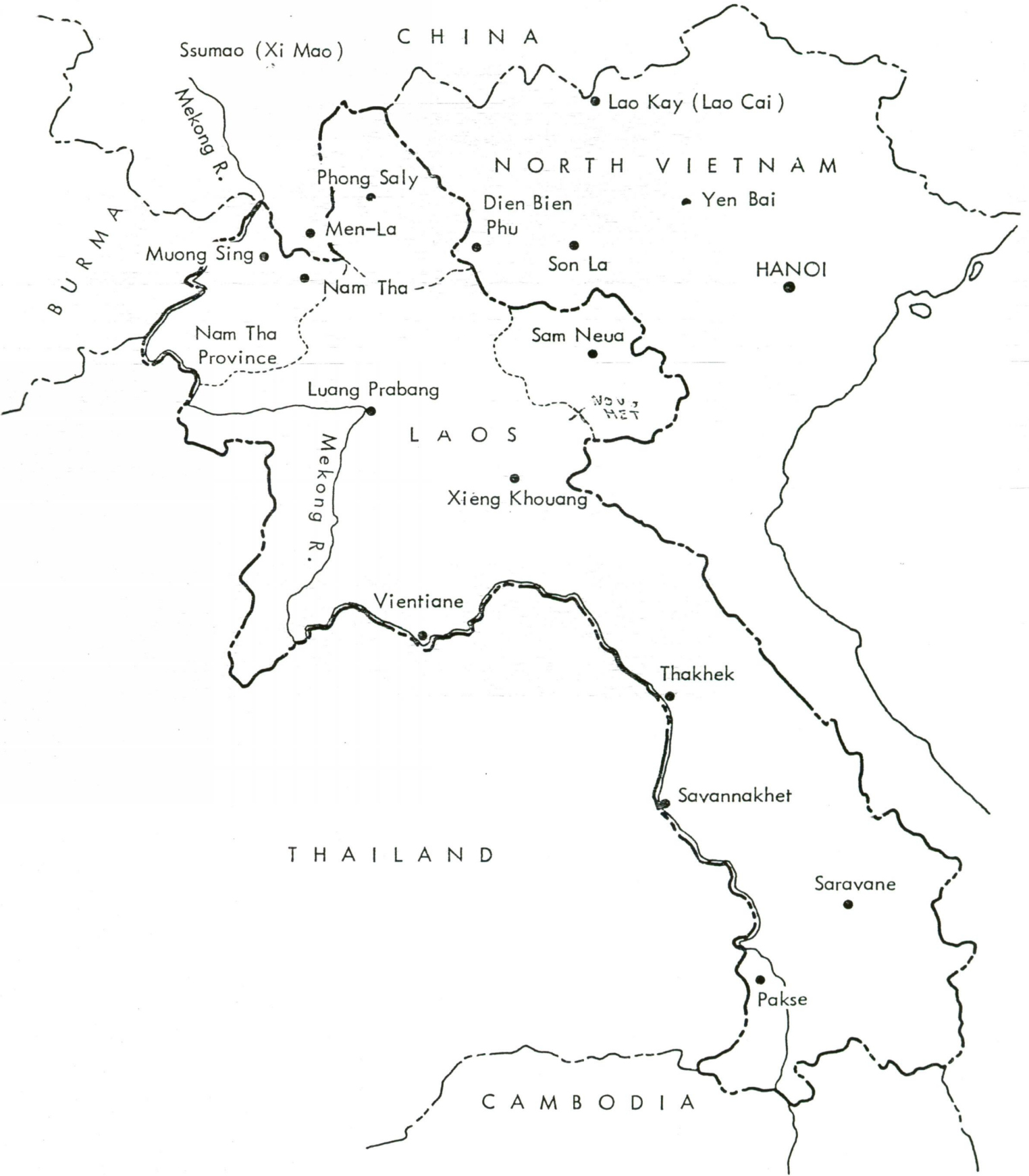
