

Cluster Villages in Laos Help Thwart, Irritate Reds



Face blackened and covered with branches, a Laotian soldier moves out on a jungle patrol after undergoing training in the use of American weapons, tactics and guerrilla warfare. (S&S)

By MARTIN STUART-FOX

VIENTIANE, Laos (UPI)—The landlocked kingdom of Laos is trying to save itself from communist guerrillas by erecting cluster villages in the countryside.

Slightly larger than the state of Kansas, Laos was carved out of the old French Indochina colonial empire, but its 1.8 million people have seen little peace since its independence in 1949.

The Pathet Lao communists, supported by the north Vietnamese Reds, are waging warfare against the government.

To help keep rural peasants on the side of the central government, Laos borrowed an idea from neighboring South Vietnam, establishing cluster villages modeled on Vietnam's 7,000 strategic hamlets.

Unlike the strategic hamlets, the five surviving clustered villages (one was captured by the Pathet Lao Reds) are not surrounded by trenchworks or bamboo and barbed wire fortifications.

But the communists show great concern over the cluster villages, which were established in September, 1963.

The Pathet Lao radio, broadcasting from the eastern reaches of the strategic Plain of Jars, has been denouncing the villages since their start.

North Vietnam in recent weeks called the villages a U.S. imperialist plot to establish control over Indochina.

The reason the communists are worried is because the cluster villages, still in their teething stage, mark one of the first steps of the Laotian government to establish its control in rural areas.

The village program results from the national government's increasing awareness of the need to convince peasants that it is interested in their welfare and in raising their standard of living.

One cluster village at Muong Kheung on the northern edge of the Plain of Jars fell to the Pathet Lao when the neutralists were driven off the plain last May.

But the national army has been able to provide security for the other five clusters and several more are in the planning stage.

U.S. Cooperation

THIS IS THE WAY the program works:

An area of relatively dense population is chosen—usually a cluster of villages in a fertile valley. The area's needs are assessed by International Voluntary Services (IVS) workers and U.S. foreign aid officials in cooperation with the Lao government.

A team of three IVS workers together with their interpreters and Lao officials then move into one of the villages to take up residence in a Lao style house.

Part of their task is to teach by example: a vegetable patch is marked out, a chicken pen constructed and elementary hygiene in cooking and the disposal of refuse is practiced.

Vegetable seeds and improved varieties of rice are distributed. Dispensaries are set up and staffed by Lao nurses until promising young villagers can be trained to take over.

In the cluster village programs completed so far, schools have been constructed with the help of the Lao depart-



Laos Taking Its Toll In Battle Against Reds

By ARTHUR J. DOMMEN

TOKYO (UPI) — The ground and air campaign by the right-wing third of the three-faction Royal Lao Government is being conducted where it hurts the communists the most—in the stilted backwater villages with their flocks of chickens and groves of banana trees, where Pathet Lao organizers are finding out they are really not wanted.

Right-wing activity in Khammouane and Savannakhet Provinces has formed the substance of high-level discussions of the central committee of the Neo Lao Hak Sat, the Pathet Lao political directorate.

The north Vietnam news agency reported a statement by Pathet Lao Chief Minister Prince Souphanouvong on the subject.

Souphanouvong said the Pathet Lao intended to "resolutely defend" the arrangements whereby the coalition was established, but that if the right-wing faction ignored the "sincerity" of the left wing Pathet Lao and "continued to resort to armed force," it would be met with "vigorous counterblows."

The third faction is the neutralist, led by Prime Minister Prince Souvanna Phouma. The coalition has the support, theoretically at least, of both East and West.

Souphanouvong dated the current campaign to mid-October when, after a period of softening up the Pathet Lao by bombing thirty villages in the two provinces, a total of "10,000 troops" began assaults that "nibbled up" areas held by the Pathet Lao.

Condemns Instigation

THE STATEMENT said Souphanouvong "sternly condemned U.S. instigation" for the actions.

Most of the skirmishing appears to center about the east-west Road Nine through southern Laos.

