

On June 1, 1978 Bangkok newspapers announced that the U.S. would be sending 10,000 tons of rice to the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Laos today is neither democratic nor a republic, and the increasing hegemony of its Vietnamese neighbors calls into question whether the prominent ^{representative} ~~spokesman~~ of the Lao people. A recent refugee from Laos reported that, in his position as ^{former} employee of the Lao ^{Ministry} Agriculture Department, he had noticed that rice ~~provided~~ ^{donated} in its part by international organizations was placed in a warehouse in Vientiane, from which it was taken away to Vietnam, ~~and not a single grain~~ ^{without a} ~~had~~ ^{could} reach the Lao people. He complained of the scandal to his superiors, and later learned that he was scheduled for arrest and "seminar" - a curious word which will be explained later - so he fled across the Mekong to Nong Khai in Thailand and joined the Laotians. Now in Thai refugee camps. In any case, thousands of Americans in Thailand are quite sure that little, if any, of the 10,000 tons will reach ordinary Lao citizens. Instead, it will ^{probably go to} feed the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao armies which maintain control of the population and conduct operations against resistance elements, which include the Lao National Liberation Front among the bolded people and the Mao, or Hanoi, bullet-headed men north of Vientiane.

This latest U.S. aid gesture illustrates how much the world has turned upside down since the U.S. pullout from Indochina two years ago. While we send food ^{which will} ~~to~~ strengthen the hand of our former enemies, our friends continue a losing struggle in and around the refugee centers of Thailand. The clearest example is the case of the Mao, known to Americans as the mountain tribesmen who manned the CIA-supported "secret army" ~~of Laos~~ which for 15 years held back

the North Vietnamese in northern Laos. ~~The~~ Hmouy is a Chinese term, ~~and~~ the Hmouy call themselves the Hmouy - the "free people". Numbering some 350,000, they happened to occupy the ~~mountain~~ mountains which dominated the ^{area} corridor for North Vietnamese troops entering Laos. They fought to maintain their identity and ~~their~~ their way of life, and they welcomed U.S. help when I arrived in the early 1960s.

First there were U.S. Special Forces "White Star" teams which provided arms and training to the Hmouy. These were withdrawn from Laos in ~~accordance~~ 1962, when the Geneva Accords ^{terminated the intervention} specified that foreign troops and equipment were to leave. An International Control Commission was established to monitor the arrangement, and I respected the Pathet Army (PAR) religiously, but was never permitted to set foot in areas controlled by the Communist Pathet Lao. Substitution of North Vietnamese troops and equipment continued unabated, and the Hmouy bore much of the brunt of it. This in turn led to the involvement of the CIA and the creation of a "secret army" not on the rolls of the regular PAR, and therefore not subject to ICC inspection.

Dua Xiong, now age 34, was a member of that "secret army". Now he ~~lives~~ ^{lives} in the Nong Khai refugee camp in Thailand, as he has for the last three years, but in 1961, ^{then} he was a 17-year old, he was recruited by the CIA and sent to Hua Hin in Thailand for ^{mountain} training as a radio operator. ("Mr. Tony" is the legendary Anthony Poshepny who received his first ^{combat} wounds as a Marine in Iwo Jima, fought in Korea, helped to extract the Dalai Lama from Tibet, and then came to Laos to help the Hmouy resist the expansion of the Communist North Vietnamese. Tony now lives with his wife and children on a farm 50 miles from Vientiane, raising tapirs. His body shows where the

Under-velveted machine gun round entered his stomach
and came out behind his hip. He complains that the
shrapnel in his right shoulder blade interferes with his
farm work.) Due Xiong fought the North Vietnamese in forgotten
places like Nam Ju, Nam Tha and Xang Luu. By 1970
he was operations officer of a group of 40 in Long Chueing —
the headquarters of its "secret army". He remembers the
famous North Vietnamese attack on the Hmong stronghold
of Bounn Loup, north of the Plain of Jars, ~~near~~ during the
spring rainy season of 1971. There the Hmongs held off
~~a North~~ an NVA Division for two long months, losing a tenth of
their number but piling up 500 attackers on the wire.
Bounn Loup never fell, ~~and~~ — and may still be holding
out to this day. The frustrated North Vietnamese
vented their ^{by slaughtering} fury on the unprotected Hmong women
and children in nearby villages. One of their mortars
also landed beside Due Xiong when he was asleep,
lacerating his back and killing two men near him.

After the 1973 ceasefire in Laos, Due Xiong the "secret-
army" was incorporated into the regular Lao Army, and
Due Xiong ^{was promoted to} a Major. ~~There is~~ when the Communist Press took
control of the Lao government in the spring of 1975, Due Xiong
put down his arms and returned to his village of Muang Phouan,
hoping that his people would be allowed to live in peace, but this was
not to be. The Hmongs, as "enemies of the U.S. imperialism" were
fair game for extermination by NVA and Pathet Lao forces.
Due Xiong recalls 16 people — men, women and children —
being killed in his village in the month before he ~~left~~
escaped from Laos. ~~They~~ Some were sniped as they went out
to tend livestock and crops. Others were beaten to a
foamable slush into their sleeping quarters at night.

So Dad Xua led his parents, wife, brother and four children across the Mekong to Thailand on Dec 7, 1975. His brother and parents are now in Providence, Rhode Island, and Dora Xua hopes to join them soon. He does not blame the Americans for losing the war, but rather the US government for accepting the spurious cease fire of 1973. He would go on fighting in Laos if he could get outside help. Since there is none, he wants to live in a free country where he will never be made a refugee again.

Americans have heard much about the Indochinese refugees, of whom _____ have found a new life in the United States since 1975. Particularly ~~apparent~~ attention has been given recently to the plight of the "boat people" of Vietnam who continue to escape from Vietnam at a rate of about _____ per month and who, if they ~~escape~~ survive the trip, end up ^{unmolested} in Asian ports all the way from Hong Kong and the Philippines to Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. The situation of these people is so desperate that they have received the greatest response from such countries as the United States, France, Australia and Canada, and the ~~boat~~ boat people are assured of ultimate ~~resettlement~~ resettlement under present regulations, even though most of them had no connections with Americans in Vietnam and have no special claims upon the U.S. government. By contrast, most of the Hmong who fought ^{a proxy war for} ~~under the guidance of~~ us in Laos are now ~~condemned~~ have no present hope of leaving their crowded camps to find new lives in America. There are now some 40,000 of them in Thailand, and 4000 admitted to the U.S. They must ~~fulfill~~ ^{possess} certain qualifications not required of the boat people. Category I is for those who have close blood relatives already in the U.S. Category II

is for those who had senior positions ^{as} the direct employees
of the United States government. Category III covers those who
worked for organizations closely associated with the U.S. government.
The troops who served in Gen. Vang Pao's 10,000-man
army are deemed to fall within Category III even though
they were ~~not~~ paid directly by the CIA. Under
present admission programs, some ~~of~~ ^{of its 40,000} are now
in Thailand, cleared for entry to the U.S. ~~has~~ ^{has} ~~about~~
about 7500 more will be eligible under a new quota
announced in May 1974 by the President-Mondale.
~~The rest have~~ For the rest, there is ^{present} no solution in sight.

~~Later~~ As thousands of our former allies waste their
lives in the Thai camps, the PAV continues its
struggle in Laos. In ~~the~~ ^{the} North Vietnamese army,
with token assistance from the PAV, launched
a new campaign to liquidate the remaining uncaptured
troops.