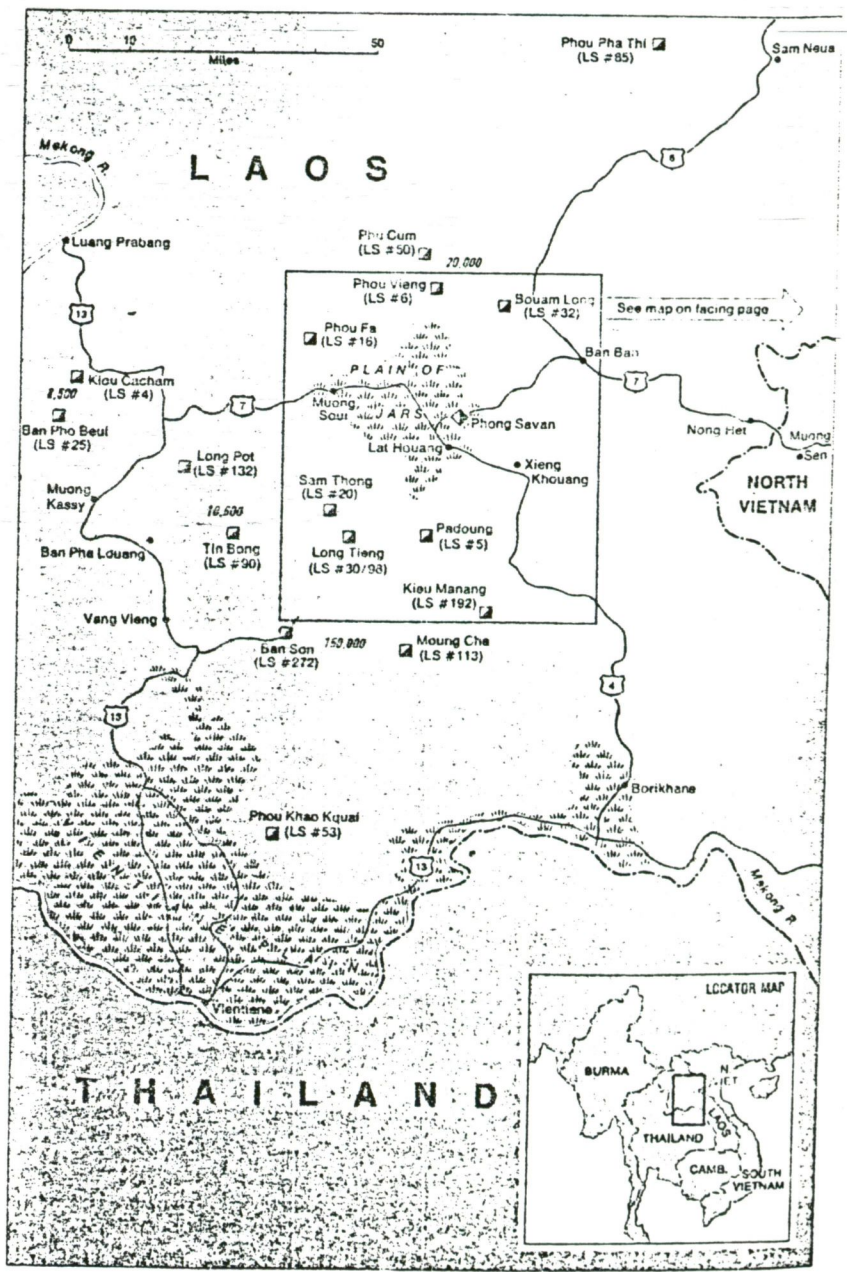


