

The Laos crisis is seen by most western observers as an attempt by the Communists, acting through the dissident neutralist groups, to split and ~~destroy~~ <sup>HARRAS</sup> the Kong Le forces, ~~and~~ to push Kong Le off the Plaine des Jarres without having to blast him off through fullscale civil war.

The Kong Le forces are poorly equipped, badly supplied and wanting in money. So far as is known they are not being paid at all.

A French military adviser said of the situation: "The Western nations have, since the signing of the Geneva accords, been <sup>supplying</sup> ~~supplying~~ <sup>Kong</sup> Le's forces with an abundance of educational films, cultural officers and advice. The Pathet Lao, on the other hand, have been kept ~~absolutely~~ richly supplied with food, ammunition and general supplies.

"I expect to be present at the disappearance of the Neutralist Army as an independent force within the next few days," the officer said.

The Kong Le troops, <sup>MAKE</sup> ~~badly~~ supplied and low in morale because of this, ~~make~~ an appealing target for the Pathet Lao. The Pathet Lao are giving supplies, food and ammunition from their own stocks to the dissident neutralists, and have been stepping up a campaign to seduce more Kong Le soldiers into either their own ranks or the ranks of the dissidents—either suits their purpose equally well. Now, with their military push, they can cut off sections of the Kong Le forces, and bring pressure to bear on them to join the dissident or PL ranks.

Kong Le, although a tough, inspiring and pragmatic battalion commander, is not trained to the duties of a commander-in-chief. His staff officers are very weak, and the combination of these factors and the area over which the neutralist forces are scattered makes his troops a very loose-knit formation, ~~very~~ <sup>easy</sup> to cut and scatter.



If the PL can succeed in this plan<sup>1</sup> to break Kong Le's power, Souvanna Phouma's position will be weakened to such an extent that it is certain he will resign. With no middle force, and the U.S. decision to break off deep involvement in Laos already made, an extreme left-wing form of neutralism, something of the order of that which might be presented by the Front for the <sup>NATIONAL</sup> liberation of South Vietnam, <sup>(Viet Cong)</sup> will be the policy of the resulting Laotian government ~~in the west.~~

It is unlikely that ~~Phoumi~~ <sup>RIGHTWING LEADER NOSAVAN</sup> would decide to fight, in view of the extreme doubt that the u.s. would <sup>actively aid</sup> ~~return in an active role to help~~ him, so that the present de facto partition would continue in Laos, except that the amount of real estate held by the Communists would be increased by their takeover of the neutralist positions. Time is on their side, as the recruitment pattern in South Vietnam makes abundantly clear.

The basic pattern of Laos now is that there are a number of divided and muddled factions <sup>l</sup> ~~rightists~~, neutralists, the old families etc- and the communists. <sup>l</sup> The various other factions do not know what they want but the communists know exactly what they want, and intend to have it.

It is difficult to see how Kong Le, the only effective force between the Communists and their goal, can continue to stand while he is basically unaided by the west.



The big question over ~~this~~ latest development is why the Communists have taken this action—despite its obvious advantages—when, with time on their side, it was obvious they would eventually get what they wanted anyway.

the answers are regarded as having a positive and a negative aspect.

There is evidence that a number of <sup>P/ACRE</sup>~~Pleien~~ Des Jarres villages formerly regarded as pro-PL have now changed their allegiance to the neutralists. The PL must see latent danger here.

The reaction to this <sup>danger</sup>~~dager~~ has obviously been the ~~attempt~~ campaign to divide Kong Le's forces, and the fighting has followed Kong Le's spirited reaction to this.



Some observers see the Communist sponsorship of Colonel Deuane, ~~REPLACING QUINIM PHOLSENNA,~~ the dissident leader, as being the start of a sustained campaign to have Deuane finally made neutralist army commander, although the forces he would command would not be the neutralists as they are now known.

If Deuane did make this progress, ~~NEUTRALIST PREMIER~~ Souvanna would have the choice of either accepting him—which would ~~be~~ mean he would be reliant on sponsoring ~~such~~ <sup>SUCH</sup> schemes as would have Deuane's support—or resigning. Prince Souvanna has a house on the cote d'azur, where he intends to retire. If the choice comes, the cote d'azur will have a strong appeal.

Phoumi will not fight because he has turned much of the south of Laos into an armed camp, and it is the southern provinces—homeland of his troops, for which he feels, and which ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> hopes to retain. Any move ~~in~~ against the communists would extend ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> lines and bring the full communist fury—including the vietminh who seem about 12 feet tall to all Lao—down on him.

He is unlikely to risk this.

Copies ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> a recent North Vietnamese magazine lauded ~~Deuane~~ <sup>Deuane</sup> and made much of him with an abundance of photographs when he appeared as the Laotian representative at a communist-type conference. Such treatment is reserved for those likely to appear in more august roles than that of an obscure delegate to an insignificant conference.

Deuane, who was with Kong Le at the ~~time~~ <sup>time</sup> of the 1960 coup, was known to western correspondents then as a "bully-boy" and is known for his arrogance. He is also ~~well~~ <sup>well</sup> known for his ambition, which suits the Communists very well at this stage.