

COMMENTARY

Interrupting its usual silence, the CIA has provided Harper's with a rare public document. It is an official letter of protest against our July cover story, "Flowers of Evil," an extremely compromising report by Alfred W. McCoy about the CIA's complicity in the heroin trade in Southeast Asia. "I trust," writes W. E. Colby, the Agency's executive director, "you will give this response the same prominence in your publication as was given to the McCoy article."

The letter appears below in full, together with Mr. McCoy's reply and the testimony of a former USAID representative who witnessed the CIA's participation in the Laotian drug traffic. This exchange, we hope, throws further needed light on a little-known stretch of the sewer that runs between Washington, Saigon, Vientiane, Pnompenh, and Bangkok.

Beyond all that, we are surprised by Mr. Colby's use of the word "trust." We may well be reading too much into it, but that word, and indeed the whole tone of the letter, suggests that Mr. Colby expected an immediate mea culpa from Harper's. Is the CIA that naïve? Mr. Colby, who once presided over the notorious Phoenix program in Vietnam, is hardly an innocent. Still, his entire letter reflects a troubling simplicity, an unquestioning trust in the goodness of his own bureaucracy. He asks us to share that trust, whatever the stubborn facts may be. As conclusive evidence of the Agency's purity, for example, he even cites Director Richard Helms' public-relations argument that "as fathers, we are as concerned about the lives of our children and grandchildren as all of you."*

*Such curious expectations of trust apparently motivated the Agency to ask Harper & Row to hand over the galleys of Mr. McCoy's book, The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia, from which he drew his magazine article. The Agency declared that it simply wanted to check the book for factual inaccuracies, possible libel, or damage to national security. To deliver this unusual request, the Agency dispatched Cord Meyer, a man with the proper Establishment connections who, as the CIA's overseer of the since-transformed Congress for Cultural Freedom,** might be said to have once been in the publishing business himself. Although the galleys were duly sent to the Agency, the CIA's subsequent complaints about Mr. McCoy's research failed to impress Harper & Row, which has since confidently published the book, unchanged. Apparently there are limits to trust, even among gentlemen.*

Although Mr. McCoy won't agree with us, our own reaction to this episode is to feel a certain sympathy for the beset bureaucrats of the CIA, who seem to be impaled on the defensive notion, "The Agency, right or wrong." By definition the CIA finds itself involved with a good many questionable people in Southeast Asia. That is a condition of its mission—a mission it did not invent but simply carries out on White House orders—and we suspect that the public would trust the Agency a good deal more if it either acknowledged the facts or remained silent. Alas, the CIA now seems determined to revamp its image into something like a cross between General Motors and the League of Women Voters. But so endeth our sermon. Let the reader draw his own conclusions.

THE AGENCY'S BRIEF:

Harper's July issue contains an article by Mr. Alfred W. McCoy alleging CIA involvement in the opium traffic in Laos. This allegation is false and unfounded, and it is particularly disappointing that a journal of Harper's reputation would see fit to publish it without any effort to check its accuracy or even to refer to the

public record to the contrary.

Normally we do not respond publicly to allegations made against CIA. Because of the serious nature of these charges, however, I am writing to you to place these accusations in proper perspective and so that the record will be clear.

The general charge made by Mr.

McCoy that "to a certain extent it [the opium trade in Laos] depends on the support (money, guns, aircraft, etc.) of the CIA" has no basis in fact. To the contrary, Mr. John E. Ingersoll, Director of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, in a letter to Representative Charles S. Gubser of California on May 27, 1971

*Phoenix is a campaign of systematic counterterror designed to root out and destroy Vietcong sympathizers. As U.S. pacification chief from 1968 to mid-1971, Ambassador Colby headed CORDS (Civil Operations and Rural Development Support), which ran Phoenix in cooperation with the South Vietnamese police. Mr. Colby has testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that, in 1969 alone, Phoenix agents "neutralized" 19,531 suspected Vietcong, killing 6,187 of them in the process. Critics argue that Phoenix uses assassination methods and that Mr. Colby's figures are extremely conservative.

**The CCF, among other activities, at one time published a dozen or so serious anti-Communist magazines throughout the world. The best known is *Encounter*, which now has a different sponsor.