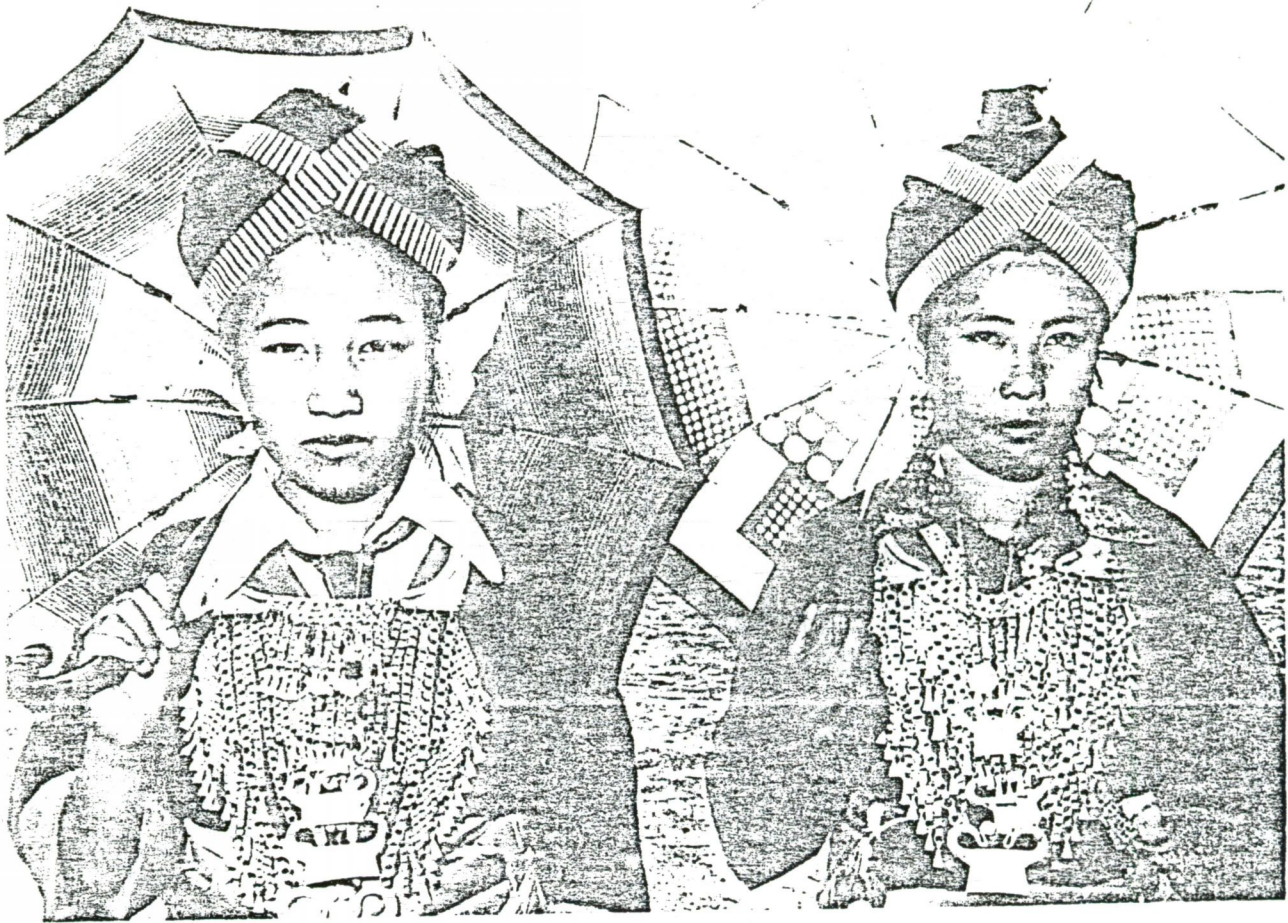
LAOS: ANOTHER SIDESHOW

Maggie DeVecchi
Poli Sci. 24
April, 30 1980
Prof. Dalton



Map # 2





Hmong Theswomen
in Refugee Camp.
Thailand 1979

During the past five years, since the fall of Saigon in 1975, there has been a substantial amount of analytic and historical writings published about the United States involvement in Indochina. Frank Snepps' Decent Interval and William Shawcross' Sideshow are the most thorough, revealing and definitive documentations we have to date about our role in Cambodia and Vietnam. These two nations continue to be in the international and media limelights because of the Vietnamese "Boat People", and because of Cambodians fleeing a demonic government and starvation. Although many Americans have wanted to bury the fact that we were involved, historical publications and present events have forced us to examine ourselves and our policies; and have provoked an unprecedented amount of humanitarian action- perhaps based on guilt- toward the Vietnamese and Cambodians.

However, there is one major story that remains to be told. Analytic and historical writings on our "Secret War" in Laos from 1960-1975 have yet to be written. There is no literature that sufficiently documents this period. What is generally known is that the CIA began active recruitment of Laotian hill-tribesmen in 1960, and subsequently established an elaborate network of air strips, bases and US trained secret army. US involvement was characterized by mercenaries and AID programs, which helped feed, heal, house and educate Laotians- consequently sustaining loyalty. After the Pathet Lao (North Vietnamese backed communist forces) took over Laos in 1975, approximately 100,000 Hmong hilltribesmen were forced to flee

their villages to seek refuge in Thailand; in order to escape punishment of death for their cooperation with the US. A group hitherto ^{unknown to} us, except through National Geographic articles, has arrived and settled in such obscure places as Santa Ana, California, and Missoula, Montana.

In light of the facts that: the Hmong were the active participants in our war in Laos; they are currently facing virtual annihilation in Laos by the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces because of their alliance with the US; there are over 60,000 Hmong refugees in Thailand living under miserable conditions, waiting up to four years to be even considered for re-settlement in ~~of~~ their country; and the Hmong are a new and growing ethnic minority in the United States, it seems both appropriate and necessary that we begin as a nation to acknowledge their plight and our responsibilities to them.

This paper will examine the background of the Hmong people, the reasons for and nature of their recruitment by the CIA, and their current situation in Laos and in the Thai refugee camps.

There are approximately 65 ethnic groups and subgroups in Laos. The Hmong (also referred to as Meo- a derogatory name meaning "Barbarian". Hmong is the name they give themselves meaning "Free man". The two names will be used interchangeably in this paper) are among the most recent immigrants from China, first settling in Laos around 1850.¹ They too are divided into several subgroups, the most common ones being: Black, White, Red, Flowered (embroidered), and Blue Meo; and the less

populace groups being: Horned, Striped, Yellow and Blue Meo.² The Lao (lowlanders)- 50% of the population_ have been and continue to be the ruling ethnic group. There are, however, more Lao in Thailand than in Laos; which illustrates how ethnic settlements are not determined by frontiers in Indochina. The Hmong are scattered over a large area of Indochina; specifically China, North Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and a small number in Burma. Population figures vary a great deal so that to this date it is still not known how many Hmong there are. It is estimated that there are 4 million in China, and that there were before 1975 approximately 1 million in Laos. Today the figures of Hmong population in Laos is even more indefinite.

