

# A Correspondence with the CIA

Alfred W. McCoy

June 30, 1972

I

On June 1 of this year an official of the US Central Intelligence Agency paid a visit to the New York offices of my publisher, Harper and Row, Inc. This CIA official was Mr. Cord Meyer, Jr. (now the CIA's Assistant Deputy Director of Plans; formerly the CIA official in charge of providing covert financial subsidies for organizations such as the National Student Association, *Encounter* Magazine, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom).<sup>1</sup> Mr. Meyer urged several of his old friends among Harper and Row's senior management to provide him with a copy of the galley proofs of my history of the international narcotics traffic, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*. In this book I show the complicity of various US agencies—particularly the CIA and the State Department—in organizing the Southeast Asian drug traffic since the early 1950s.

Mr. Meyer presented one of Harper and Row's senior editors with some documents giving the CIA's view on the Southeast Asian drug traffic. His manner was grave. He said, "You wouldn't want to publish a book that would be full of inaccuracies, embarrass the United States government, or get you involved in libel suits, would you?"

Harper and Row's management promised to consider Mr. Meyer's request and summoned me from Washington, DC, where I was then testifying before the Senate Appropriations Committee on my findings after eighteen months of research into the Southeast Asian drug traffic. This research included more than 250 interviews with heroin dealers, police officials, and intelligence agents in Europe and Asia.

At a meeting in New York on the afternoon of June 8, Harper and Row's president, Mr. Winthrop Knowlton, and its senior vice president, Mr. B. Brooks Thomas, told me that they had decided to provide the CIA with a copy of the galley proofs prior to publication for the following reasons:

First, the CIA would be less likely to seek a temporary court injunction barring publication of the book if the Agency were given a chance to persuade itself that national security was in no way endangered by portions of my book; and secondly, Harper and Row felt that a responsible publisher should have enough confidence in the veracity of any of its particularly controversial books to show them to any reputable critic for comment prior to publication.

At first I disagreed with Harper and Row's decision, arguing that submitting

the galley proofs to the CIA could set a dangerous precedent and ultimately weaken First Amendment guarantees concerning freedom of the press. Moreover, in view of what I had learned of the CIA's operating methods in Southeast Asia I was convinced that the Agency was capable of using unethical means—such as coercing my sources into retracting statements they had made to me about US complicity in the international narcotics traffic—in order to induce Harper and Row to withdraw the book from publication.

After a week of negotiations, however, Harper and Row told me that they would not be willing to publish the book unless I agreed to submit the manuscript to the CIA. Faced with what I believed would be lengthy delays if I took the book to another publisher and the prospect of losing my Harper and Row editor, Elisabeth Jakob, with whom I had worked

closely, I capitulated. Thus began more than two months of lengthy negotiations between the CIA, Harper and Row, and myself. Most of what happened during these elaborate negotiations is in the correspondence reprinted below. I have added introductory notes to explain some of the attending circumstances.

Considered collectively, this exchange of letters provides us with another important reminder—perhaps the first since the National Student Association scandals of 1967—of the contempt this most clandestine of our governmental agencies has for the integrity of the press and publishing industry. As the CIA's letter of July 28, 1972, shows, it was unable to rebut effectively my analysis of its role in the international heroin traffic during the last quarter century. Since the CIA simply had no plausible defense against this charge, it tried to impose prior censorship in order to avoid public scrutiny of its record. If it was not already clear, it now should be obvious to publishers that the Agency cannot be regarded as a responsible critic when its public image is seriously threatened by what is written about it.

II

In this letter, written after Cord Meyer, Jr.'s visit, Harper and Row asked the CIA for official confirmation of their interest in seeing the book. Since the CIA had never before been quite so willing to defend itself publicly, neither Harper and Row nor I expected to hear anything more from the

Cord Meyer, Jr.  
1523 34th Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20007

Dear Mr. Meyer:

I understand from Messrs. Canfield, Sr. and Wyeth that you have expressed an interest in being shown the manuscript of our forthcoming book, *The Politics of Heroin*, by Alfred W. McCoy.

Before making any determination with respect to your request, I would appreciate it if you would confirm it to me in writing, indicating to the extent you deem appropriate any reasons you may have for making such a request.

Sincerely,

[B. Brooks Thomas  
Vice President and General Counsel  
Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.]

2 The CIA, in reply, challenged Harper and Row by stating categorically that it could rebut all my charges about its complicity in the international narcotics traffic. We were surprised, however, that the CIA made no reference to "national security" as one of its concerns in requesting to review the manuscript. Rather, the Agency made its request purely on grounds of government privilege.

Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D.C. 20505

5 July 1972

Mr. B. Brooks Thomas  
Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

Dear Mr. Thomas:

Mr. Cord Meyer has asked me to respond to your letter to him of June 30th in connection with the book, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, by Alfred W. McCoy.

As you are no doubt aware, Mr. McCoy testified on 2 June 1972 before the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee. His testimony included allegations concerning support of the international opium traffic by U. S. agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency, and numerous other allegations concerning participation in the opium traffic by both Americans and local personnel in Southeast Asia.

In the light of the pernicious nature of the drug traffic, allegations concerning involvement of the U. S. Government therein or the participation of American citizens should be made only if based on hard

evidence that no reputable

Continued.

publishing house would wish to publish such allegations without being assured that the supporting evidence was valid. It was on this basis that Mr. Meyer talked to Mr. Canfield and Mr. Wyeth. It is Mr. Meyer's understanding that they agreed with this position and, therefore, said that a copy of the galley proofs would be made available to us. If this were done, we believe we could demonstrate to you that a considerable number of Mr. McCoy's claims about this Agency's alleged involvement are totally false and without foundation, a number are distorted beyond recognition, and none is based on convincing evidence. We are not alone in this position as the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs also considers Mr. McCoy's claims to be essentially based on rumor or hearsay.

Mr. Nelson Gross, the Secretary of State's Senior Advisor and Coordinator for International Narcotics Matters, wrote on 8 June 1972 to Senator Proxmire, the Chairman of the Subcommittee before which Mr. McCoy appeared, and refuted a number of Mr. McCoy's major allegations. In testimony before an informal congressional panel of U. S. Representatives in New York City on 9 June 1972, Mr. Gross again refuted allegations made by Mr. McCoy but in more detail.

Ordinarily this Agency does not respond to public criticism. However, in this case to the strongest directives to the U. S. Government's effort against the international narcotics traffic and are bending every effort to do so. We believe we cannot stand by and see baseless criticism designed to undermine confidence in that effort without trying to set the record straight. This, of course, in no way affects the right of a publisher to decide what to publish. I find it difficult to believe, however, that a responsible publisher would wish to be associated with an attack on our Government involving the vicious international drug traffic without at least trying to ascertain the facts.

I trust I have made quite clear our reason for asking to see the text of Mr. McCoy's book prior to publication and have also given you reason to consider your own responsibilities in this matter.

