöld of his Government's allegations on the same day. The North Vietnamese Government described the reports as "sheer fabrication."

The State Department announced on Dec. 31 that it had received confirmation from the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane of foreign troop movements into Laos, and President Eisenhower held an emergency conference on the same day with Mr. Livingston Merchant (acting Secretary of State), Mr. James Douglas (acting Defence Secretary), General Lemnitzer (chairman of the joint Chiefs of Staff), and Mr. Allen Dulles (director of the Central Intelligence Agency). The State Department subsequently declared that the U.S.A. would "take the most serious view of any intervention in Laos by the Chinese Communists or Vietminh armed forces or others," and on Jan. 2 the U.S. Defence Department announced that it was taking "normal precautionary action to increase the readiness of our forces in the Pacific."

The British and French Governments adopted a cautious attitude towards the alleged invasion. A Foreign Office spokesman said on Jan. 1 that "so far we have no firm evidence," while a French Foreign Ministry spokesman similarly said that no confirmation of the reports had been received in Paris; he stressed that French policy remained faithful to the Geneva Agreement, which provided that the government of Laos should be entrusted to "a team capable of ensuring the widest possible national unity," adding that "the present political situation in Laos does not correspond to these objectives."

In London the Labour Party leader, Mr. Gaitskill, and Mr. Denis Healey called on the Foreign Secretary, Lord Home, on Jan. 2 to ask for an assurance that Parliament would be recalled before any question arose of British troops being involved in Laos. Lord Home promised to pass on their message to the Prime Minister. Mr. Healey again saw Lord Home on Jan. 4.

The SEATO Council of Representatives, consisting of the Ambassadors of the eight SEATO countries in Bangkok, met on Jan. 2 at the U.S. Government's request, and again on Jan. 4.

A communique issued after the second meeting noted with concern the reports of the supply of war material by Soviet aircraft; declared that "continuance of such intervention can promote only civil war and imperil the security of neighbouring countries" [i.e. Siam]; and said that SEATO was determined to find a solution to the Laos problem by peaceful means, while remaining ready to fulfil its treaty obligations. The communique did not mention the alleged invasion of Laos by foreign Communist troops. The Secretary-General of SEATO, Nai Pote Sarasin, said that there was no doubt that Soviet aircraft had parachuted war supplies to the rebels, but that no evidence had been produced to support the allegations of active military intervention by North Vietnam; he emphasized that the presence of invading ground forces had to be confirmed before SEATO could take action.

The Boun Oum Government, in a Note to Dr. Hammarskjöld on Jan. 2, alleged that North Vietnamese forces estimated at six battalions had attacked Nong Et, Ban Ban, and the Plain of Jars, and had occupied several important points in Xieng Khouang province. In Vientiane, however, the U.S., British, and French Embassies stated that there was no evidence of any invasion, and that Western intelligence sources had found no North Vietnamese troops in Laos.

Twice thereafter, on Jan. 10 and on Jan. 23, M. Bouavan Norasing alleged at press conferences that Soviet as well as North Vietnamese troops were operating with the *Pathet Lao* in Laotian territory. On Jan. 26, however, M. Nhouy Abhay admitted at a press conference—attended by Prince Boun Oum—that the Government had no evidence that Laos had been invaded at all, and that its protests to the U.N. and SEATO had been made for reasons of internal propaganda, so as to assure the people that the Boun Oum Government had friends abroad.

M. Abhay claimed that Captain Kong Lae had only about 30 men, in addition to 3,000 *Pathet Lao* guerrillas [an estimate not supported in the Western Press—see above]; hence, by a "logical deduction," the Government had assumed that there must be a large number of North Vietnamese troops fighting against it. "We are sure that they are there," he added, "but it is difficult to prove . . . We have no formal proof of any foreign invasion. Those who are helping the rebels are intelligent enough not to supply us with formal proofs."