A mongoloid people of perhaps Tibeto/Burman ethnic origin, the Hmong are an extremely independent tribal group with a long history of struggle against Chinese domination- hence their migrations to North Vietnam and Laos.³ In Laos they settled in scattered mountain villages, primarily in the Xieng Khouang Province. "Their outstanding characteristic is that they cannot or will not live at altitudes less than 3000 feet."⁴ They are noted for their nomadism because of their practice of slash and burn agriculture. They cultivate rice and corn for self-sustenance, and as a cash crop raise most of the opium grown in Laos- virtually the finest in the world. Although scattered geographically, the Hmong are culturally very close-knit. They share: a rich and traditional oral folklore, their own unwritten language, a distinctive style of dress, animist religion, and a patrilineal form of social and family organization.

Traditionally, the Hmong social organization has consisted of two primary units, the family and the clan. "The patrilineal family or household is the foundation of higher social and political structures...."⁵ On the average, a Hmong village in Laos consists of 8 households, usually belonging to the same clan. The head of the clan is also the village headman. If there are several clans in the village, the eldest clan generally assumes control. He commands a considerable amount of authority with regard to village migration, the settlement of disputes within the village, and the general welfare of the village inhabitants. "...the Meos in Laos have shown no indication of a permanent system of authority extending beyond the village"⁶ However, because the Hmong have a past tradition of a king and chiefdoms (clanheads who controlled several villages) they have the will and ability to organize themselves beyond their respective village, particularly for military purposes.⁷ During the 1950's, in the wake of the Indochinese war and civil war, three principal Hmong leaders emerged; Touby Lyfoung, allied with the Royal Lao Government and the French, Faydang, allied with the Patnet Lao and the Viet Minh, and General Vang Pao, a military commander for the Royal Lao forces and later general of the CIA's "Secret Army". "Both traditional clan patterns and the overall political situation in Laos seemed to determine the alignment of their followers."⁸

The hostility between Touby Lyfoung and Faydang (the latter's uncle) was deeply rooted in a clan dispute, and not caused by ideological conflict. It is worth explaining the source and nature of this dispute because it lay the foundation of Hmong loyalties and division in the 50's and 60's.

In 1865 Ly Nhiavu, Kaitong (chief) of the Ly clan, led a year long march of Hmong to flee Chinese massacres of their tribe. They settled in the Nong Het district, a fertile and mountainous area, in which two other clans had settled, The Mua, and the Lo. The Lo were accepted as the dominant clan as they had been the first to arrive.

When the French arrived in 1893, the colonialists bought opium for the Laotian opium monopoly, and ordered the Hmong to increase production. The Kaitong of the Lo clan, offended at having not been consulted by the French, launched an attack, and was promptly defeated by ~~the~~ French's superior weapons. Ashamed of his defeat, Lo renounced his position of authority to the Mua Kaitong.⁹

Ly Fong, although a member of the Ly clan, was not directly related to Kaitong Ly Nhiavu. Ly Fong's father had been refused as a fellow clansman because "...his willingness to work as a porter-a virtual slave- for a hated Chinese made him unacceptable in the eyes of the Ly aristocrats."¹⁰ Consequently, he founded his own village, married and had a son- Ly Fong. Ly Fong became a superb linguist and thereby increased the Ly status among the Hmong. He married May, the daughter of Lo Bliayo- who was by this time the Premier Kaitong of Nong Het- and was awarded the job of assistant and secretary to his father-in-law. May gave birth to their son Touby Lyfong. After sustaining years of physical abuse by her husband, May committed suicide. Bliayo fired Ly Fong, and severed all ties with the Ly clan. Once again the Ly people were ostracized by the Hmong aristocracy.

To avoid^A clan war, the French, with the coopération of the Hmong, separated the clans by dividing the Nong Het district. Lo Bliayo's eldest son (May's brother)- Song Tou- became chief of the Keng Khoai District, while Touby Lyfoung (May's son) became chief of the Phac Boun District. In 1935 Song Tou, an irresponsible, lazy gambler, neglected to pay the District taxes to the French. Touby Lyfoung pulled a brilliant coup, and offered to pay the deficit; and was thus given, by the French, control over the entire Nong Het District; and thereby a monopoly of political power over the Hmong.¹¹

