fled some years ago from a pro-Pathet Lao village. The agent said he
did his work but was afraid. Bong did not give him much sympathy on
this score, saying he could not work well if he were afraid. (It is
hard to know whether his agents are paid, but they do come often to
visit him at his home in Vientiane, and there is obviously some sort of
reciprocal relationship. Village members of his party pay dues, but
they are fairly nominal. It seems logical to suppose that his news-
paper as well as his political activity are subsidized by his business
interests.)

About noon, we reached the plain of Pha Khom, on which is situated
a large village, or as Bong called it, town. Here we passed a police
checkpoint. Men were busy in the fields plowing and harrowing, while
women were transplanting rice. Many girls and young women were fishing
with nets in the streams running by the sides of the paddies. Bong ex-
plained that after the plowing, the small fish are partly asphyxiated
and rise to the surface. At one village we passed a church formerly
used by the Vietnamese who before Lao independence used to have truck
farms here, raising vegetables for sale in Vientiane. We frequently
passed trucks and buses, and in one field we saw a police jeep and a
Mercedes-Benz. The passengers appeared to be having a picnic meal.

In many of the villages there were small detachments of soldiers.
In a larger village we stopped briefly at the combined store and home
of a merchant friend of Bong's. He was in the process of having a new
two-story building constructed by Vietnamese workers from Vientiane and
was also having a hand-operated gasoline pump installed. He complained
about American aid, saying it would have been better to have completed
thirty kilometers of all-weather road instead of re-doing the dirt sur-
face every year.

At the village home of one of Bong's party agents who had come with
us from Vientiane, we stopped for lunch. As we arrived we heard the
blaring of a loud-speaker. The Deputy Governor was holding forth at a
partially-completed pagoda to an audience of fifty to sixty people,
mostly men and boys. He was talking about the Eisenhower-Khrushchev
meeting. As Bong approached the official immediately deferred to him.
Bong took over and spoke to the villagers at length. Later he told me
that the people had asked him why planes were flying overhead at night.
They also wanted to know what was being done with Prince Souphanouvong.
They requested help and protection from the government. He replied that
they were acting like Communists in that they were lending tacit support
to the Pathet Lao sympathizers among them. He said the people should
learn to help themselves, that the government could not help every
village, the people are the government and it is up to them to support it.

While lunching on roast chicken Bong had brought from Vientiane,
his assistant was busy enrolling several new members in the party. As they
signed up, each received a copy of the by-laws printed in Lao and paid a
two-kip month's advance on their dues. This business was conducted by assistants, the materials being shoved across the floor to the villagers who squatted separately on the other side of the room.

The party worker who was our host asked why we did not buy Laos' main export, opium, since, he said, "We buy your goods." Later he suggested to Bong that in order to win the villagers' favor they should give them presents, but Bong strongly disagreed.

On our return to Vientiane we stopped in one village where Bong said the soldiers had been menacing his agents. He summoned the local commander, a corporal, and dressed him down in front of his troops and a group of villagers. Bong then threw a copy of his newspaper on the ground, which the corporal picked up. "Here", said Bong, "are the principles and ideals of my party; we must all work together to fight the Communists." In contrast to his earlier friendly conversations, this meeting was conducted in a very authoritarian manner. It would be intriguing to know what happened after our departure. As we left the village Bong remarked that officials always give prior notice of their arrival, but that he never does this. We arrived back in the capital at nightfall.

Although substantive information is lacking indirect information appears to indicate that he has reassumed some of his former "neutralist" sentiments.

PAN SISOUPHANTHONG

Director General of Public Works and Deputy from Phong Saly, Pan Sisouphanthong gave this account of his background:

"My father was a merchant and gardener from Luang Prabang, but he also received the title of mandarin, or Tiao Panya, from the King in recognition of work he had performed. I am not a Tiao, however, and have inherited only the title of Panya. I attended the college in Vientiane and after my graduation worked in the administration. From 1946 to 1948 I was governor of Namtha, and from 1948 to 1952 I served in Phong Saly. From 1952 to 1956 I was Procurator General in Vientiane. In 1955 I was elected Deputy from Phong Saly to the National Assembly, from that part of the Province which was under the control of the Royal Lao Government. I have been a member of the Lao delegation to the United Nations and have also visited Japan."