**Indian and British Proposal for Revival of International Supervisory Commission. - Soviet and Cambodian Proposals for International Conference on Laos.**

The Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Nehru, announced a Dec. 15 that he had proposed to Britain and the Soviet Union, as co-chairmen of the 1954 Geneva Conference, that the International Supervisory Commission for Laos should be revived in view of the "bad state of affairs" in that country. He told the *Lok Sabha* on Dec. 19 that the Canadian Government had indicated that it would be prepared to participate in the Commission again provided that the Laotian Government agreed; Mr. Nehru commented that although the Commission functioned under the authority of the Geneva Conference and not that of the Laotian Government, it would be difficult for it to operate if that Government put obstacles in its way.

In London, Lord Home said in the House of Lords on Dec. 11 that "the struggle which has been going on in Laos for the last two years as a result of the *Pathet Lao* insurrection has reached a climax." He announced that the British Ambassadors in Vientiane, Mr. John Addis, was being instructed "to make strong representations to the effect that we hope that certain steps will be taken to form a broadly based Government which include in it all those who are willing to co-operate," and then to pass on to Prince Boun Oum's Government Mr. Nehru's suggestion for the revival of the International Commission. If they agreed with it (Lord Home continued) he would approach the Soviet co-chairman, Mr. Gromyko; in the meantime he had instructed H.M. Ambassador in Moscow to express the view that "steps should be taken to put a stop to the supply of assistance from outside the country to those who are in rebellion against the legal Government" [i.e. that of Prince Boun Oum].

The Soviet Government replied to the British approach in a Note of Dec. 22, which supported the revival of the Commission but proposed that it should contact Prince Souvanna Phouma "with a view to agreeing with him practical measures for resumption of the Commission's activity." The U.S.S.R. also proposed that the Geneva Conference should be reconvened; that Britain and the Soviet Union should appeal to all the States which took part in that conference to condemn foreign interference in Laotian internal affairs; and that the British and Soviet Governments should "facilitate the discontinuance of foreign assistance to the rebels of General Phoumi Nosavan, withdraw from his forces American servicemen and American military equipment and also influence other States which, together with the U.S., have placed servicemen and armaments at his disposal."

The proposal to reconvene the Geneva Conference had previously been put forward on Dec. 19 by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the Cambodian Head of State, in a speech in Phnom Penh. The Chinese Government also announced its support for the reconvening of the conference and the revival of the Commission in Notes sent to Britain and the Soviet Union on Dec. 28.

Prince Norodom Sihanouk enlarged on his proposal on Jan. 2, when he suggested that a conference should be convened of 14 States, viz., those which took part in the 1954 conference (Britain, France, the U.S.A., the Soviet Union, North and South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos), the members of the International Commission (India, Poland, and Canada), and countries bordering on Laos (Siam and Burma). Favourable replies to this suggestion were received from France, the Soviet Union, Poland, China, North Vietnam, and Burma. The British reply, sent on Jan. 14, suggested that the most urgent step was to revive the International Commission, but did not rule out the possibility of such a conference at a later stage; a similar view was expressed by Mr. Nehru on Jan. 18. No details were published of President Eisenhower's reply; the *New York Times* reported on Jan. 18 that it was understood to be "neither acceptance of the plan nor flat rejection."

Mr. Lincoln White admitted on Dec. 29 that "differences" existed between the U.S.A., Britain, France, and other countries on the Laotian question. He stressed, however, that these "pertained primarily to means and methods"; that "on the basic and fundamental objectives of helping to preserve the integrity, independence, and sovereignty of Laos there is full agreement among us"; and that the differences were "not serious" and "not a bar to arriving at a solution" of the Laos situation. The differences were believed to relate at this time to two main points: (1) whether Britain and France favoured the formation of a broadly-based Laotian Government, including neutralist and left-wing elements and pursuing a genuinely neutral foreign policy, the

CS. Government maintained that such a Government would M under Communist domination, and therefore favoured M support for the Boun Oum Government ; (2) the U.S. townment opposed the revival of the International Commis- because it felt that Communist participation would ure the Commission's effectiveness.

I The Eisenhower Government's policy in Laos was strongly aifrad by Deinoeratie spokesmen in the United States.