Sincerely,  
Lawrence R. Houston  
General Counsel

3 When I was shown the CIA's request I told Harper and Row that the CIA, by failing to mention national security as its major reason for requesting the right to review the galley proofs, had undermined the logic behind Harper and Row's stated reasons for submitting the galley proofs to the Agency. When Harper and Row told me that it still wanted to have the book reviewed by the CIA, I withdrew my consent in the letter that follows. More significantly, the strident tone of the CIA's letter of July 5 to Harper and Row—which coincided with the publication of a CIA rebuttal to some of my charges in the

Washington *Evening Star* on the same day, really making a serious effort to discredit me and suppress my book.

I believed I stood very little chance of countering the CIA's pressures successfully so long as negotiations remained private. I flew to Washington, DC, on July 16—the day before I delivered this letter to Harper and Row—and told several Washington reporters about the negotiations with the CIA. (Harper and Row had told me it was planning a press conference about the CIA's request at a yet undecided future date.)

New Haven, Connecticut  
July 17, 1972

Mr. B. Brooks Thomas,  
Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

Dear Mr. Thomas:

I cannot agree to the request by the Central Intelligence Agency to receive an advance copy of the page proofs of my book, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*.

I believe that a fundamental principle is at stake. A basic tenet of our democracy is that government agencies are subject to public scrutiny. Our democracy cannot long survive if powerful government agencies have the right to review and possibly censor criticism before it reaches the American people.

The American people have the freedom to read and the right to information from diverse sources, and the right to judge for themselves what to believe. No government agency can try to abridge these rights and this fundamental freedom in any way.

I believe that the CIA's actions in this case constitute an interference in our author-publisher relationship and I feel strongly that submitting the manuscript to the CIA for prior review is to agree to take the first step toward abandoning the First Amendment protection against prior censorship. I cannot agree to this.

My further reasons for refusing to submit the book to the CIA are as follows:

1. The public's right to know is best served by publishing the book as it now stands. The CIA has the right to respond to it publicly and to seek legal redress of any grievances.

2. The CIA has no legal right to review the book.

3. The CIA may ask for changes or take legal action to block or delay the book.

4. The CIA may take extralegal actions to delay the book or have it changed. The visits by the CIA to Harper and Row, the telephone calls, and the letters are extralegal attempts by the CIA to harass and intimidate me and my publisher. There is no reason to doubt that further such actions might be taken by the CIA at some future date.

5. The book has already been thoroughly reviewed by Harper and Row and has been approved for publication. Academic

examined the manuscript and Harper and

Row's legal staff has twice combed the manuscript with great care. There is no reason for further examination prior to publication.

As you well know, the book implicates the CIA in the narcotics traffic which is rampant in Southeast Asia. Thousands of American GIs fighting in Vietnam have become heroin addicts and Southeast Asia is fast becoming the major source of heroin entering the U. S. The CIA, the State Department, and the whole U. S. apparatus in Indochina is aiding and abetting this narcotics traffic on three levels:

1. providing political and military support for officials and political factions actively engaged in the drug traffic without pressuring them to stop the traffic;

2. concealing evidence of our Southeast Asian allies' involvement in the narcotics traffic;

3. active involvement—Air America aircraft chartered by the CIA have been transporting opium harvested by the CIA's tribal mercenaries in Laos.

These points are made in the book and have also been made publicly when I testified before the Senate Foreign Operations Subcommittee on June 2, and the Congressional Inquiry Regarding International Narcotics Traffic on June 9, as well as appearing in an article I wrote for the July issue of *Harpers* magazine.

The State Department, the CIA, the U. S. Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, and Air America have made public statements refuting my charges. Although these statements partly contradict each other and further substantiated my charges of concealment, I believe that the public is best served by a full and open airing of the debate. I stand fully behind my charges and I have provided further documentation to the Senate Foreign Operations Subcommittee and have responded to the CIA's refutations in a letter to the Washington *Evening Star*. My full findings are contained in the book which is the result of one and a half years' work and more than 250 interviews around the globe. It should be published as it stands. The CIA has already denied my charges, and giving them the book to review is like asking the U. S. Army to review My Lai [My Lai 4 by Seymour Hersh].

I ask that Harper and Row stand with me on this decision. I have asked the advice of friends, lawyers, journalists, Congressional staff people, and other publishers and they agree that the American people and the publishing industry will be best served by not turning over page proofs of the book to the CIA for advance scrutiny.

Harper and Row has invested much time, energy, enthusiasm, and money into the successful completion of this book. Our common goal is to present the facts to the American people. Cooperating with the CIA which has been involved in the drug traffic in Southeast Asia violates common sense.

In order to stop **Approved For Release 2005/06/22 : CIA-RDP74B00415R000400030046-1** from Southeast Asia, all agencies involved will first have to admit there is a problem. They will have to admit past mistakes, not cover them up. Honesty and forthrightness are in order. I do not accuse the U.S. government of intentionally fostering the narcotics traffic. This involvement, however, has been the consequence of putting top priority on U.S. military and political goals in Indochina to the detriment of anti-narcotics work. As long as our Asian allies fight the war, U.S. officials tolerate governmental corruption. Narcotics trafficking has not been treated differently from currency manipulation, stealing U.S. aid, or black marketeering—all of which are rampant.

Any change in the status quo will come from the public pressure which results from a full airing of the controversy. I hope that the public will be able to see my book, uncensored, on the scheduled September 13 publication date.

Yours truly,  
Alfred W. McCoy

**4 & 5** The following letters from Brooks Thomas to me and from me to his assistant James Fox, were written on one day, July 18, when I came to New York determined to break with Harper and Row for agreeing to provide the CIA with a copy of the galley proofs. For twenty-one hours, from 4:30 PM on July 17 until 1:30 PM on July 18, I negotiated with Harper and Row executives. They made it clear that they would not publish the book unless the CIA could first see it. I finally agreed to submit galley proofs to the CIA only after Harper and Row guaranteed to protect the integrity of the book from any retractions the Agency might obtain by bringing pressure on my sources.

Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.  
July 18, 1972

Mr. Alfred W. McCoy  
New Haven, Connecticut

Dear Mr. McCoy:

Thank you for your letter of July 17, 1972, which was delivered to me by hand last night.

I fully agree with your statement that a basic tenant of our democracy is that government agencies are subject to public scrutiny. I subscribe also to your belief that the American people have the freedom to read and the right to inform themselves from diverse sources, and the right to judge for themselves what to believe. These rights are not only basic to our democratic society, but of course absolutely fundamental to the profession of publishing. Harper & Row would hardly have endured for over 150 years as one of the leading publishing houses in the English-speaking world without a keen awareness of these rights and a willingness to stand up for them when they are threatened.