In discussing the rule of the Pathet Lao in Phong Saly, he said, "During their rule they reorganized the provincial administration. They chose the poorest person as village chief and tried to gain the favor of those who lived in poverty. They promised that when Laos would be completely under their control, those who had helped them would receive
government posts as compensation.

"I do not think the population will stick with them. The older people are accustomed to the Royal Lao government. When the Pathet Lao need labor, they force everyone to work, including the older people. In Phong Saly, even the mountain people are mostly Buddhist. [The inference being that presumably they would resist infiltration because it is opposed to their religion -- Pan's idea that Buddhism is prevalent there is not borne out by the ethnographic composition of the region, however.] Phong Saly is very badly located for us; we have many transportation difficulties plus the fact that Dien Bien Phu with its concentration of Vietminh troops is located just over the border."

"Since we have assumed control we have made democratic changes, and there have been elections. The Tasseng is elected by several Nai Bans, and the Nai Ban is elected by the villagers. Only the Chao Muong is nominated by the government. Under the Communists the Nai Ban was designated by the administration. The Pathet Lao also changed the village headman's title to Pa Than, which means "president". However, the Communist administration was not as difficult for the people in Phong Saly as it was in Sam Neua. In Sam Neua they began to force the monks to go to work. They also urged the population not to feed them, in addition to trying to use some monks as propagandists."

"The reason the situation was more difficult in Sam Neua was that it was occupied first, while even during the period Phong Saly was occupied, several areas continued to be held by the royal government. Sam Neua was closed and was also closer to North Vietnam."

**LIEP SOUMPHONPHAKDY**

Liep Soumphophonphakdy, former Secretary of State for Agriculture, was also a Deputy from Saravane to the National Assembly. About forty-five years old, he studied in the Groupe Scolaire in Savannakhet, served as an official under the French and was Governor of Saravane before his election to the National Assembly.

"The major emphasis of our program at present is to build dams in the north where there is a lack of rice. The question of rice supply is,

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1These two views appear contradictory, but the Pathet Lao have given much attention to the role of the monks and have courted their support.
of course, a political one in our country. The greatest shortage occurs from September to November, before the harvest, and the object of the dams is to allow the villagers to have two harvests a year. On the plains of the south we have enough rice for local needs. This year [1959] we have received 24,000,000 kip in American aid for agriculture, and so far have constructed dams in the Provinces of Sayaboury, Saravane, and Xieng Khoung. We are also building a dam on the plains of Vientiane. After all the projected dams are constructed there will be no need to import rice from Thailand. French aid is being used toward construction of dams in Luang Prabang and Savannakhet Provinces.

"Mountain people can then come down and settle in the lowland areas. I know that true mountaineers will come to live on the plains only with difficulty, because the climate is warmer there. Our government is not able to work all over Laos, however, and we are concentrating on the Meo in Xieng Khoung and the Kha in Attopeu. It is much easier to work with the Meo because they are more advanced and more civilized. Many Meo want to come settle in the valleys, but with the Kha it is a question of their phi. The Meo are more civilized because they have been in contact with Lao merchants, and we have received many requests for aid from the Meo in Xieng Khoung.

"A special service has been proposed to handle this problem of resettlement, and I hope American aid will be able to assist us." This is necessary because we want to resettle refugees who are arriving from China. It is also necessary because we must protect our forests. Sixty per cent of the area of Laos is covered with forests, but most of them are of no value economically because they are of brush and in a degraded condition."