(reproduced in the *Congressional Record* of June 2, 1971), stated:

Actually, CIA has for some time been this Bureau's strongest partner in identifying foreign sources and routes of illegal trade in narcotics. Their help has included both direct support in intelligence collection, as well as in intelligence analysis and production. Liaison between our two agencies is close and constant in matters of mutual interest. Much of the progress we are now making in identifying overseas narcotics traffic can, in fact, be attributed to CIA cooperation.

Mr. McCoy makes the following charges which I shall deal with specifically:

(1) General Vang Pao, "commander of the CIA secret army in northeastern Laos . . . has become an increasingly notorious entrepreneur in the Laotian drug trade."

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.

(2) The CIA assurance of food supplies to the Laotian Meo tribesmen allowed the Meo to "allot more land to the growing of opium."

This allegation would not be made by anyone familiar with the war-ravaged economy of the Meo tribe. The U. S. Government provides food to Meo refugees—Meos who have been driven off North Vietnamese and therefore have

no land to cultivate—and to villages where the bulk of the male population is off serving in General Vang Pao's forces.

Prior to the North Vietnamese offensive, supplies were delivered to the Meo tribesmen. Those supplies, however, consisted of rice seedlings and other types of seeds plus livestock to provide the Meo with basic sustenance and also to encourage the Meo to give up the planting of opium poppies. These efforts met with considerable success. Mr. Roland Paul, investigator for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, reported in the April 1971 issue of *Foreign Affairs* "that due to the long association with the CIA, the Meo tribesmen in Laos were shifting from opium to rice and other crops."

The fact is that the opium production in northeastern Laos has been greatly diminished rather than increased as alleged in the McCoy article.

(3) When Air America became the only air transport available, "it began flying Meo opium to markets in Long Cheng and Vientiane."

Air America has long had an effective inspection system, and more recently an even more rigid system to bar even inadvertent transport of narcotics has been introduced. Air America released a statement to the press on June 2, 1972, which said:

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 Air America, Continental Air Services 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.

Please note that these tightened

security and inspection measures predate Mr. McCoy's charges against Air America.

(4) After the North Vietnamese offensive in northeastern Laos, "Vang Pao was able to continue his role in Laos's narcotics trade by opening a heroin laboratory at Long Cheng, the CIA headquarters town."

There is not only no evidence connecting General Vang Pao with a heroin laboratory in Long Cheng, but also none to suggest the presence of such a laboratory in Long Cheng. There are a number of U. S. Government officials in Laos working against the drug traffic. They would have spotted such a laboratory in Long Cheng and seen to its dismantling had one existed.

(5) "CIA contract airlines have reportedly carried opium, and individual CIA men have abetted the opium traffic."

This charge is also false. CIA is not involved in the narcotics traffic and is actively working against it; its personnel are also flatly prohibited from any such activity as individuals, and are subject to termination if so involved. Mr. McCoy has produced no evidence which implicates Agency personnel in the narcotics traffic. Such unsupported charges against this Agency and its people of abetting the flow of narcotics are not only irresponsible but particularly ironic in view of the many efforts this Agency's personnel are making to stem the flow of narcotics into the United States.

More than one year ago, in an address before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Mr. Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence, stated the following:

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.

I trust you will give this response the same prominence in your publication as was given to the McCoy article.

W. F. Coyne, Executive Director
Central Intelligence Agency

THE AUTHOR'S RESPONSE:

In essence, Mr. Colby's letter consists of flat denials of my analysis backed up largely by supporting statements from such partisan sources as the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, Air America, and the CIA's own director, Richard Helms. Given the rather incestuous nature of Mr. Colby's rebuttal, it is largely a question of whether his or any other Nixon Administration spokesman's optimistic, sanctimonious pronouncements on the state of the Southeast Asian drug traffic can be believed.

First of all, let me repeat that there is undeniable evidence that CIA charter aircraft were actively involved in the transport of narcotics in northern Laos during the period from the mid-1960s until mid-1971. The former commander-in-chief of the Royal Laotian Army, Gen. Ouan Rathikun, who freely admitted his own involvement in his nation's narcotics traffic, assured me that he had personal knowledge of Air America's involvement in the transport of opium. The former commander of the Laotian Air Force, Gen. Thal Ma, who was forced out of his command because he refused to allocate aircraft for the transport of General Ouan's opium, likewise assured me that Air America was involved in the opium traffic. During the course of my research for the book, I interviewed former USAID employees and ranking Laotian bureaucrats who had seen opium-loaded Air America aircraft landing at Long Cheng, the CIA headquarters for northern Laos, and had observed an opium refinery operating in Long Cheng valley. To make absolutely sure that these allegations were well founded, I spent ten days hiking through the hills of northern Laos interviewing Meo villagers who have fought as CIA mercenaries for the past decade. I spent about a week in the mountain district of Long Pot and was told by the Meo district officer, numerous village headmen, and opium farmers that their 1970 and 1971 harvests had been purchased by Meo officers in the CIA's mercenary army and flown to Long Cheng on Air America helicopters. Since one village's 1971 harvest amounted to

more than 700 kilos of raw, pungent opium, there can be no doubt that the American pilots of these helicopters knew what they were carrying.