Unfortunately, I cannot agree with your forced to make a choice between the two, violated if Harper & Row were to accede to the request of the C.I.A. that they be allowed to read a copy of your manuscript before publication, and given an opportunity to persuade us that certain statements made are factually incorrect if they believe that to be the case. **Approved For Release 2005/06/22 : CIA-RDP74B00415R000400030046-1** must be.

Sincerely,  
B. Brooks Thomas

July 18, 1972  
New Haven, Conn.

James Fox  
Harper and Row, Inc.  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Jim,

As you instructed me this afternoon, I will outline in this letter agreements that you and I reached in our respective capacities as author and legal counsel for Harper and Row on the evening of July 17-July 18, 1972. As you yourself told me last evening and again this afternoon, these points outlined below are an integral part of the agreement between Harper and Row and myself signed this afternoon. You have also led me to believe that these points are the sole basis for negotiations between myself and Harper & Row if and when the CIA comes forward with criticisms of the author's manuscript. The agreed conditions are as follows:

*[Here I outlined six specific situations in which Harper and Row would accept my notes and sources as the definitive authority when considering the CIA's objections.]*

If for any reason these conditions we worked out together are not acceptable to you please inform me prior to submitting the manuscript to the CIA so that we can clarify any minor misunderstanding or incidental phraseology problems that might have risen from my transcription of the notes from our negotiations of this morning. As you are well aware I am totally opposed to turning the book over to the CIA since I feel that it sets a most dangerous precedent and could seriously weaken First Amendment freedoms if the CIA actually succeeded in removing material from the book. Submitting the manuscript for the CIA's review is bad enough, but submitting to censorship of material would be totally unacceptable to me.

I have only acceded to Harper and Row's determination to give the book to the CIA because you have told me that unless I did so you would categorically refuse to publish the book. The working relationships I have with persons at Harper and Row are irreplaceable and the delays involved in going to a new publisher would most certainly delay production so long that the American people would be denied this information until after the November elections. Thus, I have capitulated to management's demands for what I consider important pragmatic reasons. But I have done so with the assurance that the above considerations would be the basis on which the CIA's criticisms are reviewed. Since we have agreed that these ground rules for responsible forthcoming

You state in your letter that to submit the manuscript under such circumstances is "to agree to take the first step toward abandoning the First Amendment protection against prior censorship". With this statement I respectfully, but emphatically, disagree. No one has asserted any right to review the manuscript, they have only made a request which we are perfectly free to ignore. Nor has anyone suggested that, having read it, they can force us to make changes in it which we do not agree of our own free will. Indeed, in his letter to me, a copy of which you have seen, the General Counsel of the C.I.A. freely admits that we, and we alone, are free to decide whether and what to publish. He seeks only the opportunity to persuade us of his view. Certainly the freedom to persuade is as central to our democracy as anything else. To call it censorship is, I submit, to leap to a conclusion not supported by the facts of the case.

You are right, of course, in calling attention to the fact that the C.I.A. is requesting a prior review of the manuscript and not just the right to read it upon publication like anyone else. Although this certainly makes the request an unusual one and one not to be taken lightly, I believe that there are present factors which make such a request not unreasonable in the light of the circumstances.

Your book makes, as we all know, serious allegations concerning support of the international opium traffic by U.S. agencies, including the C.I.A. We have confidence in your scholarship, and our own investigation has satisfied us that your work is well documented and thorough. If we did not think so, we would not want to publish it, and we do. But this does not mean that it is utterly inconceivable that the C.I.A. may tell us something we do not know, or correct a fact which, if left uncorrected, might do irreparable harm to someone. To rule out this possibility, however theoretical it may be, is hardly the role either of responsible journalism or of responsible scholarship. It costs us nothing to listen, and we think we have an obligation as responsible publishers to do so. I should add that we consider this to be a position based upon strength, and not upon weakness.

Many of us here have invested considerable time and energy in your book, not the least of whom is your editor. Her enthusiasm for the work is as great as ever, and the same is true for the rest of us as well. We want very much to publish it. But we want even more to live up to the publishing house as we see them. If we are

criticisms are absolutely necessary for a harmonious relationship. Approved For Release 2005/06/22 : CIA-RDP74B00415R000400030046-1  
when we might have to deal with the Agency, I consider it imperative that they be mutually agreed upon before the CIA is sent a copy of the book. If I do not hear from you in the next few days on this matter, I will assume that you have assented to my rendering here of our agreements.

Also, let me repeat once more that although I am willing to admit that every author makes a number of minor factual errors which must be corrected, I remain, as does Harper and Row, convinced that the book is fundamentally sound. Thus, I am rather unwilling to consider changing material at this late date. Having studied the CIA's methods for the last year and a half I have learned that their stock and trade, like that of all such agencies of any nation which plays the international espionage game, is lies, deception, carefully selected misrepresentation of the past, distorted documents, and falsified statements acquired under pressure. Given the CIA's past history of conduct which violates the normal ethical standards for most governmental institutions, I am not likely to be impressed with any CIA evidence which controverts my knowledge of a given topic. Also given the rather dubious record of disturbing contradictions in statements made by government officials trying to controvert my Congressional testimony on the Southeast Asian drug traffic (vide statements in my supplementary testimony to the Senate Appropriations Committee), I have become aware that the truth is no barrier for government officials who try to discredit what I am saying.

Given all of this, I intend to defend my book with great vigor when the agency presents its criticisms. Since I feel that people at Harper and Row know less about the subject than myself and are generally unaware of the Agency's operating methods, it is very possible that disagreements might arise when considering the CIA's criticisms. If this happens and Harper and Row wants to make deletions or alterations I cannot accept then I feel that I will be forced to refuse to make such alterations or deletions. If that happens, I hope Harper and Row will still be willing to publish the book. If Harper and Row decides to drop the book rather [than] resist the agency's criticisms, I will inevitably find myself on the street looking for a new house. I hope that won't happen but I am prepared to live with that possibility. You have already spent more than 7 working days going over the book—line by line, footnote by footnote—and my editor Elisabeth [Jakab] has spent weeks reviewing the manuscript for accuracy as well as style and structure.

Although management has expressed confidence in the work, they do not have the same experience and thus cannot have the same deep-seated confidence. Yet they are the ones who will be making final deci-

sions. Thus, I feel it is very possible that material I know is valid. If this happens I will be forced to refuse, and Harper and Row may subsequently refuse to publish the book. Thus, as we approach these negotiations we should do so in a spirit of mutual confidence, but should simultaneously be aware that the same kind of philosophical and experiential differences which made Mr. Thomas advocate turning the book over to the CIA and myself oppose such an idea may again lead to a confrontation. I have yielded at this point because I have been willing to sacrifice principle for the sake of publishing substance. Having sacrificed principle, I do not feel that Harper and Row can expect me to sacrifice substantive portions of my book as well. But if we part, let us part amicably.