Senator Mansfield (the Democratic leader in the Senate under the Kennedy Administration) said on Dec. 28 that the U.S.A. had fell to show for the 5300,000,000 spent on aid to Laos in the past [t er even years except " chaos, discontent, armies on the loose, MI t Urge mission of hundreds of officials in Vientiane." Senator IMVght (chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee) •Hon Jan. 6 that the committee felt that all that could be achieved Kilos was a completely neutral Government, and that it was too to establish a pro-Western Government, which in any •rat could be detrimental.

- tte State Department issued on Jan. 7 a White Paper Muting its policy, in which it maintained that no U.S. aid bd ever been given to Laos without the knowledge and Mrcval of its Government ; that the U.S.A. was not engaged • building any military bases there ; and that it had never Mght to persuade Laos to enter into a military alliance. Ikstatement concluded : " The United States believes that (an best contribute to a solution of the Laos problem (1) by Mkoing to further international recognition and under- Aiding of the true nature of Communist intentions and mm in Laos ; (2) by the U.S.A. itself continuing clearly to 4m that it has no intention and no desire to establish a fcton military position in Laos ; (3) by joining with other Ik nations to support and maintain the independence of bos through whatever measures seem most promising."

h u interview with the *New York Times* on Jan. 19 Prince faruna Phouma bitterly attacked the Eisenhower Government, a particularly Mr. J. Graham Parsons (Assistant Secretary of fttte (or Far Eastern Affairs), who, he alleged, was " directly •joostik- fr the recent spilling of Lao blood." The Prince added : EMWt I shall never forgive the United States for is the fact that it towed me. that it double-crossed me and my Government." Iitutained that the t'.S.A. had opposed throughout the only ptole solution—the formation of a Government of national union ; Kit had been responsible for his own resignation in 1958 ; and toll had "planted the seeds of destruction" when it forced his •Mat\* as Premier, M. l'houi Sananikone, to adopt a strongly BCTtumist policy.

TV Boun Oum Government's reply to the British representa- wm about the revival of the International Commission was tot i i in London on Jan. 3. A Foreign Office spokesman said lb: itld it did not reject the proposal, it did not clearly •Bt to it. and that -Mr. Addis had been asked to seek clarifica- tion certain points. M. Ohao Sopsaisana (deputy Foreign lbiter in the Boun Oum Government) said on Jan. 5 that if fcspiatories of the Geneva Agreement believed reactivation Mlb Commission to be necessary, the co-chairmen should make B\*a l request through the Laotian Foreign Ministry ; this •I interpreted as a demand that the Soviet Union should KbJk the Boun Oum Government as a condition for the Hltoion's return to Laos.

TV revival of the Commission was therefore impeded at tfe stage by the fact that one of the co-chairmen (the Soviet Mai and two members of the Commission (India and Mod) recognized Prince Souvanna Phouma as the legal Me Minister, whilst the other co-chairman (Britain) and the tod mamber of the Commission (Canada) recognized Prince toaOum's Government. The British Deputy High Commis- torr In India, Mr. J. M. C. James, flew on Jan. 7 from Delhi •kvnagar, where the plenary session of the Indian Congress - taking place, to deliver a message to Mr. Nehru. Km reported that this concerned a proposal that India as tomnn of the Commission should convene it, thereby Meaning the difficulty raised by the Boun Oum Government ; ^Biaa Government, however, held that under the Geneva yuuent India could only do so at the co-chairmen's request. i in alternative means of overcoming the difficulty, the Wu Government was reported to have proposed that the (umision should be accredited to the King of Laos, and that itould deal with the Boun Oum Government as the *de facto* •tototration.

Mr. Duncan Sandys (U.K. Commonwealth Relations Secretary), tonatcd Delhi to discuss the problem with the Indian Government, MM at i pre\* conference on Jan. 11 that Britain and India were f'firer close agreement," and that " what we want is to see the (•ml Commission get there and do what they can to stop the Mfinc." He suggested that the question of what Government the KmMho should relate itself to did not really arise, as

" recognition " applied only to a regime and King Savang Vatthana remained the Head of State. No Government was in control of the whole country, and so presumably in achieving a cease-fire the Commission would have to deal with more than one authority. He also expressed the opinion that " a broader-based Government might have a better chance of stability."