TIAO NITH NOKHAM

Tiao Nith, Deputy to the National Assembly from Xieng Khoung, and High Commissioner for Xieng Khoung and Sam Neua Provinces, is a grandson of the last King of Xieng Khoung. His father was a mandarin and an official in the French administration. He is related to Tiao Sopsisana, Chief of Royal Protocol, and Secretary of the Committee for the Defense of the National Interests. The head of the Veterinary Service, Tiao Sinh, is his uncle. His wife is from the same family [she is a cousin], and they have seven children.

He began his government service with the Department of Forests, serving in the north and spending three years in Pakse as well. Tiao

1A few scattered programs were attempted but no comprehensive arrangement were made prior to the civil war.
Nith is a Director of the Lao Vieng Bank and former Secretary of State of the Finance Ministry. He is head of the Budget Committee of the National Assembly.

His home, although located on a rutted dirt road, is a modern concrete structure built in the style of a French colonial villa, and appeared to have been recently furnished. There were a number of new chairs of both rattan and metal, and a rug on the living room floor. He has two cars, one of which is a Mercedes-Benz. He invited his wife to join us although she speaks no French. While serving cold beer, he referred to himself as a banker and seemed proud of his contacts with high American officials connected with financial affairs.

We began by discussing the Committee for the Defense of the National Interests. He said, "Their program is very good; it is not possible to quarrel with it, but I have not yet seen any action. If they do work, it should be outside of Vientiane."

Then we switched to the question of whether the American aid program was reaching the villages. "The living standard of the villagers has improved: they now have shirts whereas previously they had only torn clothing. Some villagers now even own bicycles. There are even some farmers in the vicinity of Vientiane who raise betel nut and make enough money to afford a Mercedes. I am not completely satisfied with the aid program, and I feel that there has been a tendency to give more aid to the southern part of the country. Perhaps this is because they have better roads there."

"Roads are actually the key to the country's development. In Xieng Khouang, many of the village people have built their own roads." This led to a discussion of the financing of road construction: "Business conditions are now very slow. Kips are accumulating in the National Bank, but they are not being invested. This problem must be worked out with the Americans. As a result of the decline in business, government revenues are off, but with the help of American aid it will be possible to accomplish our objectives." When the possibility that American aid might be decreased was mentioned, he said, "In that case, the people have said it might be necessary to change the foreign policy of Laos." He personally did not think aid would be diminished and inferred that the foreign policy of the government was not subject to change.

The conversation turned to his responsibilities as a Deputy and his policies with regard to minority peoples. He said that some time ago twenty-seven Kha tribesmen had come to his house to ask his help because their village in Xieng Khouan Province, had burned down. They had come all the way to Vientiane to see him. He fed them for several days, his wife went out and bought them clothes and he asked the Ministry of Social Welfare to give them blankets.
Tiao Nith stated that since the end of French rule intermarriage between the Lao and Meo had increased. As an example, he cited the case of Toubi's brother, who is married to a Lao woman. Tiao Nith personally has cordial relations with Toubi himself, and when during the course of our interview, the latter came to visit, the two men chatted amicably, half in French and half in Lao.

"A few days ago," Tiao Nith commented, "Meo and Kha irregulars from North Vietnam massacred about fifteen Lao officers and their families at three military posts on the border of Sam Neua and Luang Prabang Provinces [late July, 1959]. Then they went back to the forest, so you can see it is necessary for the Lao Army also to be maquis." He said he would ask the Americans to help him outfit these guerilla troops. "Local Meo could be used," he said; "all they need is a few thousand kip a month each, and Eisenhower jackets would be ideal for them." He felt strongly that the attitude of the people in his province was more favorable to the government than it was in Vientiane.

Tiao Nith spoke of Haynes Miller [a former USOM employee who in 1958 wrote an article about the misappropriation of USOM funds for the Reporter magazine]. "Miller spoke French well and had been my friend. Although what he wrote was mainly true, it was exaggerated."

Tiao Nith wanted to know what my own political beliefs were, and to which political party I belonged. He said, "I have noticed that in recent debates your Congress has cut the aid budget by about three hundred million dollars. I feel that Laos deserves to be aided but if the Americans do not help us enough, we will ask our friends the French, although we know they cannot give us too much assistance."