Thank you for your consideration in wading through this necessarily long letter. I remain,

Your would-be author,  
Alfred W. McCoy

6 & 7 On July 20, one day after the following letter from Mr. Thomas was mailed, an agent of the CIA arrived in the New York offices of Harper and Row, signed for a copy of the page proofs, and carried them off to the CIA campus in Langley, Virginia, for review by "more than one component of the Agency." On the next day, the CIA's general counsel wrote the following acknowledgment of receipt which contained the most revealing statement by the CIA about its intentions ("if the decision is made to publish"). The CIA was saying, in effect, that its criticism would so thoroughly discredit my thesis that Harper and Row would voluntarily withdraw the book from publication.

Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

July 19, 1972

Lawrence R. Houston, Esq.  
General Counsel  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Houston:

Thank you for your letter of July 5, 1972 in connection with our forthcoming book, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, by Alfred W. McCoy.

We share your belief that no reputable publishing house would wish to publish allegations concerning support of the international opium traffic by U.S. agencies without having been assured that valid supporting evidence for such allegations exists. We have read Mr. McCoy's manuscript very carefully from this standpoint, and have had it read as well by several distinguished independent experts in the field. We have also read the testimony of Mr. Gross to which you advert in your letter, a transcript of which was furnished to me. All have to review the material and the evidence available to us, including the foregoing, we are persuaded that the work

is amply documented and that Mr. McCoy's approach. On this basis, and mindful of our obligations as well as our rights as responsible members of the publishing community, we have decided to proceed with publication of the work.

Despite our conviction that the work is both scholarly and well documented, we are aware that damage might be caused by factual inaccuracies, and we do not wish to foreclose your agency from a fair opportunity to persuade us prior to publication that such inaccuracies do in fact exist. With a view to permitting you such an opportunity, I will send you under separate cover within the next day or two page proofs of the manuscript which are just now being received from the printer. These proofs are being sent to you with the understanding that, by accepting them, you agree to the following conditions, which are required by our agreement with Mr. McCoy:

1. You will make copies only if and to the extent that they are absolutely necessary in order to have the manuscript read in the time provided;

2. Any comments will be submitted to us in writing not later than seven calendar days after the manuscript is delivered to you;

3. The manuscript will be treated as a confidential matter between the CIA and Harper & Row and neither if nor any comments concerning it will be made available by the CIA to anyone outside that agency.

I wish to emphasize that by making this manuscript available to you on a voluntary basis, we do not mean to imply that we will make changes in the work simply because you request them, or even because you believe the statements made to be harmful to some agency of our government. On the other hand, we will be grateful to you for bringing to our attention any factual errors which you believe have been made.

Sincerely,  
B. Brooks Thomas

Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D.C. 20505

21 July 1972

Mr. B. Brooks Thomas  
Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

Dear Mr. Thomas:

Thank you for your letter of July 19th concerning Mr. Alfred W. McCoy's book, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*.

The page proofs just arrived late this afternoon, and we are grateful for the opportunity you are giving us to review the manuscript. We have no difficulty with the conditions you set forth in your letter. We will make a limited number of copies, as more than one component of the Agency will have to review the material and the time is very short. I trust we can do a complete review within the seven calendar

days you mentioned, but if there is any difficulty I will be in touch with you. The manuscript and our comments will be confidential. Of course, if the decision is made to publish, thereafter the material is in the public domain and we will feel free, if we see fit to do so, to comment.

It is not our intention to ask you to make changes in Mr. McCoy's book even if we believe some of the statements might be harmful to the Government. It is possible that we might find some statement which is currently and properly classified in the interest of national security. If so, we will consult with you, but we believe this is highly unlikely. Our primary interest is in the validity of the evidence with which Mr. McCoy supports his allegations.

Sincerely,  
Lawrence R. Houston  
General Counsel

8 After the CIA reviewed the book for a week, a CIA courier from Langley, Virginia, arrived at Harper and Row's New York offices in the late afternoon of July 28 with the statement that follows. What is perhaps most revealing about it is the sharp contrast between the brash confidence of the CIA's earlier assertions ("We believe we could demonstrate to you that a considerable number of Mr. McCoy's claims... are totally false and without foundation..."; "if the decision is made to publish...") and the weak tone of their actual criticisms. My editor, Elisabeth Jakab, found the CIA's criticisms laughably "pathetic," while B. Brooks Thomas told the *New York Times* that the Agency's objections "were pretty general and we found ourselves rather underwhelmed by them."<sup>2</sup>

How then can one account for the sharp disparity in tone? In the week intervening between the CIA's letter acknowledging receipt of the page proofs on July 21 and the delivery of the Agency's statement on July 28, the journalists I had talked to, as well as others, published reports about what was happening to the book, breaking the silence that had shrouded negotiations from the beginning. A three-part series by Seymour Hersh on the CIA's efforts to discredit my work appeared in the *New York Times* on July 22, July 24, and July 28; a sharp editorial in the *Washington Post* on July 26; and a strong, hour-long NBC "Chronolog" television documentary on July 28. The CIA seems to have responded to unexpected criticism from the press and television by toning down its claims to Harper and Row and withdrawing into its customary silence.<sup>3</sup>

Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D.C. 20505

28 July 1972

Mr. B. Brooks Thomas  
Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

Dear Mr. Thomas:

Pursuant to our agreement, we have reviewed the book, *Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*. A complete and detailed review and analysis would take weeks, but I believe we have been able to identify enough important aspects to bear out our original concern as to the statements it might make about CIA.

The theme of Mr. McCoy's book is contained on page 8: "Unlike some national intelligence agencies, the CIA did not dabble in the drug traffic to finance its clandestine operations. Nor was its culpability the work of a few corrupt agents, eager to share in the enormous profits. The CIA's role in the heroin traffic was simply an inadvertent but inevitable consequence of its cold war tactics." His theme is further spelled out on page 14, where he says: "American diplomats and secret agents have been involved in the narcotics traffic at three levels: (1) coincidental complicity by allying with groups actively engaged in the drug traffic; (2) abetting the traffic by covering up for known heroin traffickers and condoning their involvement; (3) and active engagement in the transport of opium and heroin. It is ironic, to say the least, that America's heroin plague is of its own making."

CIA's position can be simply stated as follows:

a. The opium trade has existed in Southeast Asia for generations. This trade depended upon the market, and until recently the market for Southeast Asian opium was in Southeast Asia. The increase in the opium trade and the appearance of heroin were a result of the increased market, in part due to the presence of large American military forces in Vietnam.

b. CIA at no time allied with, abetted or engaged in the drug trade in Southeast Asia. From its earliest days in Southeast Asia, CIA took steps to ensure that it would not be involved in the drug trade.

c. When this drug trade became a matter of concern to Americans, as distinct from a local Southeast Asian problem, CIA engaged in a variety of programs to attack it. These efforts are by no means totally successful, but they have had substantial impact.