At his last press conference, President Eisenhower said on Jan. 18 that the revival of the International Commission might serve a useful purpose if the Soviet Union recognized the Boun Oum Government; this was the first public statement made by the U.S. Government in favour of the Commission's revival. President Kennedy said at his first press conference (Jan. 25) that the United States was anxious to see Laos become a peaceful independent country " not dominated by either side."

The British Ambassador in Moscow, Sir Frank Roberts, delivered on Jan. 21 the British reply to the Soviet Note of Dec. 22. Although no details were published of the British proposals, which had been drawn up after consultation with the U.S., French, Indian, and Canadian Governments, they were believed to envisage the immediate revival of the Interna- tional Commission, which, acting on its original terms of reference, would prevent the introduction of foreign military aid and try to end the civil war. The Commission would be accredited directly to King Savang Vatthana, the U.S.A. having abandoned its previous insistence that the Commission should recognize the Boun Oum Government.

The Soviet reply was delivered on Feb. 18. Its proposals were believed to be summarized in an article published in *Pravda* on Feb. 23, which called for the convening of an international conference as a first step.

The *Pravda* article said that the revived Commission would be faced with the problem of halting military operations and ensuring a peaceful settlement, and that the powers previously exercised by the Commission under the Geneva Agreement would be inadequate for this task. It was therefore proposed that an international conference should be called as soon as possible to give the Commission the necessary mandates and additional powers, and that the Commission should meet immediately to draw up recommendations to the co-chairmen on its tasks and the powers with which it should be invested.

The Soviet Ambassador in Washington, Mr. Menshikov, discussed the Laotian situation with the new Secretary of State, Mr. Dean Rusk, on Feb. 20 at the latter's request. Mr. Rusk was reported to have informed him that the U.S. Government was prepared to withdraw its military advisers from Laos if a cease- fire were arranged and any foreign military advisers helping the *Pathet Lao* were also withdrawn, and to provide only such military aid as a neutral commission might consider necessary.

King Savang Vatthana's Statement on Laotian Neutrality.

King Savang Vatthana announced on Feb. 19 that Laos would henceforth pursue a policy of strict neutrality and would not enter into any military alliance, accept foreign troops, or tolerate foreign military bases ; he therefore urged all countries to respect the independence and neutrality of Laos, and to " renounce all intervention, even in the form of aid, if it has not been sanctioned by international agreement into which we have freely entered." The King invited Cambodia, Burma, and Malaya to form a commission to visit Laos to confirm that it " threatens no one and aspires solely to peace," adding that this body would have as its mission " the denunciation of all foreign intervention, direct or indirect, open or camouflaged, which would result in imperilling the kingdom's independence, integrity, and neutrality." The King's invitation was accepted by Malaya but was formally declined by the Cambodian Government on Feb. 23. Prince Souvanna Phouma described the proposal as " frivolous and of no value."

#### Boun Oum Government's Demand to France for Transfer of Seno Air Base.

Relations between the Boun Oum Administration and the French Government remained strained throughout this period, as the latter was known to be sympathetic to Prince Souvanna Phouma and to favour a solution on the basis of a Government of national union. General Phoumi's forces seized in November an aircraft used to maintain contact between the French air base at Seno (near Savannakhet) and the French military mission in Vientiane, and on Jan. 29 General Phoumi issued an ultimatum to the French Embassy demanding a partial transfer of the base by Feb. 1. Although the French Ambassador (M. Pierre Falaise) requested a postponement until Feb. 10 to enable him to consult his Government, General Phoumi, who was accompanied by Prince Boun Oum, personally took over part of the base on Feb. 5. It was subsequently stated in Paris that M. Falaise had been instructed to protest. The Seno base, which has a staff of about 500, was granted to France by the Geneva Agreement, and no previous Laotian Government had requested its transfer.

### Stalemate in Military Operations.

Despite the onset of heavy rains, military operations continued in central Laos during the first half of March, though at a slower tempo and without any decisive result.