CHAN VANTHANOUVONG

Chan Vanthanouvong, a Deputy from Vientiane and a leader of the Santiphab party is a former governor of Sam Neua. Unlike many other members of his party, some of whom are former Buddhist priests, he speaks good French and has visited the United States. He derives an income from his store located on one of the main streets of Vientiane which stocks French books, a few English newspapers and hunting rifles. His apartment is located above the store, the sitting room containing a few chairs, tables and some large ivory tusks arranged as souvenirs.

His party is officially neutralist but is commonly regarded as sympathetic to the Communists. Most of the party's candidates did quite well in the 1958 election. Pinning him down on specifics of his party's program was very difficult, and he sometimes avoided answering questions.

"The Lao people should live within their means," he said. "Their
life has been too luxurious lately because the American aid has been poorly used. The standard of living of the villagers should be raised, and Laos should grow its own rice even if the quality is poorer than that imported from Thailand."

"The government has been harassing our party. We are not now trying to recruit any new members. We could have all the members we wish, but villagers who joined our party now would suffer at the hands of the government. Many Lao officials are poorly qualified and dishonest. This is true not only of the Lao but of some of the Americans as well. I expressed this point of view when I visited the Department of State in Washington in 1958."

Perhaps the most interesting statement he made was the following: "The dishonest Lao officials and technicians should be dismissed and replaced where necessary with Americans and French, for after all, we had the French running everything before independence. Anyone who objected to this procedure would be guilty of misplaced nationalism."

"With regard to technical aid, Japanese-type plows and simple equipment of this sort, which have been introduced by the Americans, are good things, but the Lao government's village development program has received a lot of publicity while it only duplicates existing technical ministries. It is time American aid helped in building more schools, for example. Much needs to be done."

Concerning the fighting going on in Sam Neua during the summer of 1959, he admitted that some units were aided by the North Vietnamese, "just as the royal Lao government was aided by the Americans," he said.

In response to questions about the situation in Tibet, he said the situation there was not clear. Then he asked if I thought he might become a Communist.

In 1960 he joined the Pathet-Lao government in Xieng Khouang.

THAO LEUAM

Thao Leuam, Minister of Finance in the 1959 government of Phoui Sananikone, was born in Savannakhet in 1923 according to his official biography although he states he was born in 1914. At that time his father worked for the French Consul in Ubon, Thailand, across the river from Pakse. He is a brother-in-law of Prince Boun Oum of Champassak who married one of Leuam's sisters.\(^1\) His primary education was in Vientiane and he received further schooling in Phnom Penh, completing thirteen

\(^1\)Thao Leuam was one of the first Lao officials to join the "Savannakhet government" of Prince Boun Oum.
years of education, more than most high-ranking Lao officials. His
government career began in the Bureau of Forests in Attopeu and he later
served as Deputy Governor at Pakse. He was Chef de Cabinet to the Prime
Minister of the Kingdom of Luang Prabang from 1942 to 1944. In 1945 he
participated in the resistance movement. In 1947 he served as Minister
of Finance in the second government of Souvannorath, and in 1949 as
Minister of Interior and Justice in the government of Prince Boun Oum.
In 1950 he was Minister of the National Economy in the Phou Sananikone
government, elected Deputy from Savannakhet in 1951 and re-elected in
1955. In 1953 he served as Minister of Public Health in the first gov-
ernment of Souvanna Phouma and in 1954 as Minister of Finance and Public
Welfare in the second Souvanna Phouma government. He has also served as
administrative secretary of the National Assembly and as Ambassador to
Thailand from 1951 to 1955, having held some of his posts concurrently.
From 1956 to 1957 he was Charge d'Affaires in Paris, after which he
was appointed Ambassador to Cambodia and finally, Minister of Finance
in 1959.

As a member of the CDIN he is by implication one of the young Lao
elite. Thao Leuam is a Catholic, the only Christian member of the
Cabinet.

