

of opposition similar to that in Stamford.

Nevertheless, if the New Haven experience is examined closely, there appear to be grounds for hope that the Stamford experiment, properly handled, might succeed. In a demonstration program begun in 1962 and underwritten by the Federal government, New Haven's housing authority subsidized the rents of low-income Negro families in twenty-six single-family homes scattered in middle-class white areas; these families were accepted by their neighbors and the experiment had no effect on the price of housing, nor was there any panic selling. The experiment was undoubtedly helped by the fact that the neighbors knew nothing about the operation; the usual stereotypes and fears about public-housing clients had no chance to develop, and the Negro families were accepted on their own merits.

In general, the Stamford back-lashers have comparatively modest incomes and live in modest homes bought through years of scrimping. These homes represent the largest single investment they will ever make. They feel they have purchased not just a house but a social environment, with churches and good schools close at hand. The problems of the city center, which they struggled so long to escape, are well behind them. They feel that asking them to concern themselves with those problems now is unfair. Their insistent opposition to "down-zoning," with class and race prejudice ever present in the background, is closely associated with fears for the safety of the investment they have made in their homes. One of the leaders of the opposition says that he expects to lose about half of the value of his home if the proposed public housing is built on a nearby site.

However, the truth seems to be that such fears are unfounded. A study of the effect of residential integration on housing investments done for the Commission on Race and Housing showed that when Negroes purchase property in a formerly all-white area, the odds are about four to one that the prices in that area will keep up with or exceed those in comparable all-white neighborhoods. The reason seems to be

that the white and Negro real-estate markets are quite separate; with the pressure of Negro migration and with the small supply of housing available to Negroes, the tendency of prices is to rise. If a small, well-designed project is built in one of the middle-class white neighborhoods in Stamford, and if some of the nearby houses are sold to Negroes, there is a good chance that the sellers will profit. Of course, where there is "blockbusting" by brokers coupled with panic selling by whites, prices may at first go down, but prophecies of such happenings are self-fulfilling and they need not happen at all. Nor need a well-designed project for a few Negro families in the middle of an area containing hundreds of houses and thousands of people seriously affect the way of life and property of the established residents.

Plan Still Active

The future of the scattered-site program in Stamford is not bright, but its proponents have not given up. Some time ago the mayor predicted, "Things will get calmer as the facts come out and people realize that this isn't so bad—there will be

enough people of good will to see that we get at least some measure of meaningful integration. I know there will, because I have faith in Stamford." Despite the setback to "meaningful integration" implicit in the recent proposal for combining units of public housing with housing for the elderly in the city's center, George McCulloch says that the administration is still determined to build some scattered housing in middle-class areas. If this is done, it will be a notable achievement.

The fight has been difficult for Tom Mayers. This month, when he accepted the seventh annual award of the Catholic Interracial Council, he said, "I have never felt so alone as I have in these past few months; don't let anyone stand alone who expresses a conviction." Mayers comes up for re-election next year, and many observers seem to think that the ultimate result of the controversy will be to end his political career. They recall what happened to Mayor Arthur J. Holland of Trenton, New Jersey, who moved with his family into a biracial area to set a good example. He lost the next election.

An Election To Test Laotian Stability

DONALD KIRK

VIENTIANE, LAOS
THE PORTENTS were ominous for thousands of Laotians who subscribe to a mixture of animist and Buddhist beliefs. First, the biggest bronze Buddha in the country was reported to have shed tears. Then there was a four-day battle between black and red ants on the outskirts of the administrative capital. Finally, the monument of That Luang, a ninety-foot bronze tower emerging from a royal pagoda, was said to be leaning toward the east, indicating that Laos had again become a colony of a western power. (Some say the tower leaned toward the east throughout the era of French colonialism.)

While western observers joked

privately about such stories, the Laotians had good reason for distress. Just as economists were hoping that the country might start to reap a bumper rice crop, the Mekong flooded its banks in late August and early September, destroying thirty per cent of the potential harvest. No sooner had the flood waters begun to recede than the National Assembly angrily voted down the administration's budget and was dissolved by King Savang Vatthana, who called for general elections. Two weeks later, on October 21, the air-force commander, in an act of defiance over the consolidation of commands, ordered a bombing attack on military installations in the capital.