Enter yet another character: Faydang- Song Tou and May's brother, and Touby Lyfoung's un~~le~~- of the Lo clan. In 1937, Faydang petitioned Prince Petsavath, in the royal city of Luang Prabang, to become district chief of Keng Khoai after Ly Foung (still the Kaitong of the Ly) died. In 1939, Ly Foung died, but the French refused to give any power to Faydang, and named Touby Lyfong as chief of the district. "They [The French] regarded Faydang's petition to the royal court two years before as an act of insubordination and were unwilling to entrust Faydang with any authority in the region...the French were only interested in dealing with tribal leaders of proven loyalty..."¹²

Touby Lyfoung was a very clever and well educated man, who knew how to please the French. He was the first Hmong to receive a high school degree. In 1939 he raised the taxes to an impossibly high level, but told his fellow tribesmen that they could pay part of it with opium. This achieved the desired result: a boom in opium production, much to the colonists satisfaction. "...Touby became a loyal autocrat, while Faydang

became increasingly embittered toward colonial rule. The French betrayal of Faydang was probably a significant factor in his evolution as one of Lao's more important Revolutionary leaders." ¹³

In 1945, the French, with the help of Touby Lyfoung and his followers, engaged in military preparation and operations for the Indochinese War. Touby by now had arms. Uncertain about Faydang's loyalty to the French, he ordered a massacre of the Lo clansmen. Faydang, prepared for this, had ordered his clansmen to sleep in the fields. Soon thereafter, Faydang retreated with 200 followers into Vietnam, and established his first contact with the Viet Minh. After crossing the border back and forth, to retrieve more followers, Faydang established the "Meo Resistance League"¹⁴ By the 1960's Faydang's guerillas had merged with the Pathet Lao, and Touby's guerillas joined the CIA mercenaries. "This simple clan conflict, which was pushed to the breaking point by the French opium imperative, has become a permanent fissure and has helped fuel 25 years of Laotian civil war." ¹⁵

This long and complicated saga of the conflict between the Lo and Ly clans illustrates the tragedy the Hmong have faced for thirty years. The Hmong are traditionally fiercely independent; economically, culturally and politically. They have never felt national loyalty to those countries in which they live; because they are a close-knit people, spread out over several nations, ~~and~~ who have a long history of migrations; and because the dominant powers have never successfully integrated them. Partly because of their resistance to assimilation, and partly

because of "...reluctance on the part of the Lao to share what few benefits there were with the backward tribal people." ¹⁶

The Hmong, until recently, have been isolated geographically and economically; and socially left untouched by the 20th century. At the same time, in order to preserve their independence and existence, they were coerced, by armed imperialist forces (French, US, and North Vietnamese) to become pawns in big international games. The Hmong have opium and manpower in strategically critical and remote terrain; for which they have been systematically used and abused. "...all of the monumental decisions that have affected the Meo- from their systematic slaughter in the 17th-19th centuries at the hands of the Chinese to the massive bombing by the US Air Force....- have been made unilaterally in the foreign capitals of great empires and super-powers." ¹⁷

After the great watershed battle at Dien Bien Phu, the Geneva Settlement of 1954 dissolved the French colonial Empire. Vietnam was partitioned, and Cambodia and Laos were neutralized to ward off potential conflict between Thailand, China and Vietnam. For a variety of reasons not pertinent to this paper, the United States did not sign the agreement, but gave "...a unilateral statement implying that the United States would not upset the agreement by force or threat of force as long as nobody else did so."¹⁸ In Laos, two provinces- Phong Saly and Sam Neua- were assigned by the Geneva Agreement to the Pathet Lao for re-groupement. This provided the groundwork for their buildup of political and military strength, backed by the Viet Minh. By 1959, a major civil war was on the verge of

erruption as the military conflict between the Pathet Lao, the Neutralists and the US backed Royal Lao Government for political supremacy escalated.

In the mid-1950's, fearing the growing threat of the Pathet Lao, Eisenhower began pouring money into Laos to equip the Royal Laotian Army with US military hardware, and training; and for the creation of an ordnance corps, a Quartermaster corps, and military police.¹⁹ "...the Eisenhower administration spent some \$300 million and five years in the hopeless effort to convert Laos into a clearly ^Dpr~~-~~Western? formally anti-communist military outpost on the borders of Red China and North Vietnam."²⁰ Only \$7 million of this was spent in the areas of technical and economic development. Eisenhower did not inform John F. Kennedy of this until the eve of his inauguration.

Kennedy was deeply committed to preserving the neutrality of Laos, thru peaceful means. In 1962 another Geneva Agreement was reached, after arduous negotiations, establishing a tripartite government. Souvanna Phouma (neutralist) became premier, and Souphanouvong (Pathet Lao) and Phoumi Nosavan (Right Wing) became vice premiers. This agreement was in fact short lived. Small-scale clashes and military buildups continued; and the Ho-Chih Minh trail continued to be infiltrated by Communist forces.

It is not clear to this date whether or not JFK knew the extent of CIA operations in Laos. It is clear, however, that the CIA had its own objectives and policies regarding Laos. For example: the CIA had brought back from France General Phoumi Nosavan in 1953²¹, who until 1965 remained their protégé.

