The Lao Revolution: Errors and Achievements

by ***Martin Stuart-Fox****

The third coalition government in Laos collapsed in May 1975 with the flight of five rightist cabinet ministers across the Mekong River to Thailand. It was not until December the same year, however, that the monarchy was abolished and Laos was declared a Democratic People's Republic. Already at that time many of the problems that would beset the new regime during the first year of its existence were evident. The first flush of popular enthusiasm had waned. The image of the Pathet Lao as 'liberators' was coming to be replaced by the less appealing image of 'authority'. Unrealistic expectations were giving way to the realization that not all the changes to be instituted would be agreeable. From the government's point of view the termination of American aid and the collapse of the US-backed IMF Foreign Exchange Operations Fund to support the Lao currency had brought home the difficulties inherent in the stated goal of self-sufficiency. This situation had not been helped by the massive flight of so many of the country's best trained bureaucrats and technicians. Already dissident groups were posing security problems both in southern Laos and in the mountains north of Vietiane. Among the masses the campaign of ideological indoctrination was meeting some opposition, and pointing up the deficiencies in training of Pathet Lao cadres. Yet despite these signs the decision was taken to press on with the transformation of Lao society. This paper attempts to sum up the errors and achievements of the first year of communist government in Laos, and assess the indicators to the future.[1]

In large part the problems facing the Pathet Lao stemmed from the historical circumstances of a guerrilla war waged for almost three decades against a government backed for much of the time by the power of the United States. The war had divided the country politically roughly along existing ethnic and ecological lines. The rightists controlled the rice growing areas following the valley of the Mekong populated by lowland Lao, a culturally homogeneous group professing Theravada Buddhism. The communists, on the other hand, administered the far more extensive mountainous zone that runs the length of the country from the Chinese frontier along the eastern border with Vietnam to Cambodia in the south. This area is thinly populated by tribal minorities, the principal groups being the Lao Theung, the Meo and Yao. These tribes have no common language, or even common

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interests. Each is culturally distinct with its own form of animism. General neglect of the tribal minorities under the French resulted in a very low literacy rate and level of education in the highland areas. Extremely difficult terrain and poorly developed communications have meant that the area has remained economically disadvantaged and underdeveloped in comparison with the lowland region, despite the best efforts of the Pathet Lao to effect improvements.

A further factor has exacerbated differences between the two zones, and chronically retarded an already backward economy. Massive American bombing began in Laos in 1964, even before the aerial war against North Vietnam. The destruction and disruption caused by this bombardment had the effect of preventing the Pathet Lao from developing a more effective organization and better trained personnel. Bombing enabled the war to be carried on throughout those areas under communist administration. Within their zone of control the Pathet Lao were never free to build up their resources. Graphic accounts are available of conditions of life under the extraordinarily heavy bombing[2] Pathet Lao headquarters was in a series of deep limestone grottoes at Vieng Sai in the north-east of Sam Neua province not far from the North Vietnamese frontier. Anything that moved in this area provided a target for American jets which could be expected overhead up to a dozen times a day. The systematic destruction of Pathet Lao controlled villages forced most people in the liberated zone to live either in caves or in huts well dispersed in the jungle so as to escape the electronic detectors of low-flying aircraft. Even fields had to be planted and harvested at night in many areas if peasants were to avoid being strafed.[3] Effort that might have gone into improving economic conditions, agriculture, communications and administration, went instead into rebuilding devastated villages and into a daily struggle for mere survival.

Despite this by 1973 the PL had managed to build up an effective political apparatus that functioned on a number of levels. Within a broad front organization, the Neo Lao Hak Sat (the Lao Patriotic Front), a core revolutionary communist party, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), acted as a semi-secret controlling body. available of conditions of life under the extraordinarily heavy bombing.[2] (LPLA), estimated to number some 35 000 troops towards the end of 1972.[4] However weakenesses existed both in the quality of party cadres and in the political command structure. Recruitment was necessarily principally from tribal minorities whose educational level was never high. Training concentrated upon developing revolutionary fervour and unquestioning loyalty at the expense of flexibility and understanding. Discipline was stressed, yet poor communications meant that central directives were slow to arrive in some areas where they might be ignored because not understood, or interpreted in the light of local conditions.