Mr. McCoy supports his theme by citing a large number of allegations, assertions, and interpretations. From an examination of these, it is plain that Mr. McCoy has limited his citations to those supporting his thesis, and he appears to have ignored available information which might contradict it. In the unsettled, and in many areas primitive, circumstances of Southeast Asia, rumors and unsupported assertions are common, and the first requirement of serious intelligence operations, scholarly research or responsible journalism is to check such assertions against other evidence and obtain as objective a total picture as

statements such as "according to several page leaders... claim" (page 263), "According to reports later received by the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics" (page 244), "Chinese merchants in Vientiane reported that" (page 281), and others. In the enclosed annex, we have commented on our investigation of the facts behind certain of these statements. We have by no means made an exhaustive review of every such statement in the book but send these to you in order to demonstrate our belief that your confidence that Mr. McCoy's scholarship "is beyond reproach" is not well founded.

Our difference with Mr. McCoy is no mere debate over the excellence of his scholarship. Mr. McCoy's charges against CIA, both directly and by innuendo, have been repeated by editorial writers throughout the nation and could create an accepted myth that CIA has been involved in the drug traffic. The truth is that CIA has never been involved in the drug traffic and is actively engaged in fighting against it. We believe that the effect of Mr. McCoy's book is to do a disservice to this fight and to dishearten the many sincere people in CIA who are at least as concerned about this menace as Mr. McCoy. On 14 April 1971, Mr. Helms, Director of Central Intelligence, said to the American Society of Newspaper Editors:

There is the arrant nonsense, for example, that the Central Intelligence Agency is somehow involved in the world drug traffic. We are not. As fathers, we are as concerned about the lives of our children and grandchildren as are all of you. As an Agency, in fact, we are heavily engaged in tracing the foreign roots of the drug traffic for the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. We hope we are helping with a solution; we know we are not contributing to the problem. This statement remains valid today.

Sincerely,  
Lawrence R. Houston  
General Counsel

ANNEX  
Air America

There are repeated allegations by Mr. McCoy of Air America involvement in the transportation of opium.

We believe the statement Mr. Paul Velte, Managing Director of Air America, made on 2 June 1972 in response to these allegations labelling them as "utterly and absolutely false" clearly expresses the company and CIA views on this matter. This

statement is attached.

Recently a CIA officer queried General Ouane Rathikoun who is cited as a source on Page 278 by Mr. McCoy concerning Air America involvement in transporting opium. General Ouane categorically denied that Air America was in any way involved in such traffic. General Ouane said the charge was ridiculous and that there was no need for drug traffickers to draw upon Air America facilities because they had their own.

Strict controls have been in effect throughout Air America's presence in Southeast Asia and these are being improved as we learn more of the traffickers' patterns and means operandi.

#### Statement of Paul Velte Managing Director of Air America

"Mr. Alfred W. McCoy today told the Senate Foreign Operations Committee: 'In Northern Laos, Air America aircraft and helicopters chartered by the U. S. CIA and USAID have been transporting opium harvested by the agency's tribal mercenaries on a regular basis.'

"This statement is, utterly and absolutely false. AA and USAID have cooperated in a security program which effectively prevents the carriage of drugs on any of the airline's equipment. This program is constantly being reviewed to make sure that drug smugglers cannot misuse the company's facilities. There is an intensive program of inspection of both passengers and cargo carried out in close collaboration with local and U. S. authorities. At up-country sites, inspectors inspect all baggage of passengers and crew members departing from their stations. All cargo placed aboard up-country sites is inspected by members of the inspection service. All baggage of persons departing Vientiane on AA, CASI and Lao air development are inspected. Where boarding passengers refuse to submit to inspection or are found to have contraband in their possession, they are denied the right to board the aircraft and their names are turned over to local Lao authorities. Through these and related measures, attempts by individuals to carry opium on company airplanes have been detected and prevented. These small time smugglers and users are the greatest threat and the security inspection service has constituted an effective deterrent.

"Through its many years in the Far East, AA and its employees have been well aware of the dangers of drug use and the drug traffic. It has been the policy of the company and its many loyal employees to do everything in their power to oppose any traffic in drugs. To this end there has been close cooperation between the company and U. S. and local authorities concerned with the drug problem.

"If Mr. McCoy or any other individual can bring any proof that any Air America employee has been connected in any manner with the drug traffic appropriate disciplinary action will be taken and the matter referred to the appropriate authorities.

Vang Pao

In many instances Mr. McCoy accuses General Vang Pao of being involved in the opium traffic. He cites as specific sources the BNDD, a village leader, and General Ouane Rathikoun.

We have no evidence indicating that General Vang Pao is involved in the Laotian drug trade. Because his forces are the principal Laotian deterrent to North Vietnamese aggression, many U. S. Government personnel have been in constant contact with General Vang Pao for a number of years. No evidence has come to light connecting him with narcotics trafficking.

On the contrary, General Vang Pao has strongly supported the anti-narcotics legislation passed by the Lao National Assembly in 1971 and, as a leader of the Meo, has done his best to influence the tribal groups to abandon their traditional growth of the opium poppy and develop substitute crops and new forms of livestock to provide daily sustenance and income.

Further, most of northeastern Laos is not under General Vang Pao's control but actually in the hands of the North Vietnamese. General Vang Pao obviously has no control over the crop cultivation there, and cultivation of any crop in that area is extremely difficult because of the ongoing hostilities.

The BNDD has informed us that it has no credible evidence implicating Vang Pao in the narcotics traffic which is contrary to the allegations made by Mr. McCoy on pages 244 and 248/9 of his book.

On page 289 Mr. McCoy cites a village leader in Long Pot, Ger Su Yang, to support his allegation against Vang Pao. The Long Pot sector has traditionally refused to accept Vang Pao's leadership and has maintained relationships with the Pathet Lao between peaceful coexistence and active collaboration. This casts doubt on the objectivity of his testimony.

Finally, General Ouane Rathikoun, one of Mr. McCoy's principal sources, has recently been questioned by an officer of this Agency and was very adamant in asserting that Vang Pao had not been involved in the drug traffic. He stressed the fact that opium cultivation in Xieng Khouang had collapsed to the point where opium users must buy elsewhere.

#### Paramilitary Activities and Heroin Refineries

Wherever there have been refineries in areas in which there is some American influence, action has been taken to eliminate them. In spite of this, Mr. McCoy states on page 301, "In fact, there are some American officials who believe that Chao La only works with the CIA to get guns (which he uses to buy opium from Burmese smugglers) and political protection for his opium refineries." With the access Mr. McCoy claims to have had, he should have been able to discover that last year CIA identified a refinery operated by Chao

La and had it confiscated. The production equipment was dismantled and forwarded to the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD) in Washington, D. C. This is hardly "political protection" of the type Mr. McCoy alleges.