"...General Phoumi went on to plot coups, rig elections, and help

the CIA build up its secret army; in short, he became the major pawn in the CIA's determined effort to keep Laos's government militantly Anti-Communist."²² Yet, JFK's policy was to maintain Laos' neutrality. Arthur Schlesinger describes the dangerous and growing autonomy and power of the CIA in the late 50's and early 60's.

"Cuba and Laos had already provided the new administration with horrible examples of the readiness of CIA operatives in the field to go off on policies of their own...The CIA's budget now exceeded State's by more than 50%...The CIA had its own service, its own air force, even, on occasion, its own combat forces. Moreover, the CIA declined to clear its clandestine intelligence operations either with the State Department in Washington or with the ambassador in the field." 23

Although the United States was committed to the 1963 Geneva Agreement, it was also committed to prevent Laos from becoming Communist. Therefore, the only option the United States Government saw itself having- to interdict the flow of supplies from the Viet Cong to South Vietnam through the Ho Chih Minh Trail, and to interdict North Vietnamese divisions- was subversion. Kissinger writes:

"...our purpose was to maintain a neutralist government and also to secure Souvanna's acquiescence in our efforts to interdict the Ho Chih Minh trail. We gave financial assistance to the Royal Laotian Army, to some irregular forces of Meo tribesmen led by General Vang Pao, and from time to time to Thai volunteer operators in Laos." 24

However, it is interesting to note, that the CIA had already created a "Secret Army" of Hmong by 1961, two years before the Geneva Agreement was signed. In a memo, written in 1961, from

General Edward G. Lansdale (expert on Guerilla warfare) to Maxwell D. Taylor (JFK's military adviser) he wrote:

"About 9,000 Meo tribesmen have been equipped for guerilla operations, which they are now conducting with considerable effectiveness in Communist-dominated territory in Laos...Estimates on how many of these splendid fighting men could be recruited vary, but a realistic figure would be around 4,000 more, although the total manpower pool is larger.

[After explaining several technical specifics regarding the chain of command of the "Secret Army" he continues.] There is also a local veteran's organization and a grass roots political organization in Laos, both of which are subject to CIA direction and control and are capable of carrying out propaganda, sabotage and harrassment operations. Both are located throughout Laos." 25

(This is the only official document to date that refers directly to US Secret War efforts)

It should also be understood that in 1960 the USSR was airlifting 45 tons of arms and ammunition out of Hanoi, everyday, to the Pathet Lao.²⁶ It is clear then, that as early as 1960, the United States was deeply involved in covert action in Laos, not just to protect Laos' neutrality, but to ultimately stave off Russian backed, North Vietnamese expansion.

Why were the Hmong used as a means towards this end?

Because of the 1963 Geneva Agreement, the United States could not send in its own troops; therefore it had to rely on manpower within Laos. The Hmong have a longstanding reputation of being valiant and effective fighters. Many of their villages were situated in the North East of Laos- near the Ho Chih Minh trail area. Furthermore, they were very familiar with, and adapted to the rugged mountaineous terrain. Their knowledge of the countryside was a key asset in the war effort. The fact that the Hmong themselves felt personally threatened by a

possible North Vietnamese invasion made them willing to be recruited. Tactically, the US military found it more efficacious to operate at a grass roots level, as opposed to using the Royal Lao Army. General Lansdale is quoted as saying: "I always felt that a small group of Americans organizing the local population was the way to counter wars of National liberation." ²⁷

As it has already been elucidated, the Hmong traditionally respect, and give loyalty to their own leaders- not to lowlanders, or foreign powers. One of the key elements in the creation and durability of the "Secret Army" was the forceful leadership of General Vang Pao. Unlike the French, the CIA "...found Touby [Lyfoung] unsuitable for command...The CIA wanted a real slugger who would take casualties, and in a young Meo officer named Vang Pao they found him." ²⁸ Prior to working with the CIA, Vang Pao had a long history of resistance and guerilla fighting. Many have accused him of brutality and corruption. He is said to have periodically pocketed his soldiers' salaries, used rough coercion to ensure loyalty, and been heavily involved (with CIA help) in opium traffic. ²⁹

General Vang Pao and the CIA were highly organized, and maintained cohesiveness among the dispersed Hmong because of air power. It is important to note that Laos has virtually no roads, and that air power is critical to the success of any military action. The CIA's airline- Air America- was the crucial ingredient in the organization and operation of the "Secret Army". Although the CIA operatives moved to Thailand after the 1963 Geneva Agreement, they flew in to Laos every day, to direct guerilla operations. ³⁰ General Vang Pao and