A basic weakness of the Pathet Lao as a political organization has been the relative lack of upper and middle level cadres to implement decisions made by the Politburo and the Central Committee of the Party. Partly this reflected the material difficulties outlined above, partly the inadequate pool of potential recruits available in the liberated zone. During the years of warfare this lack was made up by North Vietnamese, but it would not have been politic to introduce Vietnamese into lowland areas once the PL had taken over the government of the whole country, and they have been careful not to do so. Realization of this organizational weakness may have been a factor in convincing the Pathet Lao to enter into negotiations towards a cease-fire agreement with the Royal Lao Government which was eventually signed in February 1973. A considerable time would be required, even with substantial assistance from the Vietnamese, to build up the economy of the liberated zone, develop training and educational facilities and produce the cadres, administrators and technicians necessary for the eventual seizure of political power.

But if the economy of the liberated zone was in a parlous state, that in the rest of the country was in not much better condition. Between May 1975 when the PL made their bid for power and December when the coalition government was finally replaced by a communist regime the situation further deteriorated due mainly to the loss of US aid and the flight of thousands of technicians, bureaucrats and professionally trained people that the country could ill afford to lose. Apart from military and economic assistance, the US also provided direct financial support to the government and was the major contributor to the IMF Fund. American withdrawal from the Fund led to its collapse. However, West Germany took the place of the US in another project by providing a grant to cover the next phase of the Nam Ngum hydroelectric and irrigation dam. Though accurate figures are not available, it seems that aid from the socialist bloc in the form of finance, food and materials, together with some economic assistance from international organizations and countries such as France, Sweden and Australia, have not, however, made up for the loss of the American contribution. A resumption of American aid, however much the Lao would appreciate it, would appear to depend upon the prior normalization of US-Vietnamese relations.[5]

Even more serious than the short-term loss of foreign aid has been the effect on the economic structure and welfare of the country of the exodus across the Mekong of so many civil servants and technicians. Appeals for them to return are certain to go unheeded so long as the government for its part keeps thousands more interned in 're-education' camps. Indeed most of the few civil servants released from these centres have crossed the Mekong at the first opportunity.[6] The total number of people who have fled has become 'standardized' at 200 000, a figure

repeated in just about every article written on Laos for the past year.[7] However this may well be an exaggeration. By August 1975 there were reported to be 27 000 Lao refugees in Thailand, together with a further 25 000 Meo.[8] Of these 'Lao' refugees a large number were Chinese and Vietnamese from the trans-Mekong towns. A year later the number of Meo was estimated at 50 000, plus some 7 000 Lao and at least 20 000 Vietnamese and Chinese.[9] Although most Lao with the means had taken the precaution of transferring funds to France, Switzerland or the US it seems unlikely that, given the small numerical size of the former Lao elite, more than 100 000 people could have had both the influence and finance to have left Thailand for France, the US or a handful of other countries which have accepted Lao refugees in small numbers. But however many have fled, the fact remains that Laos has lost a large proportion of its trained specialist manpower, and it will be years before they can be replaced. Though the actions of the communist authorities were principally responsible for this loss, it nonetheless presents the government with serious difficulties in their attempts to build up the economy of the country.

Perhaps more important, as far as the PL are concerned, than the loss of technicians and civil servants whose loyalty and political sympathies would always remain suspect has been the degree of popular disillusionment and discontent that developed during the first year of the new government. In large part this has been due to two related factors: the false impression the PL themselves deliberately encouraged of both their own organization and their plans for the country, and as a consequence of this the disappointed expectations of many who initially welcomed the new regime. To appreciate how this came about it is necessary to look at the image that the Pathet Lao projected of themselves during the period of the last coalition government.