#### Ger Su Yang

A similar failure to attempt verification of information from a doubtful source appears in connection with Mr. McCoy's account on page 289 of an interview with a Long Pot district officer, Ger Su Yang. This is an account of how American helicopters flew from Long Tieng to Long Pot to take opium back to Long Tieng. Within the last two weeks, Ger Su Yang was interviewed by an officer of this Agency designated for this purpose. Ger Su Yang denies making any statement regarding Muong officers arriving at Long Pot to collect opium harvest for transport back to Long Tieng in American helicopters.

Ger Su Yang spoke of two Americans, one of whom apparently was Mr. McCoy, who visited his village, but he said they were interested in village life and he did not discuss the sale of opium with them. He added that Long Pot grows only enough opium for local consumption, but neighboring villages grow more for sale. He said all the opium sold in this sector was sold to Muong Kassy and Vang Vieng but never to Long Tieng. Knowing the proclivity of individuals in this area to say what they think the questioner wants to hear, we do not have too much confidence in what Ger Su Yang told our interviewing officer. Our point is that Mr. McCoy accepted his word without any apparent attempt at verification of his or other villagers' stories. In addition, the Meos of the Long Pot area are not only anti-Vang Pao but have on occasion collaborated with the Pathet Lao.

#### KMT Irregulars

Mr. McCoy's charge that CIA's relationship with the KMT was a key factor in the latter's involvement in the opium trade is without foundation. CIA's early contacts with the KMT ceased in August 1951 and since that date the Agency has had no substantial contact with KMT irregulars in Burma or elsewhere. Opium production in the area where the KMT irregulars located after the fall of China in 1949 had long existed and was not, as suggested by the author, started by the irregulars. That they ultimately became involved appears to have been motivated by survival rather than any other known reason.

#### The Mafia

Mr. McCoy presents the theme that there has been an association of the U. S. Government with Sicilian and Corsican Mafia types in the past and that this has somehow been responsible for the fact that those types play a large role in the illegal narcotics traffic today. The argument simply has not been supported. There have been

continued



Mafia groups, just as there have been Chinese and other groups, who have been famous for participation in smuggling and other illicit traffic for centuries. They appear wherever large illegal profits can be made, and the existence of governmental authority whether passive or antagonistic often has little effect on their activities. We do not believe Mr. McCoy has made a case to the contrary.

Support for U.S. Narcotics  
Control Efforts Overseas

On page 350, Mr. McCoy states that the U. S. Bureau of Narcotics' attempts to conduct investigations in Laos were blocked by the Laotian government, the State Department, and the CIA. BNDD reports that, "... programs to effect control of narcotic trafficking could not be initiated without Laotian national drug control laws. Ambassador Godley was instrumental in assisting the Laotian government to formulate such laws which became effective in November 1971. BNDD agents were assigned to work in Laos in December 1971, soon after the law became effective. BNDD is unaware of any opposition by CIA in this process. Rather, CIA has assisted in furtherance of the BNDD mission in Laos."

As part of his thesis that the U. S. Government is covering up for local officials who may be engaged in narcotics traffic, Mr. McCoy states on page 218 that, "The CIA avoids gathering information on high-level involvement, and even in its closed-door sessions with high Embassy officials discusses only minor pushers and addicts." This is completely untrue, but Mr. McCoy makes this serious charge apparently on the word of an unnamed Embassy official, who may not have had access to such reports. Mr. McCoy could easily have ascertained the facts. He apparently made no real attempt to do so.

9 After talking with me and seeing my notes, Harper and Row's legal department prepared the following rebuttal to the CIA. This rebuttal is simply a point-by-point response to the CIA's objections and does not go into some of the broader issues raised by the Agency's statement. I will comment on this later.

Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

August 4, 1972

Lawrence R. Houston, Esq.  
General Counsel  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D. C. 20505

Dear Mr. Houston:

Thank you for your letter of July 28, 1972 together with its enclosures.

Together with the author, we have now completed a thorough review of the comments made in your letter and in the enclosures, checking them against Mr. McCoy's manuscript and notes. Based upon

this careful review, it is our sincere opinion that Mr. McCoy's scholarship remains unshaken and we do not see any reason for making any changes in the text. I am appending hereto a list of the points made in your memorandum to us, together with an explanation of our reasons for believing in each case that no change is either necessary or appropriate.

As you correctly point out in your letter, Mr. McCoy's theme is that the CIA's role in the heroin traffic has been principally inadvertent and a consequence of other tactics which it has pursued. I believe that this theme is amply documented throughout the book and that it constitutes an eminently reasonable assessment of the effect of the Agency's activities in this area. We regret, as you do, the fact that some writers have mis-characterized the allegations which Mr. McCoy makes in the book. With this fact in mind, we believe that the best service we can render the author, the CIA and the general public is to publish the book as expeditiously as possible, and that is what we intend to do.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your courtesy to us and for honoring the conditions which we imposed when we sent you the manuscript.

Sincerely,  
B. Brooks Thomas

Appendix to Letter  
of August 4, 1972  
to Lawrence R. Houston, Esq.

Air America

Your Comment

1. Statement of Paul Velte June 2, 1972 labelling McCoy allegations relating to Air America "utterly and absolutely false."

Our Response

1. Mr. Velte's statement refers to Mr. McCoy's testimony before the Senate Foreign Operations Committee. The statement referred to does not appear in the book. Mr. McCoy believes that Mr. Velte's statement may well be accurate as of the date it was made. He does not believe that it accurately reflects conditions in the period 1965-1967 to which the passage which does appear on page 278 of the book refers.

Your Comment

2. You state that Gen. Ouane Rattikone has recently denied that Air America was in any way involved in transporting opium.

Our Response

2. Mr. McCoy interviewed Gen. Rattikone in Vientiane on September 1, 1971. We have seen his notes, and are satisfied that he accurately transcribed what was related to him on that occasion. Support for this allegation is also derived from Mr. McCoy's interview with Gen. Thao Ma in Bangkok on September 17, 1971. We note also that your Agency is markedly different from the information he gave to Mr. McCoy. confirmed by Nelson Gross (whose earlier testimony is relied upon in your letter of

July 3, 1972) in an interview with a staff correspondent of the *Christian Science Monitor* reported on July 27, 1972. In that interview. Mr. Gross stated, *inter alia*, as follows:

"Sure, Air America was probably used as a vehicle for some transit, just as all commercial and military aircraft probably were, until the fall of 1970 when we really became aware of the narcotics problem in the area."

Vang Pao

Your Comment

1. You state that the BNDD has no credible evidence implicating Vang Pao in the narcotics traffic, contrary to the statements made on pp. 244 and 248-9 of the text.

Our Response

1. The source of Mr. McCoy's statements is an interview he had in New Haven, Connecticut on November 18, 1971 with a present employee of the BNDD, who stated that BNDD had received a report implicating Vang Pao. Because of the circumstances under which the interview was given, Mr. McCoy refuses to disclose the name of the employee involved, but we have satisfied ourselves that such an interview took place and that the statements referred to were in fact made.