In his office he has a large scale map of Laos to which he con-
stantly referred while making these remarks: "The 'economy of Laos' is
non-existent. The chief economic problems are rice production and
transportation. There must be roads before industry. First the people
must have enough to eat. There must be aid to help them improve their
cultivation of rice. We need French aid and American aid for live-
stock programs to help us raise pigs and cattle. If these little pro-
grams succeed, and each village then has enough rice and livestock, this
will be a great victory. The question of rice is very vital."

"Right now it is difficult to make a political impression on Phong
Saly or Sam Neua and to come in contact with the population through
health services and other means. We must have roads, from the south to
the north, before we can reach the masses. Roads are very necessary.
The only thing that is more important is adequate rice."

"There are no funds to apply to the building of new roads, so I
have asked USOM for help but have had no response as yet. However, they
have said that the question interests the United States government. [The
third largest allocation in the American aid program following the Army
and the police, is the funds provided for transportation]."

"If in three to five years we can make some progress with small
local industries and developing resources this too, would be a
victory [in the sense that then Laos might then be less dependent on
foreign aid]." "But for the next few years or so, foreign aid is
essential."
"I have begun to prepare a tax program for the rich people in the towns but there is a question whether the Assembly will approve it. [At this point a member of Thao Leuan's staff remarked, "After we have made some good progress in collecting taxes from the Chinese and Vietnamese, then we will begin to work on the Lao]."

"The Lao are a contented people once they have their rice. There are no great needs. Nobody has ever died of hunger in our country. Life is easy here; we have enough land. Only people in cities have the material things of the West."

In reference to this last comment, I asked him how many people in the towns were interested in living well and how many were interested in the welfare of their country. Thao Leuan smiled and said that many were interested in living well, but very few put love of their country first, expressing his hope that this attitude will change in the future.

In response to a question regarding the role of the non-Lao peoples, Thao Leuan said they prefer to remain by themselves, but that progress in integrating them is being made. He felt that in five to ten years there would be non-Lao groups as officials in the government. Currently a Kha is serving as Deputy from Attopeu in the National Assembly. There are also officials at the Tasseng level as well as minor officials in the administration of Laos, from the non-Lao population.

Thao Leuan appeared highly rated both by his colleagues and by many foreigners and seemed to be trying to do a conscientious job under great difficulties.

KHORANHOK SOUVANNAVONG

At the time of the interview Khorenboy Sovannavong was Secretary of State for the Interior. He was born in Vientiane in 1915 and received a diploma from the School of Law and Administration in Vientiane, a secondary training school for Lao officials. He gradually advanced through various grades in the administration. Among the posts in which he has served are: Chief of the Postal Administration in Thadeua near Vientiane; District Chief in Xieng Khouang Province; Mayor of Vientiane and Governor of Sayaboury and Nam Tha Provinces. He was associated with the Lao Issara movement and later a member of the Progressive Party, and today belongs to the coalition group, Rally of the Lao People. In 1958 he was elected Deputy from Nam Tha Province. During his term as Governor of Nam Tha, he was active in the Sports Association in that Province.

He is a member of the same extended family as Bong Sovannavong, who is his cousin, the son of his father's sister. This family and the Sananikone family are perhaps the two most prominent in Laos outside of the Royal family. His great-grandfather was a mandarin at the court
of the King of Vientiane. When that Kingdom was overthrown by the Thai his grandfather served as Chao Muong of Vientiane at the time of the Siamese rule. His father was Chao Muong of Vientiane at the time of Pavié, serving under the French in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

His father had several wives; he is the son of the first wife. Four of his half-brothers, prominent in Lao Administration, are sons of the second wife. These include Ourot Souvannavong, former Ambassador to Washington, and during the summer of 1959 scheduled to be appointed Ambassador to Vietnam. Ourot studied in Cambodia, and before his assignment abroad held an important position in the Ministry of Interior. Outhong Souvannavong, a former Minister is councilor to the King; he has a Bachelor's degree obtained in Saigon. Oudom, an ex-Ambassador to France, is at present serving as a Deputy Governor of the National Bank; he studied in France and has a degree in astronomy. Ouksao, who has a degree in agricultural engineering from France, is Director of the Ministry of the Plan, responsible for the administration of the American aid program.

