

IVS, B.P. 104  
Vientiane, Laos

Tony Lake  
IVS/Wash

June 26, 1975

Dear Tony:

Hopefully you have started to get some of the things we've been sending you from Laos by now. I'm writing this letter from Penkhoe's place here in Bangkok Noi. I got down late yesterday and plan to return to Vientiane in about two weeks. When getting my border pass, Thongly indicated that I hadn't finished working in Laos yet and wanted to know if I would be able to pick up my white foreigner's residence card when I came back. In the absence of a definitive "no", we are hopeful that they will let me continue until at least 28Oct. 1975 without any particular fuss. If they don't give me the white card back, I will look for a sponsor and put in a formal request for a new one. I anticipate no trouble in crossing back into Laos and assume that they'll give me at least a two week tourist visa even if they don't fork over the white card.

I had originally planned to spend the full thirty days allotted me on my Thai visa, visiting and job hunting in Thailand. However, Peter Royle (Now acting director in my absence.) and I had a most encouraging meeting with Dr. Somchith, Philathivong, Directeur les Organisations Internationales et de la Cooperation, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the 24th which gives me some things to do. Somchith is PL. Our meeting was designed primarily as an introduction of ourselves as a potential aid donor (in the form of technicians) who had previously worked under the Ministry of Plan under a 3-party Letter of Agreement which was now defunct because USAID had been one of the 3 parties.

As such, the IVS organization would be forced financially to reduce the scope of its work, but was still very interested in assisting Laos' development and was most anxious to conclude a new agreement with the government enabling us to do so under whatever arrangement seemed most desirable from the standpoint of the Lao gov't. Somchith replied with the Phoumi Vonguichith line saying that Laos would welcome aid (and technicians) from whatever source so long as they fit into the central government program and came under direct government supervision. He said in essence that he would treat IVS not as an American organization nor as an organization previously connected with USAID but identically with other potential donor agencies like CUSO, Christian groups, etc. As such, he asked that we provide him with a history of our previous activities in Laos including numbers of volunteers and their areas and ministries of involvement in the past and a realistic presentation of the program we expect to be able to field in the coming year. The sooner he has this information from all organizations involved the sooner he can get an overview and start to make some decisions. His office is organized with two deputies who handle agencies like ours under a "bi-lateral aid" section (umbrella title) and the UN and World Bank under a "multi-lateral aid section."

In addition to the history which Walt is helping me prepare, I would like to present Mr. Somchitt with a proposal for an IVS program during 1975-76 sustaining four full time teaching positions at Dong Dok and a staff person to draw up the formal agreement. The staff position might terminate once the agreement is reached, might turn into a half-time staff and half-time teaching position in the fall or might turn into a full-time volunteer position (preferably teaching) in the fall. In any case, it will stress the need for a dynamic future programming relationship between IVS and Laos with possibilities of program expansion and change rather than a one-shot static phase out of IVS work. In order to present a realistic guide to IVS "possibilities", I need your specific concurrence which I already have in

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general and your estimate of how big a program we would be talking about. The top figure for the coming year appeals to me when I stop to figure it up. With Chris and a wife and two kids, Ian and a wife and child, Peter & Jenny and myself on a full staff salary, salary and COL could come to something like \$2500/mo. Add \$50/mo. for IVS Laos office expenses--mostly typing, translating and some materials--\$8500 for return transportation, medical, insurance, baggage allowance, postage, cables, IVS/Wash., overhead, recruiting, etc. and its all pretty staggering. On the other hand, a bare bones budget would cut all salaries back to \$150, COL to \$100 with full COL for wives and half for children or some such. If budgeting demands it, the possibility of pushing Chris towards a different job and dissuading him from returning has to be considered. In that case, we would offer myself as a replacement lit teacher to the M.E - a poor substitute perhaps but they might buy it. That could cut the team size to four people and salary and COL expenditures to just over a \$1000/mo. If those four people also agreed to save their return transport fares and ask for the additional increase in fare between now and then only for return at the end of the year, you might be able to do it. Do your own fiddling with the budget, make your estimate of your fund raising capacities, keep Chris informed and let us decide here if we think we can operate on the funds you could make available this year. Cable us a brief answer so I can get any proposal submitted to Somchith and send along a more carefully detailed budget afterwards. I think we can mutually agree on an arrangement which will allow us to keep a team operating while investigating the future.

On the other hand, my optimism concerning a continued presence for IVS doesn't mean that everything is all right A-OK in Laos. It is not. That is part of the reason for considering discouraging Chris and family if budget necessitates. (It is not sufficient reason to discourage him, however, if the budget can afford him. He's a fine teacher and an important part of Dong Dok. They want him back. He wants to be back. Only if the budget can't support his family should he be allowed to eliminate himself on the basis of feeling that funds are inadequate.) It is still possible that foreign organizations will all go a la Cambodia. The battles within the PL are just getting started and it is not at all clear that Phoumi and Souphansuvong will win. At present, their position appears weak. There are at least five factions in the PL ranks it seems and the struggle continues. The Kaysawn, Nouhawk group have never been to Vientiane and probably have a distorted opinion of the place. Only Luany Phrabang and four mongs in the city of Vientiane are currently beholden to the PGNU. All other parts of the country have ousted old officials and placed themselves under the authority of Muong Vieng Sai PL army headquarters. Large numbers of NVN troops are rumored to be in the Thakhujaeva. Souphanou vong and Phoumi; are negotiating in Lam Nena and it is rumored that they might not be allowed to return to Vte without they sign an agreement allowing NVN troops permanent bases and access in the country of Laos. Their return is awaited with misgivings. The Vte has population are more down on the PL now than they were a month ago when the American panic was on. Dong Dok area was liberated today or yesterday and Mrs. Pinkham advised Jerry to move into town. She is going to. He isn't. The uncertainty of the future still looms large in the lives of many people here. Reason to look at heavy monetary investments with some scepticism. - - - - - I'll write next from Vte, I expect, in about two weeks. My opinion is to have IVS continue to pursue its options as long as there are some. The big push for American-leaving has been more American than Lao in origin. The Embassy and USIS are giving the LAA different and opposite ribes on their remaining.

Peace, Larry Olsen