Renewed fighting was reported at the beginning of March for possession of the important road junction of Pou Khoun, and on March 9 the forces of Prince Boun Oum's Government were said to have abandoned the village and to have taken up positions to the east and south. On the other hand, an assault by left-wing forces advancing southwards along the Luang Prabang-Vientiane road was only initially successful; after pushing back, at heavy cost to themselves, the Government's troops to a point just north of Muong Khassy (80 miles from Vientiane), the left-wing advance was reported on March 14 to have been checked.

Meanwhile Laotian and U.S. intelligence sources stated that Soviet aircraft were still supplying munitions to the left-wing forces in the Plain of Jars, and this appeared to be confirmed by the fact that an aircraft taking observers of the International Control Commission for Vietnam to Hanoi was refused permission to land there on three occasions. Although the reasons given by Hanoi airport were "bad weather" and "technical difficulties," the air crews stated that flying conditions on two occasions were quite satisfactory and that refusal of permission to land appeared to be designed to prevent the Commission's officials from seeing the landing of Soviet-supplied aircraft flying to or from Laos.

During the last week of February Prince Souvanna Phouma left Pnom-Penh and made a tour of the left-wing-held areas of central Laos, during which he inspected units of the *Pathet Lao* and had discussions on Feb. 25-26 with Prince Souphanouvong, their leader, in Xieng Khouang province.

In a joint statement, the two princes stated that they would continue to resist "imperialist aggression"; denounced continuing U.S. military support to Prince Boun Oum's Government; alleged that the U.S.A. had recruited 3,000 Chinese Nationalist troops, recently driven out of Burma, to strengthen Prince Boun Oum's forces; and appealed to his soldiers to desert and join the "Royal Army," i.e. the rebel forces nominally controlled by Prince Souvanna Phouma.

### Failure of Talks between Prince Souvanna Phouma and Boun Oum Government.

A delegation of Prince Boun Oum's Ministers arrived in Pnom-Penh on March 9; it was led by General Phoumi Nosavan (Deputy Premier and Defence Minister, and a member of Prince Souvanna Phouma's former Government before the outbreak of the right-wing rebellion). Following lengthy talks between the Prince and General Nosavan a joint statement was issued on March 10 which, for the first time, gave some hope of an agreement.

The statement said that both sides had agreed that "a policy of strict neutrality and a neutralization of the country by treaty" were the fundamental bases to restore peace. It went on: "They strongly condemn foreign interferences and refuse to allow the Kingdom and the people to bear the cost of a deadly struggle for influence in which they have no part. Foreign interferences must cease, to allow the restoration of a climate of mutual confidence for national reconciliation. This is possible only with the help of an impartial international commission, accepted by agreement between the parties, which would be able to operate throughout the national territory."

The statement also declared that Prince Souvanna Phouma was the only statesman who could negotiate with the *Pathet Lao* in order to achieve national reconciliation, and that he had said he would do everything in his power to that end. It was agreed that discussions between the leaders on both sides should continue and that they should meet as often as possible, either in Laos or Cambodia, in order to reach the first objective—the formation of a coalition Government.

General Phoumi Nosavan said on his return to Vientiane that the Pnom-Penh talks had been "a great success," while Mr. Norasing stated at a press conference that both sides had agreed on the following steps in an attempt to end the fighting; (i) another delegation would be sent from Vientiane for talks with Prince Souvanna Phouma before he left on March 15 for a tour of foreign capitals; (ii) if Burma and Cambodia agreed, a three-nation commission (with Malaya as the third member) would be set up to end foreign interference in Laos and supervise general elections; (iii) the possibility of a 14-nation conference as proposed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk; (iv) another meeting at Pnom-Penh for a "general reconciliation under the aegis of the 14 nations" if foreign interference in Laos had meanwhile ceased.