The Provisional Government of National Union (PGNU) that was set up in April 1974 consisted of two bodies: a Council of Ministers, the government proper, and a National Political Consultative Council (NPCC). This latter body, comprising forty-two members (sixteen rightists, sixteen Pathet Lao and ten neutralists), was presided over, with charm and ability, by Souphanouvong, royal half-brother of Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma. The NPCC, whose political importance had been badly underestimated by the rightists, became under Souphanouvong's guidance, the vehicle by which the Pathet Lao promulgated what purported to be their political programme for the country. The eighteen-point National Political Programme unanimously adopted by the NPCC called for the building of a Peaceful, Independent, Neutral, Democratic, United and Prosperous Laos.[10] This essentially moderate document consisting of twelve points covering domestic affairs and six referring to foreign policy was widely disseminated throughout the rightest zone where it was generally accepted

at face value as the Pathet Lao blueprint for Lao society. This may have been unduly naive on the part of many people who might have been expected to have known better, but it reflected the effectiveness of PL propaganda together with the lack of any real information about who the Pathet Lao were and what were their intentions.

In view of the importance that came to be attached to this eighteen-point programme it is worth while examining its provisions in some detail. To begin with the eighteen points envisaged a continuation of the monarchy, the later abolition of which undoubtedly lost the PL some support, especially in the region of Luang Prabang. A wide range of democratic freedoms and rights was spelled out, including freedom of belief, speech, publication and assembly; freedom to stand for election and vote; freedom of movement and residence; and the right to free enterprise and property ownership. Buddhism and other religions were to be respected. Lao traditional culture and education were to be defended. The document also called for the eventual unification of all armed forces, and the building of a strong economy through development of both the 'state economic sector' and private undertakings and joint private-state enterprises. The foreign policy provisions called for the neutrality of Laos and looked to continued American aid to heal the wounds of war.

Events in Vietnam and Cambodia in April and May 1975 abruptly brought this moderate programme to an end. Since it had only been officially approved and published by the PGNU in July 1974 it had not been given much of a chance to work. However already it commanded wide support. But once their desired end had been achieved, and the PL finally controlled the government of Laos, more radical policies were initiated. It is interesting, however, that the eighteen-point programme has remained the document most frequently quoted by those disillusioned by or unhappy with the new regime. In fact adhesion to the eighteen points has become a rallying cry for armed anti-communist insurgents operating in Laos.[11]

In contrast to the moderation of the NPCC document the programme mapped out by Kaysone Phomvihan, Secretary-General of the LPRP, before the National Congress of People's Representatives called together in Vientiane to inaugurate the new communist government in December 1975 promised a far more radical transformation of Lao society.[12] Among other provisions Kaysone vowed to 'completely liquidate all remaining traces, consequences, and power of the neo-colonialist system'. This would be achieved by strengthening the popular democratic dictatorship, through consolidating people's councils and committees at all levels, and through expanding the Lao Peoples Liberation Army (LPLA) and improving its organizational network. Workers would represent the vanguard of this continuing revolution. Farmers were to stress cooperation and production—a forewarning of

the collectivization of agriculture yet to be introduced. Soldiers were to be vigilent to defeat all imperialist intrigues. Students were to integrate theory and practice, youth to work, monks to mobilize and educate the people. There was to be a concerted national effort in which all must co-operate in the course of which Lao society would experience profound and lasting changes. It was a vision which did not strike immediate enthusiasm among many easy-going Lao who would have been content with less far-reaching changes.

The new programme, which was put into effect during the first half of 1976 with considerable enthusiasm, but relaxed slightly from July on, was naturally compared with the provisions of the NPCC document, and often found wanting. The gap between expectation and performance which dogs many a government began to widen, and disillusionment set in. Partly this was due to the image of the Pathet Lao that had been current in the rightist zone, an image that was remarkably ill-informed. Government propaganda had always painted the communists as the source of all evil. In default of any accurate information on which to base an informed assessment the communists could fill any role in popular imagination from vicious murderers and North Vietnamese puppets to gallant freedom fighters struggling against enormous odds for the real independence of their country. As the word of the government was treated with some scepticism, the latter view tended often to prevail, especially among the young. The spontaneous acclaim that greeted Souphanouvong when he returned in triumph to Vientiane to take part in the PGNU in April 1974 was in part due to the fact that for many people in Laos Souphanouvong, the royal prince who had taken to the jungles, epitomized the self-sacrifice and idealism of his movement; but it was also a powerful demonstration against the self-serving corruption of the principal families who had wielded military and political power since Laos gained independence from France. The very moderation of the eighteen-points, the hard work, dedication and flexibility of the PL Ministers during the coalition government, all went to convince the average Lao that the PL were not nearly as bad as they had been made out to be. When they finally seized power the great majority of people were prepared to go along with the new regime.