At one point the traveler finds himself where the only law on the road is enforced by Pathet Lao guerrilla bands.

Just 20 miles before the South Vietnam border is reached, the road passes through Tchepone, which has been an important staging area for Pathet Lao forces and is believed to be a way-station on the so-called Ho Chi Minh trail from north into South Vietnam.

It was in this area that three companies of north Vietnamese troops were discovered in December 1958. The Lao government in Vientiane started screaming invasion, as it has done many times since.

However, in retrospect, most observers agree that what the north Vietnamese were doing was guarding the

trail for passage of key cadres into South Vietnam. Insurgency against the Saigon regime opened in a serious manner the following year.

Only last week, the government of Prince Souvanna Phouma denounced north Vietnam for claiming a thin slice of territory in this sparsely populated area.

"The Lao government forcefully denounces the aims of annexation and expansion of north Vietnam and requests the authorities in Hanoi to see to it that the national territory of Laos is evacuated forthwith," the statement said.

As Souvanna Phouma's government points out, the French map used at the 1954 Geneva Conference clearly shows this strip of territory to be part of Laos and not part of Vietnam. However, on north Vietnamese maps, it is shown belonging to Vietnam.

ment of public works and the U.S. Agency for International Development roads department. Wells, irrigation and drainage channels have been built. A new airstrip was built for the Phone Hong cluster, 50 miles north of Vientiane. Finally, village councils have been set up so that the villagers can administer much of the program themselves.

In practice, local antipathies and superstitions have slowed the program. The rice planting season or harvest is capable of bringing it to a complete halt.

Natural Defenses

BUT THE cluster villages have one thing in their favor which is not found in South Vietnam. They are relatively easy to defend.

For one thing, the Pathet Lao must cross precipitous limestone ranges to attack the clusters. A right-wing or neutralist military garrison has been stationed near each cluster for its defense.

In one cluster, near the neutralist army headquarters at Vang Vieng, 100 miles north of Vientiane along Route 13 to Luang Prabang, the Filipino-run "Operation Brotherhood" has set up a hospital, and an IVS worker is building a house in the cluster area.



MEMBERS OF A LAOTIAN CLUSTER VILLAGE ARE TAUGHT AGRICULTURE BY FILIPINO CASIMIRO GUIEB.

UPI

FAR EAST FILM FARE

'Cleopatra' Tops New Film List on Military Circuit



Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra finds that love and politics don't mix well.

"Cleopatra," the multi-million-dollar epic about the love of two rulers of the Roman Empire for the beautiful queen of Egypt, heads the list of five new films at military theaters in the Far East.

The others are "Bikini Beach," "Night Must Fall," Walt Disney's "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" (a revival), and "Sing and Swing."

"Cleopatra," starring Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton and Rex Harrison, tells the story of the young queen's struggle to gain the throne of Egypt, which her brother, Ptolemy, seeks to claim for himself. Julius Caesar (Rex Harrison) comes to Egypt to settle the quarrel between the two young rulers.

At their first meeting, Caesar is captivated by Cleopatra's beauty and charm. When Ptolemy attacks Caesar, the Roman troops rout the Egyptian forces and Cleopatra is made uncontested ruler of Egypt.

On returning to Rome, Caesar is assassinated by Roman senators who fear his ambition will bring an end to the Republic.

Caesar's friend, Mark Antony (Richard Burton), then assumes the leadership of Rome and goes

to Egypt to meet Cleopatra, where he too falls in love with the queen.

The film runs over three hours.

"Bikini Beach" is a frothy musical played strictly for the young at heart.

It takes place at Bikini Beach, a hangout for teen-age girls and muscle boys. The film makes no pretense at having a plot, but does offer laughs, songs and attractive young people.

Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello share top billing.

"Night Must Fall" is a story about a psychopathic killer starring Albert Finney, the young English actor who starred in the Academy Award-winning film, "Tom Jones."

The shocker tells the story of Danny (Finney), a young Welsh

boy with his irresistible charm. He has a way with people. He laughs at "squares," dances the twist and rides a scooter.