Also, from the middle of August until late November, the unity of the government was threatened by the ambitions of Kong Lae, the independent-minded leader of the neutralist forces. Kong Lae's men exchanged occasional shots with Royal Army troops near the Plain of Jars in north-central Laos until three of Kong Lae's colonels persuaded him to flee to Bangkok in mid-October. He returned a month later, saw that he still lacked support, and took asylum in the Indonesian Embassy. He then resigned, blaming his eclipse on American intrigue, and went to Indonesia, ostensibly to inspect facilities for some forty neutralist Laotian troops in training there.

The rebellion in the Assembly, the bombing, and the Kong Lae affair, though not directly related, were indicative of the struggle for a united national front against Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese troops in the eastern regions.

Contest for Power

Observers attribute the defeat of the budget, by a 26-19 vote, to the machinations of younger men in the Assembly who were annoyed with the government for not promoting some of them to the cabinet. The "younger" generation (most of its members are in their thirties and forties) was particularly eager for the sixty-two-year-old Premier, Prince Souvanna Phouma, to appoint members to four seats reserved for the Communist-affiliated Pathet Lao, which pulled out of the coalition government more than two years ago. Souvanna, anxious to maintain at least a façade of adherence to the 1962 Geneva Agreement on Laos, has kept the Pathet Lao seats open in the unlikely event that the Com-

munist will some day occupy them.

More than that, however, Souvanna has refused to listen to the younger delegates' objections to several of his cabinet appointees and has paid no attention to demands that men from their group be named to three unfilled junior ministerial posts. Observers here tend to view the quarrel not in terms of right- and left-wing politics but as a constitutional struggle similar to those between the legislative and executive branches of western governments.

In the contest for power, the executive appears reasonably certain to win at least a short-term victory. Some of the recalcitrant delegates, charging intimidation by government representatives, have said they will not run in the elections, scheduled for January 1. Many became totally disillusioned after occupying the seats they won in the last election in July, 1965. While the constitution stipulates that matters pertaining to its interpretation are "within the competence of the National Assembly," these delegates know that the Assembly cannot exercise its will against the combined strength of the cabinet, the King, and the Royal Army. Far better, some have said, to quit politics and resume lower-echelon administrative positions in the government itself.

The major difficulty with the last Assembly was that many of its members failed to take a realistic view of the nation's problems. During the budget debate, for instance, delegates called for a reduction in the deficit while opposing taxes. Some wanted more improvements, presumably financed by United States aid, for their own districts but criticized aid elsewhere. Delegates charged in general that the country was far too

dependent on foreign support but complained that the army was not moving swiftly enough against the Pathet Lao. The army, in fact, could not move at all were it not for the United States, which defrays more than half the national budget of nearly \$30 million and equips both royal and neutralist forces outside the budget.

In the long run, the discontented politicians may pose a severe threat to national stability. At this stage, however, it is doubtful if they would go much beyond opposing government measures within the Assembly.

THE DEVELOPMENT of some semblance of political stability in Laos is attributable in large part to the increasing success of the Royal Army since the summer of 1964. Military observers estimate that the central government here controls some fifty per cent of the land and nearly three-quarters of the nation's three million population as compared to forty per cent of the land and three-fifths of the population two years ago. Royalist forces, totaling seventy thousand men, have defeated the Pathet Lao forces to the point where they are no more than an extension of the North Vietnamese Army, whose principal interest in Laos is to defend the Ho Chi Minh Trail into South Vietnam. An informed source claimed that thirty thousand North Vietnamese troops now occupy Pathet Lao territory in support of some twenty thousand Pathet Lao. Two years ago, he estimated, the figures were reversed.

The tide began to turn in favor of the government after the debacle in the spring of 1964, in which the Pathet Lao drove Kong Lae's neutralist forces off the Plain of

Jars. A combined Royal Army and neutralist force that summer cleared the road from Vientiane to the royal capital of Luang Prabang. Since then Royal troops have driven the Pathet Lao from strongholds north of the plain and have repulsed attacks by North Vietnamese on installations in the south. One key to their success is the Royal Lao Air Force, whose U.S.-supplied T-28s strafed enemy troops as they moved across open areas.