And yet Mr. Colby would have us believe that his agency has been doing everything in its power to curb the narcotics traffic in Southeast Asia. Then how does he account for the fact that General Ouan's heroin laboratory near Ban Houei Sai in northwestern Laos operated for almost two years without any interference from the CIA or its 30,000 mercenary troops? Until the laboratory was abandoned by its staff in mid-1971, it was the largest opium refinery in Southeast Asia, and it processed thousands of kilos of pure heroin for both U.S. GIs fighting in South Vietnam and addicts back in the continental United States. Substantial quantities of heroin from this laboratory, packaged with its distinctive Double U-O Globe brand label, addicted tens of thousands of American GIs and have been seized in bulk quantities in cities along the East Coast from New York to Miami. The CIA had a number of secret paramilitary installations only minutes by helicopter from this laboratory, and yet it did nothing for almost two years. Nor is there a possibility that the CIA was somehow ignorant of the situation. Retired CIA personnel, local CIA mercenaries, Baptist missionaries, and ordinary hill tribesmen knew of the laboratory's location and importance months before it was abandoned.

In light of the gravity of the heroin crisis in the United States, it is particularly unfortunate that the CIA, and the State Department as well, have attempted to assuage the American people with falsely optimistic and, in fact, blatantly dishonest and contradictory statements about the quality of the Nixon Administration's anti-narcotics effort in Southeast Asia.

In order to justify its continuing prosecution of the war in Indochina, various Nixon Administration spokesmen have come forward with rather dubious claims about the commitment of the Thai and Vietnamese governments to anti-narcotics work. On May 15, Secretary of State Rogers told the Senate Appropriations Committee that "we are getting good cooperation from Thailand with the drug problem." And yet only three months earlier a highly classified Cabinet-

agency committee with both CIA and State Department representatives, had concluded that "there is no prospect" of curbing the drug traffic in Southeast Asia "under any conditions that can realistically be projected" because of "corruption, collusion and indifference at some places in some governments, particularly Thailand and South Vietnam, that preclude more effective suppression of the traffic by the governments on whose territory it takes place."

When I testified before the Senate and presumed to articulate a position that contradicted the official orthodoxy as set forward by the Administration, various government agencies rushed to discredit me. A State Department spokesman, Mr. Nelson Gross, accused me of sensationalism, and a Bureau of Narcotics official, Mr. John Warner, labeled me a purveyor of "gossip, rumors, conjecture, and old history." In their haste to discredit me, however, Mr. Warner and Mr. Gross contradicted themselves and other Administration statements. Rebutting my Congressional testimony about the role of official corruption in the Southeast Asia drug traffic, Gross stated: "As for Ouan Rathikoun... we are not aware of anything more than unsubstantiated allegations concerning his past and present complicity. With regard to his 'control' of the 'largest heroin laboratory in Laos,' once again, all we have is allegation."

Only ten days later, John Warner contradicted Gross in the course of rebutting my charges in an interview with the *Washington Evening Star* (June 19, 1972): "Gen. Ouan Rathikone, former chief of staff of the Royal Laotian Army, had consolidated several opium refineries into one, and with his army controlled and protected the Laotian narcotics traffic for years, Warner said."

Evidently, the Administration is so nervous about the compromised nature of its anti-narcotics effort in Southeast Asia that its spokesmen feel compelled to conceal or controvert even the most obvious facts. General Ouan has admitted his involvement to me and to other journalists before and since. I find it impossible to believe, as no doubt would the good General Ouan, that Mr. Gross and the State Department "are not aware of anything more than unsubstantiated allegations concerning his past and can only con-

clude that Mr. Gross is not facing the unfortunate realities of the Southeast Asian drug traffic. But Mr. Gross is only a spokesman, no matter how maladroit, for the Nixon Administration, and his transparent argumentation merely reveals the shallowness of his department's commitment to anti-narcotics work in Southeast Asia.