Oudai, another relative, is a former Governor of Thakhek Province and is now Director of Protocol at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Like Khoranhok he studied in Vientiane.

Oudong Souvannavong, the only Lao to hold the degree of Doctor of Medicine [obtained in France], is the son of Khoranhok's sister. He has occupied various high posts and in 1960 was for a time Minister of Public Works, Planning, Transport and Telecommunications in the Kou Abbay government.

Khoranhok himself, Secretary of State for the Ministry of the Interior, (1959) was formerly Chef de Cabinet to the Secretary of Defense.

TANE CHOUNLANOUNTRI

Born in 1908 at Kengkék, a village near Savannakhet, Tane Chounlamountri was the son of a local merchant. His mother was the daughter of a prominent Savannakhet family. He is very proud of his village origin, and when I visited him, he said that his was one of the most famous villages in Laos because it had provided so many officials for the Lao government. In his office he has a list of all the officials originating from Kengkék, and as the Deputy for this area in the National Assembly, he is now in the process of collecting money to build a bridge to link his village with the road, and also to dig several wells. The village, he said, has a population of between one and two thousand, and he told the American Ambassador about this "so that they will know about my village." After this orientation he took
me across the hall to the office of the Secretary of State for the Interior and located Kengkoh on the large-scale map for me.

In response to my questions during our initial interview, he indicated that he would like to write his biography for me and also submit a statement of his ideas. Following the biographical data below is a translation of his prepared statement.

He was educated at the Lycee Pavie in Vientiane and received the Diplome Universitaire in 1926, having received eleven years of schooling. From 1937 to 1942 he served as Chao Muong of the region of Borikane, in Vientiane Province. In 1942 he was transferred to Xieng Khouang and served there until 1945. From 1945 to 1946 he served as Governor of Phong Saly. In 1950 he was Executive Secretary to the Lao Cabinet, and in 1951 he served as President of the Court of Appeal. From 1952 to 1957 he was Director of Pension Funds. In May, 1958 he was elected a Deputy to the National Assembly and served as Executive Secretary in the Ministry of Public Health. In 1959 he was appointed to a similar position in the Ministry of Justice. These are in effect sub-ministerial posts.

THE SITUATION OF LAOS
August, 1959

According to the thoughts of Thao Tane Chounlamousuntri, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Justice, of the Royal Government, presided over by his Excellency Phouxi Sananikone.

Internal Administration

The present regime, a democratic monarchy, goes well with the desires and hopes of the Lao people. The King represents the unity and the soul of the nation. It is earnestly hoped that the monarchy will continue to exist in the future.

The Constitution has recognized the right of the Lao people to vote and to elect their representatives in the National Assembly. There are advantages as well as disadvantages in this system.

By way of advantages, the people, via their representatives, participate in the affairs of the country and their control. With regard to disadvantages the people are poorly educated. Many are still illiterate, and do not understand the intrinsic value, and above all, the ideologies of the candidates who represent them. The last supplementary elections are proof of
this. Almost all the contests were won by the Communists. What is necessary here is a transitional system, that is, one which will allow the designation of representatives by the crown, or by the government, on the one hand, and representatives elected by the people on the other, while awaiting development of education in the villages. This wise measure would avoid the dismissal of educated candidates presented to the voters, and would eliminate the disorders which can be created by the voters.

**Government Leaders**

It would not do to pass without commenting on this point. On the political scene those figures who have dominated the government are Katay Don Sasorith, Prince Souvanna Phouma and Phoui Sananikone. The former is from the south, the second originally from the north, and the third is from central Laos. The first and third are from the Lao bourgeoisie, and the second is from royal stock, belonging to the family of the Viceroy, the royal family "that goes ahead." We know well the tradition that was handed down to us of three-fold royalty: the central royal family, that is, the present royal family which occupies the throne, of which the Crown Prince is Savang Watthana; the royal family "that goes ahead" which currently includes Prince Phetsarath, Prince Souvanna Phouma and Prince Souphanouvong, and which formerly occupied itself with the Army, police, and foreign relations; and the royal family "which goes behind" which is currently in the background, not having any representatives on the political scene, but which is engaged in the internal affairs of the Kingdom, finance, public works and economy.