But none can guess the dark brooding, the urge to kill, which lurks behind the mask.

"20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" stars Kirk Douglas and James Mason in an adventure tale from the book by Jules Verne. Those who appreciate the vivid and imaginative writing of Verne will find much of interest in the film.

"Sing and Swing" is about a post office messenger boy who, along with three teen-age pals, forms a rock-and-roll group.

They pool their resources and make a studio tape recording of an original song. The tape gets lost and triggers a series of tuneful events.



Richard Burton plays Mark Antony, a strong man whose weakness is love for Cleopatra.

Obscenity Ruling Clears Lenny Bruce

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (UPI) — The Illinois Supreme Court reversed itself Tuesday and ruled that a Chicago performance by comedian Lenny Bruce was not obscene.

The court June 18 upheld Bruce's conviction on obscenity charges, but vacated its ruling July 7 following a U.S. Supreme Court decision on an obscenity case in another state.

The U.S. Supreme Court struck down a rule that obscenity and affirmative values must be

weighed against each other to determine which predominates.

"Our original opinion," the Illinois Supreme Court said Tuesday, "recognized the defendant's right to satirize society's attitudes on contemporary social problems and to express his ideas, however bizarre, as long as the method used in so doing was not so objectionable as to render the entire performance obscene."

In view of the U.S. Supreme Court decision, the Illinois high court said, it is clear that "the 'balancing test' rule is no longer a constitutionally acceptable method of determining whether material is obscene, and it is there made clear (by the U.S. court) that material having any social importance is constitutionally protected."

The court said it was evident from summaries of Bruce's 55-minute monolog that his performance "went beyond the customary limits of candor, a fact which becomes even more apparent when the entire monolog is considered."

Mangano As Garbo

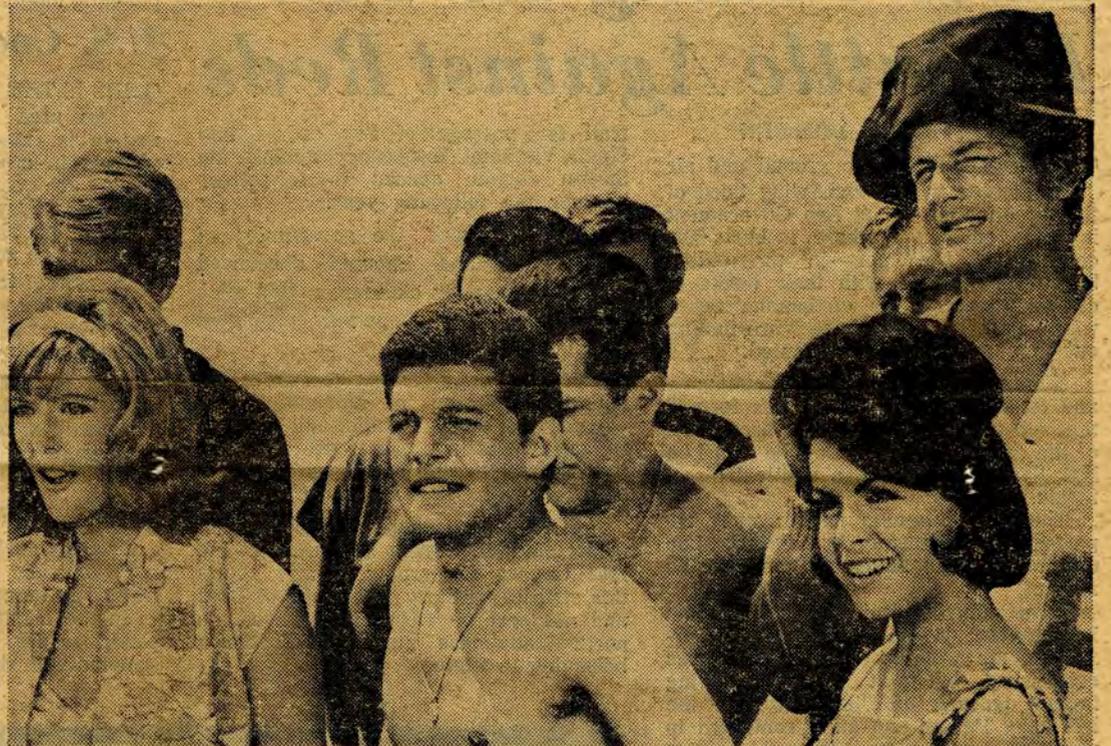
ROME (AP)—Italian film producer Dino de Laurentiis has announced plans to make a movie on the life of Greta Garbo.