Most people expected change and were prepared for it. What they wanted was a part in deciding on reforms. But the changes they wanted were in administration, in education, in areas of public finance and public works—changes which as far as the PL were concerned required decisions by the party central committee and could hardly be left up to regional initiative. Instead the changes they began to institute concerned personal life styles, social intercourse and religious celebrations. As these affected an increasing number of small personal freedoms, while more substantive issues remained to be decided,

resentment began to build up. It was at this point that deficiencies in PL preparation and personnel became evident.

Most of the young PL cadres who came down from the mountains to take control of the provincial capitals of southern Laos belonged to tribal minorities. Their training, as has been pointed out, had stressed unquestioning obedience to any party instruction, together with total acceptance of everything the party did. Their experience had been limited to the mountains of their birth, and the rigours of war. Though they had been taught to differentiate the masses, whom they were told were on the side of the PL, from the corrupt Vientiane government and administration, their attitude was all too often more that of victors than comrades-in-arms. As the initial enthusiasm for the new regime decreased amid mounting frustration over often petty and unnecessary regulations, relations between cadres and townsfolk deteriorated.[13] This trend was exacerbated by age-old prejudices based upon ethnic differences and antagonisms. The way in which young cadres issued orders to village elders shocked and alienated many people. Cadres, faced with the criticisms of the more sophisticated urban-dwelling lowland Lao fell back upon arrogance and the repetition of party slogans.

Three areas in particular can be singled out as sources of friction: changes demanded in life style, curtailment of personal liberties and interference in voting procedures. Even in simple matters of dress and hair styles a gulf separated the liberators from the liberated, especially in the towns. The baggy clothing and cloth caps of the Pathet Lao soldiers contrasted with the Western styles favoured by most young urban Lao and were initially a source of amusement. The PL soon made it clear that they considered modish clothes a sign of decadent imperialist influence to be eradicated as soon as possible. Jeans for girls, bell-bottoms, long hair, Western music and dancing were all condemned. Where social pressure failed to achieve the desired result more drastic means were used. In April 1976 some 1 200 of the capital's most incorrigible youth—addicts, prostitutes, hippies, gamblers, etc.—were arrested and sent to re-education camps on separate islands (two for men and another for women) in the middle of the Nam Ngum dam not far from Vientiane.[14]

But it was not only the Western-influenced youth of the towns who were affected by this ideological and cultural campaign. Even in the villages the austere hand of the authorities was felt. Pathet Lao soldiers held aloof from the numerous ceremonies centred on the village *wat*, the Buddhist temple. Lavish expenditure, fine clothing, even an excess of Lao rice wine were frowned upon as frivolous wastage of scarce national resources. Consumption at family celebrations—marriages, funeral feasts—was reported to the village political committee. Pressure was placed upon villagers not to attend festivals. Even traditional

dancing was condemned as unseemly. In part this was an effort to undermine the influence of Buddhism, in violation of the PL pledge to respect religion. All Catholic churches throughout Laos have been closed down, with the sole exception of one in Vientiane where, ironically, though few Lao attend Catholic members of the Vietnamese community still worship.

Curtailment of personal liberties often by petty bureaucratic controls was another irritant. Movement was severely restricted as the authorities endeavoured to get people to return to their villages as part of a policy stressing the importance of agricultural production. Three hundred thousand are reported to have complied.[15] Passes were required not only to move from province to province, but also to leave the district and even one's home village. Official authorization was required by peasants to sell their produce at local markets, while a ban was placed upon the free slaughter of livestock. Together these measures led to severe food shortages and inflated prices, resulting in smuggling, black marketeering and other abuses for which the PL had always castigated the previous regime.[16]

