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Before We Turn Laos Into Another Korea

The irony in the crisis over Laos is that this little country was for a short time last year the only country in the world which had succeeded in achieving national unity by our favorite American formula—unification by free elections. Indeed the elections were held in exactly the way favored by our friend Syngman Rhee in Korea, i.e. the elections which finally unified the country were not nationwide but confined to the northern provinces which had hitherto been under the control of the Communist-led Pathet Lao. The balloting in May of 1958 was for 21 new seats which were added to the National Assembly, raising its total membership to 59. Because of a split in the conservative forces, the Pathet Lao won 9 of the 21 new seats and a smaller neutralist party won four. This gave the Left 13 votes in a National Assembly dominated by the 36 votes of the anti-Communist Rally of the Lao People. The Left "still was not anywhere near a majority," as Eric Kocher, director of the State Department's South-East Asia Affairs told a House Government Operations subcommittee last March.* The Pathet Lao were given two seats in the Cabinet, their leader Prince Souphanouvong being made Minister for Planning. The other post which went to the Left, perhaps in that whimsicality supposed to be characteristic of Laos, was the Ministry of Religion and Fine Arts.

Successful Trickery

The agreement which brought about these elections and this coalition, ending a continuously smoldering state of civil war in Laos, was opposed by the U. S. government. Mr. Dulles had refused to take part in the 1954 Geneva talks which ended the war in Indo-China, and encouraged the Diem government in the southern part of divided Vietnam to break that part of the Geneva accord which called for the unification of Vietnam by free elections; Dulles and Diem feared that these elections would be won by Ho Chi-minh and the Communist led forces of the north. In Laos, the State Department opposed the agreement for a coalition and elections because it feared a Czech-style take-over from within. "We did everything we could," Walter S. Robertson, then Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, told the Porter Hardy subcommittee last March, "to keep it [i.e. a coalition] from happening." But the alternative, a divided country and endemic civil war, was unpopular in Laos. (See box on this page). The Pathet Lao, fearing trickery, had insisted that the elections be held under the supervision of a coalition Cabinet. The outcome showed that their fears were well-founded. The Geneva accord had set up an International Control Commission of India, Canada and Poland to bring about peaceful unification of Laos

* See Page 33 of the newly released censored transcript of hearings on U. S. Aid Operations in Laos before the Porter Hardy subcommittee of House Government Operations, a rich mine of background information on the current crisis.

How U.S. Blocked Laotian Unity

Mr. [John T. M.] REDDAN [chief counsel subcommittee]: Who was putting the pressure on the [Laos] government to enter into this coalition [with Pathet Lao]?

Mr. [Eric] KOCHER [Director, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs, Dept. of State]: These were mostly Cabinet members, and they also said there was a feeling, a strong feeling among the population for unity. They had been disunified for so long that now for the first time they really wanted to get together as one country with all the Lao people together and then everything would work out fine.

[Security Deletion]

Mr. REDDAN: You say the Lao Government was told that if they went through with this coalition we might withhold aid from them? Is that a correct interpretation?

Mr. KOCHER: I don't think it was quite as strong as that. That we would have to consider reassessing our policy toward Laos. . . .

Mr. REDDAN: No one laid it on the line, in other words, that if you go through with this coalition, no more aid?

Mr. KOCHER: It wasn't done as bluntly as that. . . . As I said, many times it appeared as if the coalition government was about to take place, even before that, over a period of perhaps two years before it actually did take place. We each time bent every effort to prevent that.

—Executive session, Porter Hardy subcommittee of Gov't Operations, March 11, on U.S. aid in Laos.

by free elections. On July 19, 1958, after the May election results had been certified and the two northern provinces united with the rest of the country, the Control Commission voted 2-to-1, Poland being the dissenter, to adjourn *sine die*. Three days later the Prime Minister of Laos resigned and then formed a new government without the two Pathet Lao ministers. "The point is," as Mr. Robertson told the Porter Hardy subcommittee, "they did get their provinces back from the Communists and they did get rid of the coalition."

Just Like de Gaulle

This was neat footwork, though somewhat below the high moral plane of formal State Department declarations. Ever since the government of Laos has become less democratic. Last January the National Assembly dissolved itself and voted the Prime Minister emergency powers which Under Secretary of State Dillon described to the Porter Hardy subcommittee as "generally similar to the types of powers that were voted to General de Gaulle's government in France." The subcommittee report last June described them less delicately as "dictatorial" and said one of the first acts of the new govern-

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Kastenmeier, Freshman Democrat from Wisconsin, Offers Resolution Against Germ Weapons

First Protest in Congress Against New Horrors for "Little Wars" (Like Laos?)