Perhaps just as damaging in the long run is the CIA's effort to induce my publisher, Harper & Row, to eliminate what it considers objectionable portions of my book, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, or withdraw it from publication altogether. After receiving a formal request from the CIA's legal counsel, Harper & Row's management decided it was bound by its sense of publishing responsibility to provide the Agency with a copy of the manuscript for prior review. Faced with the prospect of delaying the publication of my book past the November elections and thereby denying American voters information they might need for their electoral decisions, I consented to Harper & Row's decision though I disagreed with its philosophical bases.

On July 20, a CIA agent arrived at Harper & Row, picked up a copy of the book, and spirited it off to the CIA campus in Virginia for review by "more than one component of the Agency." On July 28, another CIA agent delivered the Agency's written critique to Harper & Row. Neither Harper & Row nor I found the rather feeble arguments convincing enough to merit any changes in the book.

Aside from the obvious issues raised by this attempted interference with my First Amendment freedoms, what I find most interesting about the CIA's moves is their unprecedented openness. The reaction by the press and publishing industry to date has been predictably hostile. Why, then, did the CIA take this risk? I can only conclude that the Agency realizes that what I am saying about its activities is not only critical but accurate. Evidently it believes my analysis is so painfully accurate that it was willing to accept bad publicity in order to dilute the book or block publication entirely. If I were as sadly misinformed as Mr. Colby would have us believe, then the Agency surely would have been able to rebut me effectively by issuing a simple press release after the book is published.

—Alfred W. McCoy
New Haven, Conn.

EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY:

- There is trouble at Long Cheng, the secret Central Intelligence Agency military base in north Laos. Meo guerrilla leaders are demanding full operational control over the dozen or so aircraft that work daily from this 5,000-foot paved runway in the middle of nowhere. The Americans resist, knowing only too well what the implications of giving in would be. They hassle. Everybody, of course, knows the stakes in this little game. Everybody knows that the Meo have their own ideas as to how these flying machines can be put to efficient use. It's there for everybody to see: the neat, banana-leaf-wrapped cubes of raw opium stacked neatly alongside the runway, not quite a hundred yards from the air-conditioned shack from which Agency officers command a clear view of the entire area. In the end, General Vang Pao, commander of the Meo army, has his way. The Americans who are supporting this army might regret the small loss of operational control. But the war must go on. Anyway, even if the Meo rack up all the planes, more can always be brought in. The time is 1967.

- An American refugee-relief worker visits a Meo village atop a 4,500-foot mountain just north of the Plain of Jars. Having come to discuss local food-and-medical problems, he is given a walking tour of the area. Of particular interest to him is a sizable patch of unripe poppies growing on the side of a hill just up from the village. It is opium, he is told. Soon it will be harvested. Then "we will sell it to the General [Vang Pao]." It represents a bit of extra cash; they will receive about \$5 a pound. "You Americans don't pay us very much," he is told. The time is 1967.

- A Lao Air Force C47 transport taxis to the head of the dirt airfield at Ban Houei Sai, a small town in the extreme northwest corner of the country. As the engines shut down, a Lao Army truck pulls up beside the main door of the plane. Quickly, the soldiers manning the vehicle begin

tossing small packages up to the receiving crew members. An American, observing from a distance, asks a native employee to get a closer look. He reports back directly: opium, about 500 pounds of the stuff, is being placed on board. He also says that the commander of the Laotian Regular Army, General Ouan Rathikun, has come in with the flight and is supervising the operation.

- North of Ban Houei Sai, on the Lao side of the Mekong River near the Burmese border, is a cluster of opium "cookers" in which the raw product is reduced, in this case to a morphine base. They belong to Chao La, a Yao tribal leader and CIA guerrilla commander. For months, an American badgers Chao La for permission to visit the site. Finally he does. Not operational at the time, the apparatus invokes images of a bootleg still in the backwoods of Kentucky. The opium processed here comes in from Burma and Yunnan, contacts having been made by Chao La's intelligence network that, funded and supplied by the CIA, works undercover in these areas. The time is 1968.

These foregoing accounts have not been conjured up from my imagination. They are factual incidents, and I am the American mentioned in three of the examples. And they shouldn't be viewed as isolated events, but rather as a mere sampling of just how deeply the trafficking of opium runs as a central and integral part of the Laotian power structure.