Even though Prince Souphanouvong is obedient to Communism, he maintains his royal blood and his respect for the throne. Proof of this was in 1953 when his Lao-Vietminh troops coming from Dien Bien Phu approached within four kilometers of Luang Prabang. Knowing that the King refused to leave the palace, he told his officers and soldiers, "I will cut off the hand of anyone who attacks the royal city." [This differs from the usual version of the battle, to the effect that the decision of the King to remain in the royal capital and the prophecy of the blind monk of Luang Prabang that the Communists would not succeed, inspired the defense of the city.]
attacking and conquering

I.

The retreat of the Iao-Vietnamese troops before

I've

the enemy in Laos: In June the Politburo directed our

country. For my part, I see these two things at

the same time in the Politburo directives currently

get an order on the radio being held by a member of the
directorate from the government right now. He looks with

some joy that the ex-president and the ex-communist, others

are rejoicing, and the government is as yet not accepted by them. However,

even there are some of the government, or government, internal

the problem of the national community. Internal

the government relations of the internal

Prince Souvanouvong have been able to obtain the con-

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2. The respect for the Crown on the part of the chief rebel

It is desirable that the Crown Prince himself should undertake for some time the high function of head of government. In doing so he would bring together, I am certain, all the political parties, and concord would be established around the throne among the high personalities of the Kingdom. No one would command, and all would serve the country and their King.

I had the occasion one day to banter with one of leaders, of the Neo Lao Hak Sat [the political party successor to the Pathet Lao].

"You say that we are bitter against each other in this country. Your paper Neo Lao Hak Sat and that of the Lao Hakka Sat [Committee for the Defense of the National Interests organ] insult and torment each other. Added to this is the Voice of the Lao People, the National Unity and Independence Party, directed to modifying your pro-Communist conduct.

"So, worn out with incessant and interminable quarrels, if the Good Lord one day put me in charge of forming the government, here is what I would do: I would call the influential men of your group to collaborate with me in the setting to right of the country. I need your intelligence and your capacity for work, but not your beliefs and your ideology. I will forbidd your journal 'Neo Lao Hak Sat' to appear, because I don't want to hear your songs of praise for Lenin and Stalin, Mao Tse Tung and Ho Chi Minh, and I will slash the neck of anyone who communicates with, or gives intelligence to the Communists. On our part, I would like all the journals to follow the same line of conduct, which consists in bringing constructive ideas to the government, and not in provoking senseless sterile criticism with regard to our internal unity, or for purposes of alienating our immediate neighbors, or friendly nations.

"Well then, what do you think of it? Are you willing to bring me your sincere collaboration without duplicity?"

He replied, "Yes, one hundred per cent."

There you are, a sounding out of the spirit of one of the leaders of the Neo Lao Hak Sat.
Laos is geographically indefensible from the military point of view, with her three million inhabitants scattered over an area of two hundred fifty thousand square kilometers.

Roads are non-existent in the mountainous areas. Inter-village and inter-provincial communication is very difficult at every season of the year. This makes it hard to move troops and equipment. Also, air transport cannot operate during the rainy season. That is why it is necessary to change our means of defense. We currently have 25,000 men in the Army equipped in western style. This is sufficient for police and village security, but to combat an enemy from the outside, it is necessary to create a guerilla army. This would consist of about 25,000 men, equipped with light arms communication and transmission equipment. It would need many helicopters and some fast, small airplanes.