Resentment over what was seen as unnecessary meddling by the authorities occurred during the important elections held early in November 1975 for three levels of local government: groups of villages (*tasseng*), municipalities and provinces. Candidates were screened for their ideological orthodoxy and revolutionary fervour, qualifications best filled by newly arrived cadres and political opportunists. Opportunism in fact plagued the first year of the new regime. Low level bureaucrats denounced their superiors in the hope of taking their places, while those who learned the new slogans most quickly got themselves elected to administrative committees. But what was obvious to villagers was hidden from the newly arrived Pathet Lao, with the result that the government's prestige suffered. Too often official interference with both choice of candidates and voting procedures led to the election of arrogant parvenus incapable of fulfilling their administrative duties. Only slowly have some of these opportunists been weeded out.

Another cause for resentment and uncertainty has been the government's programme of political re-education. This has operated on a series of levels. Some three to four thousand senior rightist officials and army officers have been sent to spartan re-education camps in the remote north-east of the country where they seem likely to remain indefinitely. Thousands more minor functionaries and former soldiers have spent anything from a few days to a month or more in less rigorous camps. As much as anything it has been lack of information that has made people unhappy. It was never known for how long those sent to the camps would be away. In some cases revolts occurred, one reportedly led by a former Pathet Lao commander.[17] On the lowest level, the whole population, through inclusion in mass movements, has been subjected

to continuing ideological indoctrination in frequent seminars which may last from a few hours to a few days. Privately many may grumble about the waste of time, but under duress everyone attends.

It should be noted that the government has not been unaware of its mistakes. As early as October 1975 a party document warned that 'owing to many years of oppression and exploitation, the ideological perception of the oppressed and exploited is to some extent limited.'[18] And two months after the establishment of Laos as a Democratic Peoples Republic the authorities were forced to admit that cadres 'have not attentively studied the party line and policy and lack appropriate plans to implement it'.[19] This had led to misunderstanding and suspicion about what the government was trying to do. Cases of abuse and threats by PL militia have also been reported and a number of soldiers arrested.[20] Only slowly however, have the more galling restrictions been lifted. In Savannakhet, personal visits from both Kaysone and Nouhak, both of whom have aged mothers living there, were used as occasions to allay the simmering discontent. Provincial cadres were publicly rebuked. All too often, however, the official reply to all forms of criticism has been simply to intone that 'the people must understand'.[21]

Part of the problem that has faced the new government stems from its own highly centralized political structure, its 'democratic centralism'. Information is passed up the hierarchy while decisions flow in the opposite direction. Given poor communication, administrative inefficiency and the fact that the system is new and unwieldy, it is not surprising that it works slowly. But then things in Laos have always worked slowly. More serious is the effect such a system can have on individual initiative. Even minor decisions must be referred to higher authority. A member of the Supreme People's Council has been quoted as admitting that 'everything depends upon the Central Committee, even the administration; even for the nomination of a provincial cadre, the Central Committee must give its approval'.[22] Nothing is left to provincial cadres but the zealous application of petty regulations, and the implementation of party directives that are often only partially understood.

Security has been another problem facing the new government. Although acts of terrorism and sabotage have been few and isolated —grenades were thrown into the grounds of the Soviet and Cuban embassies in Vientiane, a bridge was blown up east of the capital— armed opposition has developed in two widely separated areas. Both were apparently unconnected spontaneous outbreaks, though that in southern Laos may have benefited from some organization from Thailand. That in the north broke out as soon as units of the Lao People's Liberation Army began to move into areas controlled by Meo who had been loyal to the former government, and who had been recruited to form an independent clandestine army by the American

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). An estimated 50 000 of the quarter of a million Meo in Laos have fled to Thailand for fear of communist reprisals. PL efforts to resettle Meo on the Vientiane plain have been actively resisted. Scattered incidents have been reported from Sayaboury province and south of Luang Prabang. Most attacks take the form of ambushes; some roads are unsafe and the LPLA has been forced to mount a series of armed patrols into the area.[23]

Meo opposition can be seen partly as resulting from fear and distrust of an enemy they have been taught for years to hate, partly as an attempt by the fiercely independent tribesmen to resist any and all Lao domination. As far as the Meo were concerned there had never been a cease-fire. The situation was quite different in southern Laos. There opposition did not develop until six months after the PL had taken power.[24] This suggests two possible conclusions: that at first people were prepared to give the new regime a go, and that resistance was deliberately organized, probably with outside support, only after it was seen that popular discontent was growing. In rural areas an important source of discontent was the forced 'donation' of rice stocks to the state. Food shortages marked the first year of communist rule, and rice had to be imported from neighbouring Thailand.[25] Cadres reportedly committed the kind of excesses in their zealous search for supplies that they would have been careful never to do as guerrillas.