The agreement between the two sides was welcomed by the U.S. State Department, which expressed the hope that, together with King Savang Vatthana's declaration of Feb. 19, it would "help to bring about an end to foreign interference and serve as a solid basis for progress towards peace." The New China News Agency, on the other hand, announced on March 10 that

the *Xeo Lao Haksat* had urged the Laotian people "to achieve all enemy attacks and achieve the liberation of the country from U.S. imperialism and the Phoumi-Boun Oum rebels." A further *Pathet Lao* statement, broadcast by Baff radio on March 14, denounced any compromise "traitorous Boun Oum clique" and hinted that Prince Souvanna Phouma's negotiations with Prince Souvanna Phouma might possibly lead to a repudiation of Prince Souvanna Phouma, whom the Communists had hitherto recognized as the only legal Prime Minister of Laos.

As arranged in the Pnom-Penh talks, a delegation of Ministers from Prince Boun Oum's Government arrived in Cambodian capital on March 14 to continue talks with Prince Souvanna Phouma on the problem of forming a neutral Government to include right-wing elements as well as *Pathet Lao*. Prince Souvanna Phouma, however, stated on March 15 that the talks had not achieved any national reconciliation, and later the same day left Pnom-Penh for a six-weeks' visit to Rangoon, Delhi, Cairo, London, Moscow, and Peking.

In Vientiane, the Government announced on March 17 that the talks with Prince Souvanna Phouma had ended in failure. The statement referred to "Prince Souvanna Phouma's refusal to face realities"; deplored his abrupt departure on a world tour; declared that any official welcome extended to the Prince abroad would be regarded as an "unfriendly attitude" and said that the Government were now pinning its hopes on an international solution to the crisis. Reports from Pnom-Penh suggested that the Prince's departure had been prompted by a message from Prince Souphanouvong warning him of any compromise with the Boun Oum Government would not be accepted by the *Pathet Lao*.

(*Lc Monde*, Paris - *Times* - *Daily Telegraph* - *Guaid* - *New York Times* - *New York Herald Tribune* - *U.S. Informant* - *Soviet Embassy Press Distribution*, London - *Ind* - *High Commissioner's Office*, London - *The Hindu*, *Mathaff* Directorate of Information, Rangoon) (Prev. rep. 17719A)

### A. UNITED KINGDOM. — "Bradshaw" ceases Publication.

The decision to cease publication of *Bradshaw*, the world's most famous railway guide, was announced on March 9 by the publishers, Henry Blacklock & Co. Ltd., of Manchester. It stated that it would appear for the last time in May. *Bradshaw* has had a life of 122 years.

The publishers explained that the decision had been taken "for economic reasons, due to increased production costs and decreasing sales. It was pointed out that during the past few years each issue contained more than 1,000 pages and that its production was "one of the most complex printing tasks in the world involving over 20,000 hours annually. Stating that there was no other publication comparable with *Bradshaw*, the firm said that it was "only way in which people will be able to gain information about railway timings in future will be through the railways' own handbooks, and as these are published on a district basis it will be difficult to get a complete picture of the railway timing network." [The Regions of British Railways—the London Midland, Southern, Western, Eastern, North Eastern, and Scottish—each published twice a year; five of these regional guides are printed by Messrs. Blacklock.]

It was also announced that publication of *Bradshaw's Air Guide* and *Bradshaw's Manchester ABC Railway Guide* would cease with the May issues.

The originator of the railway guide was George Bradshaw, of Salford, a Quaker and by trade an engraver. Following the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, he brought out on Oct. 19, 1839, *Bradshaw's Railway Time Table*, giving times and fares for the "northern" railways; the first edition, consisting of eight pages of timetables and five pages of maps, was designed "in a form and size suitable for the waistcoat pocket," whereas the current edition runs to 1,225 pages. In December 1841 the scope of *Bradshaw* was extended to cover all the railways of Britain, and for generations thereafter it appeared monthly and became—in the phrase of *The Times*—"a household word implying railway timetables on the grand scale." In recent years it had appeared ten times a year. (Times - Daily Telegraph - Guardian)

### B. SPAIN. — Cancellation of Unused U.S. Credits.

It was reported from New York on Jan. 5 that Spain had cancelled the \$70,000,000 credit arranged in August 1959 with 13 U.S. commercial banks as part of the international programme of support for the stabilization of the Spanish currency and economy. No drawing had ever been made on the credit.—(New York Times) (Prev. rep. 16920 A)