CIA operatives helicoptered into villages, asking for recruits in exchange for rice, guns and money. Many felt forced to volunteer. A former Hmong leader said: "Vang Pao sent us guns... if we did not accept his guns he would call us Pathet Lao. We had no choice."³¹ After securing the loyalty of a village, the recruits cleared strips of land to be used as landing pads. A network of air strips were created; linking the villages to each other, and to CIA headquarters in Padoung; ~~and~~^{thereby} facilitating the distribution of weapons and food. (See Map²) By 1965 the CIA army consisted of 40,000 Hmong. 10,000 were elite Special Guerilla Units (SGU's), and around 30,000 were village defense militia.³²

The Hmong who worked for "Sky" (code name for the CIA) engaged in a variety of missions. "Destruction Missions" consisted of destroying rice and ammunition stocks of the Pathet Lao.³³ The FAG's (Forward Air Guide) were teams of Hmong equipped with sophisticated radio equipment, who were sent to monitor the Ho Chih Minh Trail and call in US Bombers. The FAC's (Forward Air Controller) were used to call in tactical support aircraft.³⁴ Other operations included gathering intelligence on troop movements, locating bomb targets, surveying supply traffic on the trail, capturing prisoners for interrogation, and placing mines on enemy trails.³⁵

In 1966, the US built a radar station (Phou Pha Thi) atop a 5,680 foot mountain, to improve the accuracy of bombing operations in North Vietnam. In March 1968, two months after Vang Pao lost the Sam Neua Province, Phou Pha Thi was captured by the Pathet Lao. This marked the beginning of a decline in strategic strength

of the CIA and Vang Pao forces. It also precipitated an enormous refugee problem.. Air America undertook a massive airlift operation of thousands of Hmong. Hundreds more were forced to undertake long marches southward as the Pathet forces moved in on them. By 1971 approximately 60,000 Hmong were re-settled in Ban Son. (See map³⁶)

Since the late 50's the Agency for International Development (AID) had created significant programs in technical and economic assistance. They made important contributions in Laos, in the areas of health, sanitation, improving agriculture etc... During the time when the Hmong were re-grouped in Ban Son, AID was responsible for air dropping rice and other necessities to them; as well as to the villages that were holding out against the Pathet Lao. There are reports from several village leaders that rice was cut off when the village would not give any more of their men to "Sky". "Since USAID decides where the rice is dropped, the Meo have no choice but to stand and fight"³⁷ Although there is no documentation proving that AID worked for the CIA, one could infer that this was the case. General Westmoreland explained : "By 1971 Meo losses in the perennial fighting against the Pathet Lao and their North Vietnamese supporters on the strategic Plain of Jars in the northern part of Laos had become so heavy that widespread defections were becoming a serious problem."³⁸ Perhaps the CIA and AID decided that the only way to secure loyalty was to use the ultimate weapon- control the feeding of the Hmong, and discriminate against those who were uncertain about continuing in a fight that began to look hopeless.

After the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Pathet Lao captured Vientiane and other major cities. The US flew out the leadership in a small airlift to Thailand, where they met up with their wives and dependants who had been bussed out. Vang Pao and his main men were flown to Missoula Montana, where he joined his son who had a US government scholarship to study at the University of Montana.³⁹ And so ended all US involvement in Laos- and so began the construction of a revolutionary society backed by Vietnam and the USSR.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Kaysone, and President Souphanouvong, Laos was faced and continues to face an economy in shambles. The land has been ravaged by bombings, making agriculture difficult if not impossible in certain areas. "US planes dropped the equivalent of 1 ton of bombs per person over Laos"⁴⁰ Laos rates as one of the ten poorest nations in the world; and it is still afflicted by a terrific lack of social homogeneity. The Soviets and Vietnamese today maintain approximately a thousand civilian and military advisers each, plus 40,00-60,00 soldiers in the field.⁴¹ It is estimated that there were 30,000 ^{Hmong} casualties during the war; roughly equivalent proportionately to 20 million US dead. All in all, as Westmoreland himself wrote: "There was nothing left to show for a long and costly American effort!"⁴² Of course, he fails to mention the sacrifice and effort of the Hmong.

One of the most critical problems facing Premier Kaysone, is that of building a cohesive, Socialist state; and integrating the dozens of ethnic groups who have never felt ideological or national loyalties. Many of Kaysone's policies and tactics have

deeply affected the Hmong and have caused over 150,000 to flee into Thailand, and over 35,000 deaths of Hmong trying to escape.

Kaysone has two basic goals with regards to the Hmong.

1) In his own words: "dismantling the native economy of local self-sufficiency and advancing towards large-scale socialist production."⁴³ 2) Neutralizing those Hmong previously affiliated with the CIA. The Hmong have shown strong resistance to both; nevertheless, they are faced with weapons and might they cannot challenge. With regards to the former objective of Kaysone's regime, the Hmong are in effect being told to give up their traditional way of life. They have been directed to settle in the plains (where^{They} are ill-adapted to the environment, and prone to severe illnesses), and to join farming cooperatives.