This infantry would, moreover, be equipped with radar of the type currently in use by the French Army in Algeria, sensitive enough to detect the enemy at a distance of five to seven kilometers. If we possess means of defense, we will be able to resist the Vietminh Communists. If we don't, we expose our young Army to sheer loss. It will be necessary to be diplomatic as has been done formerly by our King, to tie the knot of friendship with the whole world. This cannot be done immediately but by degrees.

Many people will disagree with me on this point, but why then do Thailand and the United States allow Soviet Embassies in their countries? The way I see it, it would be a better solution to accept a Soviet Embassy in Vientiane to regulate the affairs of the ex-Pathet Lao. That would constitute an honorable solution without the return of the International Control Commission.

Having said this, I am opposed to any interpretation which excludes my friendship for the representatives of the American Mission to Laos, for the sacrifices and the most precious aid they bring my country.

American Aid

The precious American aid is very much appreciated
in Laos -- only the way in which it is applied is often the cause of criticism. It is complicated and slow, given by many people of the aid mission to many people in the Lao government, in a way that makes it difficult for the heads of the Lao government to follow and still more difficult for the other Ministers. Most of this aid goes to the police and the Army, and very little to the economists, such as Public Works and Industry.

The results are visible only to the government and the chiefs of the various national services. They are seen with difficulty by the mass of the people. One wishes that the aid in question would be distributed once a year, at the beginning of each year. This would allow the government services benefiting from the aid to plan their programs with continuity and without interruption. The aid will have to be augmented in some sections in order to ease our economic conditions. Thus, we would certainly be better off if we had many black-top roads linking Vientiane to Thakhek, and Vientiane to Luang Prabang, and to Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua via Pakse and Tha Thome, as well as to Savannakhet and the Vietnamese coast. With these well-made roads surplus agricultural products could be absorbed by other provinces that need them and internal economic equilibrium could thus be created.

At the present moment the American aid in road-building consists in making platforms or earthen embankments, which the rains carry away each year. With each new dry season they begin the same thing again, never accomplishing more. In my opinion, I feel it would be good to limit road work performed with the money from foreign aid to black-topping the surface of roads that have already been created. Then at the end of each dry season, one would at once see the concrete evidences of American aid. This would let the masses see with their own eyes this type of American aid and appreciate it.

Rural aid is very well received. It is wished that this kind of aid would also extend to small artisans and industries in the village.

In the private sector, long term loans with small interest, given by the American aid mission, would be well received by Lao businessmen, who, for lack of capital, are condemned to inactivity.
In the social domain, the local financial means are insufficient. There are enough schools, but they are not as yet adequate. Dispensaries are almost nonexistent in the important provincial villages. In my opinion, it would be a good idea for American aid to go as well into this activity, in order to help the Lao government lower the infant mortality rate.

In the administrative department, it would be a good idea to make the number of Provinces twenty-four instead of twelve. This would reinforce Royal authority and also tighten up surveillance and control of the territory of the Kingdom. It would entail great expenses but is necessary if we want to survive. Currently, the large territory of our country with the weak security the government exercises on the villages makes possible the birth of subversive ideas.

**Laos Seen From Above**

Seen from above with a magnifying glass, Laos is a little strip of mountainous terrain situated in the heart of the Indochinese peninsula. It exists among other strips of land called Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Vietnam and the Philippines. They constitute Southeast Asia.

How are these split-up countries able to exist, each with its own administration, beside their colossal neighbors, India and China? Up until now, they owe it to France, England and the United States, but despite the interest of these big powers, the countries of Southeast Asia are going to be eaten up sooner or later, one after the other by Communist China with the support of Soviet Russia. Then, in the last round, India will be devoured in its turn, in spite of its size.

Already the tentacles of Communist China have reached out to Burma and Cambodia. Only Laos, Thailand, the Philippines, South Vietnam and Malaya fight courageously against being taken. Today Laos is invaded. Tomorrow it will be Thailand, and the next day Cambodia and Burma.

Just as small fish in the ocean and little birds in the air are eaten up by larger ones, the same will happen to little countries. It is time to grow together in one cluster which will be strong.