The real key, however, is the unity of the armed forces, which have weathered a series of internal crises and may be all the stronger as a result. The most serious struggle was the defeat of rightist strong man General Phoumi Nosavan, who attempted to seize power early in 1965 and fled to Bangkok after his failure. Both Laotian and western officials regard the final outcome of the air-force bombing and the Kong Lae affair as two more steps toward total integration of the military establishment.

The immediate cause of the air-force insurrection was the reluctance of the commander, General Thao Ma, to integrate his command with the military headquarters in Vientiane. Operating out of the southern city of Savannakhet, General Ma failed to appear at a ceremony joining the commands two days before sending eight of his T-28s on their mission over Vientiane. Ma's difficulty was that the planes had the capacity to inflict only minor damage on the capital and lacked the ground support needed to pose a real threat. Finally convinced that he could hold the base at Savannakhet and nothing more, Ma led ten of his best pilots to Thailand, where they probably will remain despite half-hearted Laotian attempts at extradition.

Observers speculate that Ma may have hoped to gain the support of neutralist troops, since Kong Lae had left for Bangkok only four days before his attack. Like Ma, Kong Lae resented attempts at integrating his command into the Royal Army, notwithstanding Souvanna's assurances that he could retain nominal control. Royal generals charged that Kong Lae, whose eight thousand men were mainly responsible for holding the western rim of the Plain of Jars, was not a good disciplinarian and

could not have blocked a major assault. The only answer, they said, was close co-ordination under one command, or at least under a joint command in which the neutralists would have to submit to royalist orders in a crisis situation.

One drawback to integration of commands is that Kong Lae has promoted scores of officers, including himself, to high ranks without royal



ordinance. "Major General" Kong Lae is actually a captain, colonels are sergeants, and a number of lieutenants and captains are corporals. Officials hope they can negotiate the question of ranks and are reasonably confident of winning the loyalty of most of the neutralist forces.

Threat from Pathet Lao

Military leaders believe that the departure of Ma and Kong Lae has rid the armed forces of their two greatest internal problems since Phoumi. Commanders still tend to be jealous of their regions, but not nearly so much as several years ago. Observers say that regular troop movements from one general's area to another, often an exercise in politics and power, are more feasible now than before. They also note that all the army's top generals attended their annual meeting with the King in October at the palace in Luang Prabang. Among them was General Vang Pao, leader of the hardy Meo tribesmen, who had always been "too busy" to make the trip in previous years.

One reason for the large attendance was that the generals hoped to persuade the King to postpone the elections from January 1, in the middle of the dry season, to the start of the rainy season in April. The North Vietnamese usually stage a series of "rice raids" during the dry season, swooping down on villages and looting them of their rice supplies. General Kouprasith Abhay, the army's second highest but most powerful leader, acknowledged his fears that Pathet Lao terrorists and North Vietnamese troops also would attack government installations and polling places. If the elections could be postponed until the monsoon, he argued, the chances of enemy action would be substantially reduced.

The Pathet Lao have made clear their opposition to the elections. Refusing Souvanna's invitation to participate, Prince Souphanavong, the Pathet Lao leader, charged that the elections would be "completely illegal and reactionary," that their only purpose was "to set up a new administration to make greater efforts to serve the U.S. scheme to occupy central and lower Laos."

Both the King and the Premier, however, have expressed their determination to hold the elections not later than January 6 to abide by the letter of the constitution, which stipulates that a general election must be held within ninety days after dissolution of the Assembly.

Even without the threat of Pathet Lao terrorism, the government faces tremendous obstacles in running the elections smoothly. The electoral rolls, for instance, are six years out of date, and district governors must issue special identification cards to the entire electorate, which theoretically consists of everyone over eighteen years of age. Election officials, moreover, will have great difficulty setting up polling places in remote areas, partly because of transportation problems. Indeed, the elections promise to be far more difficult than the 1965 balloting, in which only literate citizens, mostly government workers and army officers, were eligible to vote.