Your Comment

2. You state that Ger Su Yang's testimony on page 289 is not credible because the Long Pot Sector has traditionally refused to accept Vang Pao's leadership and has maintained friendly relationships with the Pathet Lao.

Our Response

2. The description of the system by which Meo mercenaries purchase opium from villagers in the Long Pot area is based not only on the interviews with Ger Su Yang described on page 289, but also on interviews with the Headmen of Nam Suk Village and Nam Ou Village, both of which were conducted on August 21, 1971. We believe that their credibility is a highly subjective matter which is best evaluated by the interviewer in a face-to-face meeting.

Your Comment

3. You state that Gen. Ouane Rattikone has recently been questioned and is adamant in asserting that Vang Pao has not been involved in the drug traffic.

Our Response

3. Mr. McCoy does not rely primarily on Gen. Rattikone in connection with the assertions made about Vang Pao's involvement with the drug traffic. In any event, it would not be at all surprising if Gen. Rattikone's assertions to a representative of your Agency are markedly different from the information he gave to Mr. McCoy.

Your Comment

1. You state that the CIA has identified and dismantled a heroin refinery operated by Chao La and that this contradicts Mr. McCoy's assertion that Chao La received political protection for his refineries.

Our Response

1. While in this area, the author was told by retired CIA personnel, local CIA mercenaries, Baptist missionaries, and hill tribesmen that a heroin refinery operated near Ban Nam Keung from 1965-1971. The author believes that this is the refinery which was confiscated by the CIA last year and which is referred to at p. 346 of the text. The same sources informed the author that another refinery operated near Ban Houei Tap in 1970-1971. Both refineries were located in areas where there was American influence.

Ger Su Yang

Comment

state that an officer of the Agency named Ger Su Yang, who admitted talking to Mr. McCoy but denied having discussed the sale of opium with him. You go on to state that you do not have confidence in what Ger Su Yang told your officer and state that Mr. McCoy should not have accepted his word either without any attempt at verification.

Our Response

1. The author does not base his account (on page 289) of American helicopters flying opium from Long Pot to Long Tieng solely on his interview with Ger Su Yang. The author spoke to many villagers in Long Pot and in neighboring villages who confirmed Ger Su Yang's story. In addition, the author obtained similar information from Ron Rickenbach, a former USAID official in Laos, General Ouane Bettikone, and General Thao Ma, a former commander of the Royal Laotian Air Force. More recently, the author has been advised by some British television journalists who have recently returned from the area that these activities are accurately described by him. A former State Department official has also confirmed to the author that his account is correct.

KMT Irregulars

Your Comment

1. You state that the author's charge that the "CIA's relationship with the KMT was a key factor in the latter's involvement in the opium trade" is without foundation.

Our Response

1. We cannot find in the book any statement that the CIA's relationship with the KMT was a "key factor" in the latter's involvement in the opium trade. The author does state (p. 306) that there was a "peculiar symbiosis between opium and espionage" in the activities of the KMT, an inference which we believe is amply supported by the evidence cited.

2. You state that since August, 1951 the CIA has had no "substantial" contact with KMT Irregulars.

Our Response

2. At pp. 305-8 the author describes a number of contacts the CIA had with KMT Irregulars in 1962 and later. The principal sources for these passages are William Young, a former CIA employee, U Ba Thein, a Shan rebel leader, and various Yao tribesmen interviewed by the author (cf. fn. p. 208). Under the circumstances, we do not find such testimony to be incredible or the contacts described insubstantial.

Your Comment

3. You state that opium production in the areas where the KMT Irregulars located after the fall of China was not, as suggested by the author, started by them but had existed for a long time prior thereto.

Our Response

3. We cannot find in the text any assertion to the effect that the KMT Irregulars started opium production in the areas in which they settled after the fall of China. The author does say (pp. 126-7) that the KMT greatly expanded the opium trade in the Shan states, a statement with which you do not appear to disagree.

The Mafia

Your Comment

1. You state that Mr. McCoy states that "there has been an association of the U. S. Government, Sicilian and Corsican Mafia types in the past" and that this has "somehow been responsible" for the fact that these types play the role they do in narcotics traffic today.

Our Response

1. Mr. McCoy does assert that during the War and shortly thereafter the Government associated with the Sicilian and Corsican underworld for reasons having nothing to do with the illegal narcotics traffic. Mr. McCoy clearly regards it as ironic that one result of such associations was a rebirth of these groups and their subsequent involvement in the narcotics trade, but we do not believe it is a fair inference from the book to state that the U. S. Government has "somehow been responsible" for this result simply because it has been such in the narrow causal sense of the words, as to which there can be little dispute.

Support for U.S. Narcotics Control Efforts Overseas

Your Comment

1. You cite Mr. McCoy's statement on page 350 that the BNDD's attempts to conduct investigations in Laos were blocked by the Laotian Government, the State Department, and the CIA and quote a statement that they are "unaware" of any such opposition by the CIA.

the statement on page 350 is a BNDD agent familiar with the investigations referred to. We have questioned Mr. McCoy about this source and are satisfied that he exists and that he made the statement in question, although Mr. McCoy has requested that he not be identified for his own protection. The statement attributed to this source is not, of course, necessarily inconsistent with the statement that the BNDD in Washington is "unaware" of any opposition by the CIA.

Your Comment

2. You quote the author's statement on page 218 that the CIA avoids gathering information on high-level involvements, even in sessions with high Embassy officials, and discusses only minor pushers and addicts. You state that the assertion is untrue, and criticize Mr. McCoy for having made it on the word of an unnamed Embassy official who may not have had access to the facts.

Our Response

2. The source of the statement on page 218 is a Foreign Service Officer in the U. S. Embassy in Saigon who was interviewed in the presence of a BNDD employee and another Embassy official. Mr. McCoy has disclosed their identities to us but asked that we keep such information confidential in order to protect the individuals involved. We are satisfied that the assertion is amply corroborated in view of the circumstances of the interview.

III

The quality of the CIA's defense--and most important, the methods the Agency employed in concocting it--provide the strongest evidence of the folly of allowing government agencies to help decide what will be published. In fact, the CIA's letter consists of little more than flat, unsubstantiated denials, evasions, and half-truths, as well as false denials by my sources in Southeast Asia that were obtained only after the CIA brought considerable pressure on them, as I shall show.

A. KMT (Nationalist Chinese) Irregulars: The CIA attempted to rebut my detailed history of KMT-CIA collaboration in the Golden Triangle region of Southeast Asia during the last twenty years by flatly asserting that there has been "no substantial contact with KMT irregulars in Burma or elsewhere" since August, 1951. (What

exactly does the CIA mean by "substantial" anyway?) Yet in making this denial the CIA simply ignores the evidence in my book that the KMT paramilitary units were employed by the CIA as mercenaries in northwestern Laos in 1961. It conspicuously avoids commenting on my account of the close collaboration between CIA intelligence teams and KMT military opium dealers in northeastern Burma throughout the 1960s. Specifically, I stated that the CIA intelligence teams, set up to carry out patrols inside southern China, were based



in Burmese outposts used by KMT military caravans for opium smuggling on a large scale. Even though this is the most detailed section of the book on the connections between CIA espionage operations and the Golden Triangle opium trade, it did not get a word of comment from the Agency.