With the setting up of the Lao Peoples Revolutionary Front 21/18 in February 1976 anti-government resistance took on more organized form. The figures stand for the date of the Vientiane cease-fire agreement (21 February 1973) and the eighteen points of the former NPCC's defunct political programme, which the front claims to uphold. Its effectiveness in southern Laos, especially in the vicinity of Pakse and Savannakhet has been such that Pathet Lao soldiers only travel in convoy in much of the countryside. There have been reports of soldiers and civilian officials being pulled off buses at road blocks and shot. A saying has it that anyone found wearing Pathet Lao shoes will have his feet cut off, anyone wearing a Pathet Lao shirt will have his arms cut off, and anyone wearing a Pathet Lao hat, well ... too bad.[26]

It is clear that this anti-government opposition is receiving at least some outside support from local authorities in Thailand, if not from the Thai government, or the CIA as the Lao claim.[27] However what is also clear is that, whether out of fear or sympathy, villagers are failing to report the presence of insurgents to the authorities. As the government has admitted: there has been 'an alarming loss of public confidence' in the regime.[28] Certain social and political directives, a report by the LPRP Central Committee in July 1976 said in effect, were not in line with the 'nearest desires and needs of the people in the new era of self-mastership and independence'.[29] Not that the security situation is really serious, but it is an embarrassment to the government,

and it is obviously causing some concern.

Recruits for the insurgents come from a number of disparate groups. Chief among them are the Lao refugees who fled to Thailand but who did not have the means or the influence to flee further. Conditions in the refugee camps are not salubrious. Thai authorities have placed restrictions upon the movement of refugees for fear of infiltration by communist agents. Many are former soldiers who left to avoid possible PL reprisals but whose families often remained in Laos. There is an incentive for such men to sign up with the rebels to see their families again. However the 21/18 Front claims to recruit its supporters from inside Laos. Some of these recruits are former soldiers who had known nothing but the army and who found themselves bored by civilian life. Some are undoubtedly adventurers, little more than bandits. The Front also claims to include a number of disaffected Pathet Lao among its members, men who believed their own leaders when they spoke of an independent and neutral Laos, and resent the continued presence and influence of the Vietnamese.[30] Indicative of this feeling is the popular criticism of Kaysone as 'not really Lao', a slighting reference to his Vietnamese father. The implication is that if he had been 'pure' Lao he would not be taking Laos down the path of Vietnamese communism.

However the importance of the security problem in Laos should not be over-estimated. It does not represent more than the actions of a small disaffected minority. No government, least of all one newly installed faced with the problems that the Pathet Lao have had to deal with, can expect to please all the people all the time. Although the pace of change may have been too abrupt for some, especially those who stood to lose in power or social prestige, policies have been essentially moderate in their application, especially when compared with events happening simultaneously in Cambodia. Here again the Lao appear to have taken some lessons from the Vietnamese.[31] But given the proximity of the centres of Lao population to the Mekong border with Thailand, and the impossibility of policing that border, if Laos were not to lose even more of its small population policies had to be moderate. The regime may not have been too unhappy, however, to see the last of many of those who left: certainly it did little to stop them. The Pathet Lao have neither the organization nor the ideological resources to deal with what could have been an indigestible body of latent opposition. If the 'graduates' to date are anything to go by their re-education programme leaves something to be desired in the way of effectiveness. Instead of having to contend with even larger numbers of people seen as posing a continued threat to the regime, the PL are free to turn their attention to organizing the masses and to the economy. The principal elements of the usual mass organizations aimed at mobilizing and politicizing the masses have been set up. Communist control is already effective in most areas. On the economic front the government