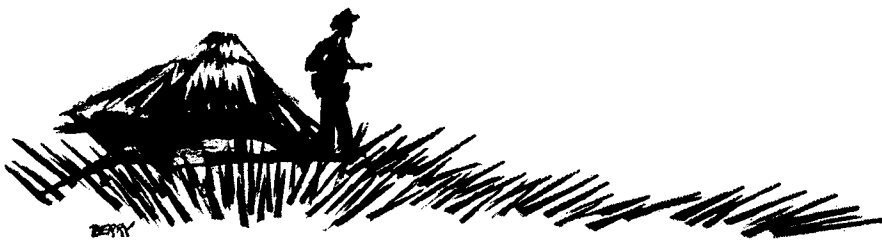
GENERAL Ouan Ratikone, the Royal Army commander, has said the military leaders will not participate in electioneering. In a country whose

future has often been determined by coup d'état, General Ouan's pronouncement seems too good to be true. It appears altogether likely that commanders will do what they can to help ensure that government-supported candidates defeat the delegates who voted down the budget. General Kouprasith, who commands the pivotal Vientiane region, put the issue bluntly to me: "We have our opinion on politics, and our opinion is the same as the government's. The government wants us to encourage certain candidates. The troublesome elements will be pushed out."

While the elections may not be a shining example of democracy in action, they probably will be an improvement on the past. The last full-scale election, in 1960, was rigged so that government candidates won by wide margins. Even General Kouprasith concedes that the army "cannot control the minds of the people" and realizes that "a small percentage of bad men" will win.

Far from creating disunity, in fact, the entire process of forming a new National Assembly could strengthen the central government. U.S. officials, injured to disaster and disillusionment, are at least hopeful that the campaigning will not reduce the hard-won stability of the past two years. As a buffer area between China and Thailand, the government-held portions of Laos are well worth the \$80 million in military and economic aid that the United States has invested here in 1966. The United States and North Vietnam now appear to have reached a stalemate in which the Laotian and U.S. troops will not threaten the Ho Chi Minh Trail on the ground so long as the North Vietnamese troops do not launch any large-scale attacks beyond Pathet Lao territory.

Prince Souvanna is quietly confident that his government can weather the constitutional storm over the Assembly just as it has weathered other recent crises. Asked what would happen if the new Assembly also opposed his policies, he told a correspondent, "Don't let us try to forecast the future. I hope the next Assembly will be reasonable."



Australia Votes To Stay in Vietnam

DENIS WARNER

MELBOURNE
THE principal article of faith sustaining the National Liberation Front and the régime in North Vietnam is the conviction that the people of the United States and its allies so strongly disapprove of the Vietnam war that eventually Washington will be forced to bow to the popular will and abandon the effort. The theory, based largely on the noise and space that critics of U.S. policy make and command everywhere, is understandably attractive to men whose choices have been closed off by superior military strength.

This theory is not easily tested, at least not in a way calculated to shake firmly held convictions. Domestic policies habitually dominate elections around the globe, and in terms of reaction to the Vietnam war, the U.S. midterm result lends itself to almost any interpretation.

No one anywhere, however, can doubt the significance of the outcome of the Australian election. Australian critics and the Labor Party opposition hooted with derision when Prime Minister Harold Holt turned to President Johnson at a White House luncheon and pledged to be "all the way with L.B.J." One cynic said, "It is ridiculous to say that we want to be all the way with L.B.J. All we want is L.B.J. to be all the way with us."

There was nothing cynical about the reaction of the Australian voters on November 26. They increased the government coalition's margin in the House of Representatives from nineteen to forty-one seats. In

a manner that defied misinterpretation, the voters recognized that the security implicit in the American alliance demanded reciprocal efforts that they were fully prepared to make. Turning away from parish-pump issues, the Labor Party had challenged the Liberal-Country Party coalition on its Vietnam policy. The electorate's answer was to bury all of Labor's hopes in an avalanche of votes for the government.

Leader Out of Touch

A week before the election, Arthur Augustus Calwell, who led the opposition to its slaughter, was asked what Labor would do when it got into power if, after consultation with the United States and its other allies, it decided to pull out of Vietnam and its allies asked it to stay. "Now you've misrepresented me," Calwell replied. "I didn't say that after consultation we would withdraw our troops. We will withdraw them. We will have no part in a dialogue with the Americans as to whether we should or should not withdraw. That's our business. That's our right." Rarely has a political leader shown himself to be so out of touch with the temper and the character of the people. Australians may often be in too much of a hurry to get into a fight. They are not disposed to get out simply because the going is tough.

Right to the end Calwell appeared to believe that his opposition to the nature and form of the Australian participation in the Vietnam war was a surefire winner. He not only knew his history but had been