"Mr. Speaker, I have taken the floor today to speak to you about a problem which I feel is important to us as a nation of free people who honor and protect life, and hopefully, represent and live as a moral and good people. My talk is the increased emphasis by the Defense Department on the CBR program; that is, the chemical, biological, and radiological warfare program. The Defense Department is interested in increasing the CBR program from an approximately current level of \$40 million to \$125 million.

"We should note that it does not take a great level of technological skill or great amounts of money to build chemical and biological weapons. It is not unlikely that smaller nations that are less responsible would begin using these deadly weapons against each other. This, of course, is why it is of paramount importance that the United States set a moral tone in this area.

Not for Preventive War But—

"I wish to consider the subtle but real change in policy for which adoption is pressed by those connected with the CBR program. The purpose is to gain acceptance for chemical and biological weapons, as just another weapon in our arsenal. Gen. [Wm. A.] Creasy [former head of the Army Chemical Corps] suggested before the House Space Committee that CR be used as an offensive weapon. He stated on page 15 of the hearings [before that committee]—

I am not advocating preventive war but we must change our policy, which is that we don't hit back until you hit us.

"The argument of the Defense Department, through General Stubbs, is that a war fought with chemical weapons is a more humane war. They talk about their psychochemicals which can make cowards out of brave men and vice versa; they tell of the possibilities of sleep chemicals which will put populations to sleep for hours, while soldiers march in and take over the area. This, of course, is not the whole story. General Creasy has stated that CBR weapons are as deadly or deadlier than nuclear warfare.

CBR for Brush-Fire Wars

"How would these weapons be used? Judging from the testimony before the Space Committee, these instruments of warfare would be used in the so-called brush-fire localized war. CBR would take the place of nuclear weapons in this kind of encounter. Depending on the kind of bacteria or chemical used, the results could be just as horrendous, indiscriminate and inhumane as if nuclear weapons were, in fact, used. Indeed, there are those that take the position that we should not build these weapons, arguing that the range of

The Kastenmeier Resolution

"House Concurrent Resolution 33, Reaffirming the long-standing policy of the U.S. that the U.S. shall not engage in biological or gas warfare unless such weapons are first used by our enemies.

"Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress hereby reaffirms the long-standing policy of the United States that in the event of war, the United States shall under no circumstances resort to the use of biological weapons or the use of poisonous or obnoxious gasses unless they are first used by our enemies."

—Introduced Sept. 3 by Kastenmeier (Wis.)

destruction which we have in our defense arsenal would seem to be quite complete without an expended CBR program.

Kastenmeier Himself Partly Won Over

"Given the present world situation, I am sure that this is not a realistic position. There is strong evidence to suggest that the Soviet Union is engaging in a build-up of biological and chemical weapons. Hence, the realities of the situation appear to demand that we ourselves engage in an increased program. I might add that I agree to this view only reluctantly.

"The fact, however, that we might have to have an expanded program in this field does not mean that we should change the basic policies of the United States which were reiterated by President Roosevelt on June 8, 1943, when he stated that the U. S. under no circumstances would use poisonous or obnoxious gases unless used first by our enemies. This policy is being attacked on all fronts by various officials close to the Defense Department. For example, General Rothchild stated [in *Harpers* for June]:

We must reject once and for all the position stated by President Roosevelt that an enemy can have the first chemical or biological blow wherever or whenever he wishes. That blow could be disastrous. We must make it clear that we consider these weapons among the normal usable means of war.

Mr. Speaker, unless we are willing to express publicly a moral national policy on this issue we will be creating the impression that we are oblivious to the horrors that these weapons bring if unleashed. I am introducing today a concurrent resolution which will reaffirm our policy of non-use of biological and chemical weapons unless they are first used by our enemy. This is the way our historical heritage and our moral values can be reaffirmed."

—Kastenmeier (D. Wis.) in the House Sept. 3 (Abridged)

Williams (N.J.) Introduces Bill for World Action Against Radioactivity

Senator Harrison A. Williams (D. N.J.) introduced a bill, S 2645, on Sept. 3 which would lay the foundations for international cooperation in combatting radiation hazards. Senator Williams said Senator Hill had already introduced a bill (S. 1628, discussed in our last week's issue) which would give the U. S. Public Health Service authority to establish radiation health standards. Williams said his bill would authorize the Surgeon General, as head of USPHS, to invite other nations to participate in a world-wide project to

"first, accumulate and disseminate reliable data on actual atomic fallout and other sources of radiation; second, promote accelerated research by all governments and agencies into the precise health effects of radiation and the means for curbing it; and third, disseminate to the medical and health professions and the peoples of the world . . . the results of these studies." The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare where it may be pigeonholed with the Hill bill unless there is public pressure.