

Blon / us
FILE SUBJ.
DATE 1992
SUB-OPAT

DO NOT
CIRCULATE

MEMO

**ANOTHER LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (LPDR) EFFORT TO REWRITE
ITS DARK HISTORY TO GAIN MOST FAVORED NATION TRADING STATUS**

**The Frank Proschan proposed article entitled
"JANE HAMILTON-MERRITT: An Evaluation of Her Scholarly Work"**

Frank Proschan, who is closely associated with the Lao People's Democratic Republic, LPDR, and its American lobbyists and apologists, including Roger Rumpf and Jacqui Chagnon, formerly of the American Friends Service Committee, and now with the Asia Resource Center, based in Washington, D.C., is apparently part of the LPDR's attempt to rewrite its dark history since coming to power in Laos in 1975 in order to gain from the U.S. **Most Favored Nation** trading status and all the accompanying potential benefits which are critical to alleviating the dire economic conditions in the LPDR.

A U.S. Non-governmental Organization, NGO, Forum on Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos was held at Marymount College, Arlington, Va. from June 2-4, 1994. At that conference, Hiem Phommachanh, LPDR Ambassador to the U.S., in his remarks, wrote: "We hope in the near future, President Clinton will choose boldly to grant Most Favored Nation trading status to Laos, as he has done for some of our neighbors."

Also in attendance at this conference were Rumpf, Chagnon, and Proschan. Rumpf introduced a petition asking Congress to grant Most Favored Nation trading status to the LPDR and urged conference participants to sign the petition.

Congress would, in fact, have a difficult time in granting MFN to the LPDR because of its long and consistent record of gross violations of human and civil rights. This is a regime that is described by the State Department's most current Country Report on Human Rights as a Communist one-party state in which freedom of speech, assembly, and religion are restricted and where police monitor Lao society and foreigners, denies the right of privacy or the right of citizens to change their government, where arrests are made on unsupported charges; accusers' identities are withheld, and internal travel is controlled by the government. Prisoners--many political prisoners--labor for both state and private enterprises, suggesting a multi-party system brings long imprisonment, and human rights groups are not allowed.

This is a regime that when it came to power in 1975 launched a campaign to eliminate or silence those who had not sided with it. On the list were senior military, police, and civilians of the Royal Lao government, minorities allied with the U.S. during the Vietnam War, and the royal family. The extermination of the beloved Lao King and Queen in a "seminar" camp is well-hidden by Vientiane's diplomats.

This is also the regime that violated international weapons conventions by using chemical and biological toxins against its

political adversaries--particularly the Hmong ethnic minority--throughout its almost 20 year control of Laos.

The LPDR's continuing use of chemical weapons--including several verified attacks in April and May of this year--is particularly troublesome. In the May 28, 1994 issue of **Daily News**, a Thai language newspaper, Prasit Mongkoltahrn, a representative of the Thai Security Council, talked about the recent fighting in April and May in Laos between the LPDR and its opponents and reported that the LPDR had used chemical weapons in the fighting "which made lots of people and animals sick." The Thai Security Council spokesman warned Thai people who travel to Laos to be careful "because of the possibility of coming into contact with the chemical." He also warned that some Thai areas that border on Laos such as Chieng Kham District in Payo Province and Ban Kok in Utaradit Province might be affected by these chemical agents. (See attached article from **Daily News**, May 28, 1994 and the translation.)

In addition to LPDR efforts to rewrite its history, this rogue nation, as it did during the 1980s, must once again assemble a Western cadre of scientists, academics, NGO personnel and other apologists to convince journalists, editorial boards, lawmakers and their staffs that evidence of the use of chemical weapons against minorities and political adversaries is only propaganda.

With this additional record of disregard of conventions and treaties which ban chemical weapons, it is doubtful that Congress would want to grant MFN trading status to Laos.

In order to present a pristine profile to Congress of a responsible nation that deserves MFN and other critical benefits that accompany this status and of a regime worthy of inclusion in the world community, the LPDR seems intent upon expunging its history of human rights abuses, rape, torture, concentration camps, mistreatment of its minorities, and the on-going violations of international weapons conventions.

"Academic freedom," according to the State Department's current human rights report on Laos, "remains tightly controlled. Laos academicians are sometimes denied permission to travel abroad for conferences or training. The Government also restricts and monitors the activities of Western scholars doing research in Laos." As a result, independent research in Laos by Westerners is impossible.

Jane Hamilton-Merritt's **TRAGIC MOUNTAINS: THE HMONG, THE AMERICANS, AND THE SECRET WARS FOR LAOS 1942-1992** (Indiana University Press, 1993)--14 years in the research and writing--describes in great detail the activities and policies of the LPDR from the time it took over the government of Laos by force in 1975 to the present.

It is obvious that **Tragic Mountains** and its author stand squarely in the way of the LPDR's attempt to rewrite its history and thus stand a chance of gaining U.S. MFN status. The LPDR, through agents and apologists, needs to discredit revelations of this dark and repressive regime. Thus, the need to discredit **Tragic Mountains** and its author.

Frank Proschan, through his temporary "associate scholar" position in Semiotics at Indiana University which began in the fall of 1992, has come to the forefront of this LPDR campaign of disinformation. Proschan's efforts in the fall of 1992 to stop the publication of Tragic Mountains failed, the book was published, broadly and favorably reviewed and endorsed, and is now in its third printing.

Using academics as unregistered lobbyists is a well-known technique of propaganda and disinformation employed by foreign governments.

#

jhm
6/27/94