is wisely stressing self-sufficiency in food as the first goal, followed by exploitation of the nation's not inconsiderable natural resources. Provided the government continues its careful course, taking prompt notice of popular discontent, it should avoid the kind of peasant uprising that occurred in North Vietnam in 1956. Much depends upon the speed at which agriculture is collectivized, when and how it is carried out. If, however, the government turns a deaf ear to the people, insisting simply that they 'must understand', it risks a peasant revolt which, with encouragement from Thailand, could plunge the country once again into the kind of fratricidal conflict that preceeded the Pathet Lao takeover.

Since this paper went to press the last western journalist, John Everingham, has been expelled from Laos. Since there is no further need to protect Mr. Everingham's position I should like to acknowledge the long conversations I have had with him as a most important source on current events in Laos.

1. This paper is to a large extent based upon conversations with some of those who have fled Laos since the communist takeover, and with Western journalists who have covered the recent events. In addition the author has drawn upon his own experience as correspondent for United Press International (UPI) in Laos from 1963 to 1965.
2. See for instance the series of articles by Jacques Decornoy in *Le Monde*, 3 to 8 July 1968, translated in Nina S. Adams and Alfred W. McCoy (eds), *Laos: War and Revolution* (New York, 1970) pp. 411–423.
3. As Pathet Lao cadres extended their contact with mountain tribal villages, each would be bombed and napalmed. See John Everingham, 'Let them Eat Bombs',*The Washington Monthly*, vol 4, no. 7, 1972, pp. 10–16.
4. Joseph J. Lasloff, *The Pathet Lao* (Lexington, Mass., 1973) p. 69. See also pp. 41–63 for the structure of the NLHS, and pp. 69–92 for the LPLA.
5. MacAlister Brown and Joseph J. Zasloff, 'Laos 1976: Faltering First Steps Towards Socialism', *Asian Survey*, vol. 17, no 2, February 1977, p. 115.
6. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol 92, no 15, 9 April 1976.
7. Brown and Zasloff, *op.cit.*, p. 111.
8. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol 89, no 31, 1 August 1975.
9. Robert Shaplen, 'Letter from Laos', *The New Yorker*, 2 August 1976, pp. 73 and 74. Shaplen's figures are not consistent. This estimate does not include those Chinese and Vietnamese who have not remained in Thailand.
10. For the full text see the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol 5, no 2, 1975, pp. 251–255.
11. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol 92, no 17, 23 April 1976.
12. For the text of this speech see the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol 6, no 1, 1976, pp 110–117.
13. For the sole account of this development in a southern Lao provincial centre see John Everingham, 'A Struggle in Microcosm', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol 92, no 15, 9 August 1976, pp. 26–32.
14. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol 92, no 19, 7 May 1976. By December the numbers had risen to over 2000 and only 284 had been released—see *New York Times*, 13 December 1976.
15. Brown and Zasloff, *op.cit.*, p. 109.
16. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol 92, no 15, 9 April 1976.
17. Shaplen, *op.cit.*, p. 66.
18. Quoted in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol 92, no 15, 9 April 1976.

19. *ibid.*
20. Shaplen, *op.cit.*, p. 66.
21. David A. Andelman, 'Laos After the Takeover', *New York Times Magazine*, 24 October 1976.
22. *Le Monde*, 2 December 1976.
23. For the Meo see *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol 89, no 31, 1 August 1975; vol 89, no 35, 29 August 1975; vol 90, no 47, 21 November 1975; and vol 91, no 7, 13 February 1976.
24. *ibid.*, vol 92, no 17, 23 April 1976.
25. *Le Monde*, 3 December 1976.
26. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol 92, no 17, 23 April 1976.
27. Shaplen, *op.cit.*, p. 74.
28. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol 93, no 47, 19 November 1976.
29. Quoted in *ibid.*
30. Shaplen, *op.cit.*, p. 66.
31. See John C. Donnell, 'South Vietnam in 1975: The Year of Communist Victory', *Asian Survey*, vol 16, no 1, January 1976, pp. 1–13.