Then, curiously, after categorically denying any "substantial" contact with the KMT paramilitary units in the Burma-Thailand borderlands, the CIA critics felt compelled to apologize for KMT involvement in the opium traffic ("That they [the KMT units] ultimately became involved appears to have been motivated by survival rather than any other known reason"). These are the harshest words the CIA can find for the single most powerful opium and heroin trafficking organization in the world.

According to the reports of a former CIA agent cited in my book, these KMT units, with their vast mule caravans and intricate purchasing network, control almost 90 percent of northeastern Burma's enormous opium exports and most of northern Thailand's illicit harvest—equivalent to more than one third of the world's entire illicit opium supply. Moreover, these KMT units have been operating large heroin laboratories in their headquarter compounds along the Thai-Burmese border—laboratories producing heroin for both GIs in South Vietnam and addicts here in the United States.

**B. The Mafia:** I find it somewhat unnerving that the CIA is so confident of its immunity to public scrutiny that it no longer even bothers to contest the fact that it provided important political support for both the Sicilian Mafia and the Corsican narcotics syndicates of Marseilles. It is sharply significant that by refusing to comment on evidence in my book, the CIA is in effect admitting for the first time that it was allied with the founding father of the Marseilles postwar heroin industry, Barthélémy Guerini.

**C. Paramilitary Activities and Heroin Laboratories:** Once again the CIA attempts to flatly deny my analysis, this time citing a transparent half-truth. Although it is true, as the CIA claims, that the heroin laboratory at Nam Keung in northwest Laos voluntarily shifted its location in mid-1971 when US officials brought pressure for it to do so, this opium refinery had in fact been operating since 1965 with the full knowledge and tacit consent of the CIA. It was owned by one of the Agency's most prominent mercenary commanders in northern Laos, Major Chao La. This laboratory was opened in 1965 near a highly classified CIA base used for training tribal commandos for cross-border missions into southern China. Rather than disrupt operations at this opium refinery, the local CIA agent moved his training base in order to maintain the security of his operations.

Moreover, the huge refinery at Ban Houei Tap in northwest Laos also operated for almost two years without being disturbed by the CIA because its owner was

the commander-in-chief of the Royal Laotian Army General Ouane Rattikone. This laboratory had a capacity to refine some 3.6 tons of heroin annually (estimates of total current US consumption range from six to ten tons a year) and supplied most of the heroin for GI addicts in South Vietnam. Moreover, large shipments of its output stamped with its distinctive Double U-O Globe brand label have begun turning up in the United States. And yet the CIA did absolutely nothing about it.

**D. Ger Su Yang:** By far the most disturbing aspect of the CIA's review—worse than all its half-truths and false denials—was the pressure it applied on the Meo district officer, Ger Su Yang, to coerce him into retracting statements he had made when he described to me the role of Air America, the CIA's charter airline, in northern Laos's opium trade.

In August of last year I visited Long Pot, Ger Su Yang's village in northern Laos, with an Australian photographer, John Everingham, and a Laotian interpreter, Phin Manivong. After spending a week in the village we learned that not only had Air America been shipping opium out of Long Pot for the last two years but that the CIA had halted shipments of needed refugee supplies to the district because Ger Su Yang had refused to send any more young men to a certain death as CIA mercenaries. In order to pressure USAID into sending food to the slowly starving village, we made public the CIA's withholding of rice.<sup>4</sup> Shortly afterward a senior USAID refugee officer close to the CIA threatened the life of my interpreter. Officers in the CIA's secret army visited Long Pot village to advise Ger Su Yang that he would be arrested and taken away if any more news came out of Long Pot. The ultimatum was delivered in such a way as to convince Ger Su Yang that he would never come back alive if that happened.

Needless to say, Ger Su Yang was more than apprehensive when a CIA helicopter arrived in his village sometime this July and CIA mercenaries ordered him aboard the aircraft for a flight to CIA headquarters in northern Laos. Coincidentally, my photographer, John Everingham, arrived in the Long Pot area the very day that Ger Su Yang returned from his ordeal and so we have a remarkably complete report of what actually passed between the CIA and this Meo district officer.

According to Everingham's account, Ger Su Yang reported that he was interrogated for over an hour by a "short, fat," rather irate American in a building near the runway at CIA headquarters. Ger Su Yang later recounted to Everingham the following details of the interrogation.

"The American [CIA agent] asked if I had a photo of you [Everingham], if I knew how contact you in Vientiane. It was easy to see the American was angry that you had come to Long Pot to talk to me.

"I was afraid. I didn't know what was so I said I knew nothing about everything he asked me.

"He also asked if it's true the American helicopters carried away our opium. Again I didn't know what was best to say. So I said I didn't know if it was true or not."

How frightened and intimidated Ger Su Yang had been is revealed by his last question to Everingham:

"Do you think they will send a helicopter to arrest me or send Vang Pao's soldiers [CIA mercenaries] to shoot me?"

Whether these pressures on Ger Su Yang derived directly from the CIA's review of my book, this incident provides ample evidence of the dangers inherent in providing manuscripts to the CIA—or any other government security agency—prior to publication. Once the material is published and in the public domain, it is both more difficult and less profitable for the CIA to pressure sources to withdraw their statements. The damage has largely been done. However, if the CIA thinks it might induce a publisher to withdraw an embarrassing book from publication, then it is obviously worth the Agency's time and trouble to secure such retractions.

Harper and Row went ahead with publication of the book in its original form. And, in fact, Harper and Row's management accelerated its production schedule and brought it out on August 17—a month ahead of schedule.

All's well that ends well? Not quite. First, it remains to be seen what precedent this incident may or may not set for the publishing industry. In this case it is fortunate for me and my book that the CIA was unable to convince my publisher to make any changes; the CIA's review was much less fortunate for my informants in Southeast Asia. If America's publishers are not careful to defend their own constitutional prerogatives, then the CIA, for one, seems only too willing to help them wither away. If publishers will now refuse to cooperate when the CIA calls, then perhaps mine has been a worthwhile test case. Secondly, in 1969—before significant numbers of GIs started using heroin in Vietnam—this country had an estimated 315,000 heroin addicts. Three years later that estimate has nearly doubled. Early this year the government estimated that there were almost 600,000 addicts in the United States. □

<sup>1</sup>For details on Cord Meyer, Jr.'s career see R. Harris Smith, *OSS* (University of California Press, 1972), pp. 372-375; *New York Times*, March 30, 1967, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>*New York Times*, August 9, 1972, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>*Village Voice*, August 24, 1972.

<sup>4</sup>*Washington Post*, August 31, 1971.