Their refusal to do so has cost them dearly. They "...have been treated brutally by the new regime which has tried to force them to submit in the plains, where it is easier to keep an eye on them"⁴⁴ Hmong refugees have testified to the US Congress that between 1974-1979 (when the media began to report it) the Pathet Lao launched dozens of attacks on Hmong communities, using lethal chemical agents. Although it has not been proven that such attacks have taken place, there have been so many reports of this in the refugee camps that it seems more than likely. Hmong spokesmen estimate that over 1000 of their people have died of gas poisoning. "...whole villages of men, women, and children collapsing into agonized convulsions and vomiting blood before dying..."⁴⁵ The Hmong have come to refer to the gas as "medicine from the sky" It has been lately reported that Vietnamese soldiers themselves have taken over the anti-Hmong campaign, and^{ave} escalating their brutality. Soldiers scout

the mountains for former and current Vang Pao guerillas, usually massacring them and sometimes their families- no investigation, no trial.

Today there are some 60,000 Hmong in Thai refugee camps near the Lao border. Between 1500-2500 enter Thailand every month, hundreds more die on the journey into Thailand. Escape from Laos requires at least two weeks. The Hmong usually travel in groups, and are often accompanied by Vang Pao guerillas who go back and forth across the border. The escapees travel with hunger, and intense fear of being attacked by Vietnamese soldiers, or stepping on land mines. Once they reach the Mekong River, they face the greatest danger. Because none of them know how to swim, they attach bamboo sticks to their arms and try to float across the Mekong undetected and without drowning in the currents. Western newsmen have repeatedly reported seeing dead bodies floating down the river-bullet ridden, probably the victims of Vietnamese border patrol.

Most of the refugees want to be re-settled in a third country- preferably the United States. There are also many guerillas, still loyal to Vang Pao, who conduct sporadic attacks on Vietnamese and Pathet Lao officers and bases. It is rumoured that Vang Pao has been sending cassette recordings to the guerillas, commanding their efforts from Montana! It is also said that the Chinese are providing arms and money to the Hmong guerillas, and that the CIA is still infiltrating money (perhaps by buying opium). Perhaps, once again, the Hmong are being used in a political struggle between big powerful nations.

Those who want re-settlement have been waiting up to four years before even speaking to an immigration official. The Hmong

have been extremely difficult to re-locate. Although they are familiar with airplanes, helicopters ~~and~~ walkie talkies, their basic lifestyle is rooted in the 12th century. Essentially illiterate, rural, and by western prejudices "primitive", it

October 17, 1980

TO: (which have to work with a fixed number of allocations determined by Carter and the Congress) Many Hmong practise polygamy, which re-stricts their entry to the US. "US immigration law is clear;

polygamists need not apply, even if they killed hundreds of I received the copy of "Laos: Another Sideshow", written by Pathet Lao with their bare hands in pursuit of some policy Maggie. It certainly had a wealth of information and I was developed in Washington. Also- because of the limits on the surprised on the amount of resources that she was able to number of refugees allowed into the US every year, the Hmong draw off of. Please extend my congratulations and if she are basically in competition with Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees. decides to do any future papers and I can be of assistance. Larry Eichel, a refugee worker, in his testimony to Congress said: please do not hesitate to contact me.

So few spots on the resettlement checklist are available for them [Hmong] that American officials in Thailand have developed an unofficial point system-in addition to the five categories and fifteen sub-categories- to assist in deciding who will go to America and who will continue to wait. Points are awarded for military rank, length of service, amount of American training, knowledge of English, eminence in the community and severity of wounds suffered combat. It is an attempt to provide rationales for impossible arbitrary decisions" 47

The story of the Hmong is a tragic one indeed. They have been repeatedly victimized by forces over which they have no control. But, fortunately the Hmong do not view themselves as defeated, or with pity. Their struggle to be 'left alone' has persisted for decades, and has strengthened their will to resist and survive that much more. Those who have settled in the US and France have for the most part adjusted very well. Despite the in-avoidable bouts with depression, homesickness, and adjusting to an entirely new lifestyle, their spirit has remained invincible. They are hard working people, who treasure the fact that they

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can finally live and peace, and see their children receive an education.

A

This is an excellent paper, demonstrating an extraordinary empathetic insight into the subject. You manage to put together from a variety of sources a story that is exceedingly moving in terms of the suffering inflicted on an innocent people. But you relate the tragedy with solid command of their history and a relatively balanced awareness of the factors contributing to their fate.

I hope that you will be able to continue your research into this second scandalous Silesow, and tell the story with greater detail and at greater length, in a place where it might be more widely known. It certainly merits telling, especially in America.

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