De Laurentiis said the Swedish film star would be portrayed by his own wife, Silvana Mangano, who gained fame playing the role of a bare-legged rice picker in the film, "Bitter Rice."

The producer said he would ask Miss Garbo to collaborate on the film about her rise to stardom in Hollywood. A start on the picture is planned for next autumn at a studio near Rome.

Beatniks Beat Rap

WEYMOUTH, England (UPI)—Five beatniks were placed on probation here after showing up in court—cleanshaven and with haircuts. The five, who had been charged with loitering, were described by the woman judge as "decent and employable."



Frankie Avalon (center) has the same old problems in "Bikini Beach," a sequel to the recent "Muscle Beach." The problem: girls, namely

Candy Johnson (left) and Annette Funicello (right). Tall fellow in background is Jody McCrea, who appears to be wearing one of his father's (Joel) battered old cowboy hats.

Reagan May Turn Politician

HOLLYWOOD (UPI) — Actor Ronald Reagan indicated Wednesday he is thinking about turning politician after receiving thousands of letters encouraging him to run for public office.

His election eve television speech for Republican candidates drew thousands of letters and telegrams commending his criticism of President Johnson and the Democratic administration.

"I have never aspired to public office, nor looked upon a political

career with any particular favor," Reagan said. "But I have some other thoughts about where an individual's responsibility lies despite his tastes and personal desires."

Reagan, 53 has made speeches on behalf of the Republican Party for 10 years, attacking "big government." He wrote his half-hour nationally televised speech earlier this month.

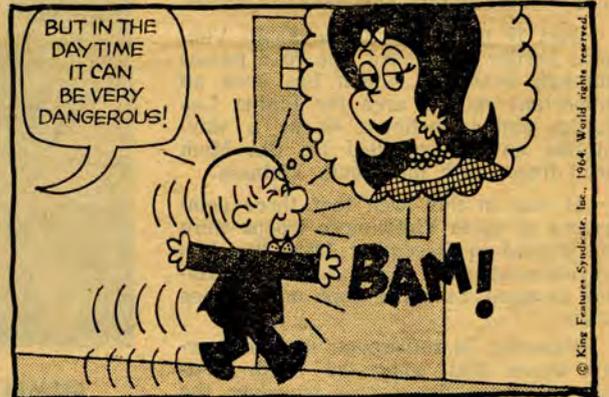
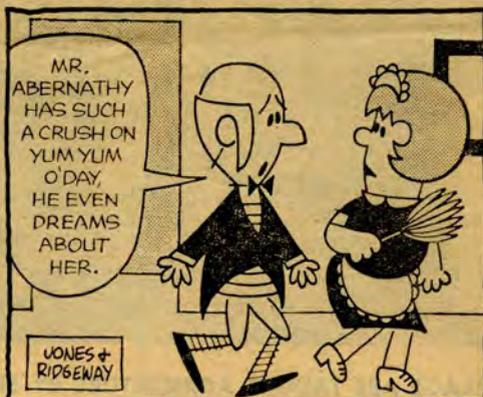
Reagan was born in Tampico, Ill., and was graduated from

Eureka (Ill.) College. He came to Hollywood in 1937 to make his first of some 50 movies, "Love Is on the Air."

He interrupted his motion picture career for almost four years during World War II, and was discharged from the Army Air Corps as a captain.

Reagan served six terms as president of the Screen Actors Guild and has been an active leader in California Republican politics.

MR. ABERNATHY



by Jones and Ridgeway