The object of bringing these facts into the open is twofold. First, to show that opium trafficking was rampant in these areas when I was there. And second, to state my belief that the American Embassy, together with other agencies nominally working under its auspices, not only knew what was going on but was fully aware that it was in no small way conducted by the manipulation of U.S. aid earmarked for other purposes. I don't make this charge lightly. It was common knowledge to every field officer in the north. Talked about, but only on an informal basis, the opium question was subordinated to the primary needs and objectives of U.S. policy.

The utter ruthlessness of this tactical methodology is important to bear in mind. It mattered not what ancillary problems were created by our presence. Not, that is, so long as the Meo could keep their

continued

wards in the boon of dying in the name of, for these unfortunates anyway, some nebulous cause. If for the Americans this meant, as it did, increasing the potential reward, or quite literally, pay-offs, to the Mco leadership in the form of a carte blanche to exploit U.S.-supplied airplanes and communications gear to the end of greatly streamlining opium operations, well, that was the price to be paid. In time, the arrangement became increasingly mercenary. Dealing on such contractual terms perhaps made it easier to rationalize away the other half of Laotian reality: that hundreds of thousands of natives had been caught up in an American war of attrition, and that the essence—the very life-force—of an entire people had been horribly scarred, if not fatally extinguished.

The war in Laos has always been depicted as only a "holding operation"; merely a place to buy time for our supposed allies, to allow them a period of grace in which to mobilize. Thus, with a second line of defense established, the fate of this beleaguered kingdom could be left to the whim of fate. For the generals, Ouan and Vang Pao, and for the rest of their cronies, there has been time to prepare for the inevitable day of abandonment by their benefactors. For them, enough opium has been grown, enough heroin processed from it and sold on the streets of Saigon to American GIs and in the back alleys of New York City, so that the generals' future portends surfeit, not destitution. The tragedy in Laos is that of the poor—the Mco soldier, his family, and the rest of the conglomerate Lao society who have long been bombed, shot at, burned, uprooted, and who must now, in stark confusion, ponder the enormous catastrophe that has befallen them.

The Americans ultimately will go home; the creators and engineers of the Laos operation will be duly complimented on a job well done. For them there will be high-ranking appointments, and general promotions all around.

But for the great bulk of the American people, who must one day come to realize the crimes that have been committed in the false name of national honor, for them, there can only be shame.

—RONALD J. RICKENBACH
East Hampton, N.Y.

McCoy, Alfred W. THE POLITICS OF HEROIN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA,
by Alfred W. McCoy with Cathleen B. Read and Leonard
P. Adams II. New York, Harper & Row, 1972. 464 p.
maps. HV 5801 .M1.

LOCATION IN CIA HISTORICAL BOOK COLLECTION

See Agency Library

HS/HC-844

SEPTEMBER 3, 1972 SECTION 7



A movie natural, with a part for the C.I.A.

The Politics Of Heroin in Southeast Asia

By Alfred W. McCoy.
With Cathleen B. Read
and Leonard P. Adams II.
Illustrated. 464 pp.

New York: Harper & Row. \$10.95.

By JAMES M. MARKHAM

It looks as though *Papaver somniferum*, the rather beautiful opium poppy, is going to provide us with a new genre of film, fiction, journalism and, even, scholarship. This is understandable. Heroin addiction is savaging our cities. "Any nation that moves down the road to addiction, that nation has something taken out of its character." President Nixon observed last March shortly after his return from China, once the most addicted of nations. Mr. Nixon has declared "war" on heroin at home—and galvanized his emissaries abroad. In certain parts of the world, American diplomats now give almost monomaniacal attention to persuading frequently indifferent or corrupt officials to do something about poppy cultivation, heroin refining and heroin trafficking.

Moreover, from the perspective of a journalist or film-maker, the subject is a natural, replete with ignorant hill tribesmen hacking away at their poppy fields in remote corners of Asia, ragtag paramilitary smugglers leading vast mule caravans across cloud-shrouded mountains, shadowy Chinese middlemen bribing

James M. Markham, who was a correspondent for The Associated Press in South Asia and Africa, now reports frequently on drug problems for The Times.

high-ranking officials to look the other way, cosmopolitan Corsican intriguers arranging for stewardesses to strap on "body packs" of No. 4 heroin and fly to New York, intrepid undercover agents trying to foil all of the aforementioned and—last, but by no means least important—the junkies on our streets, symptoms and carriers of disquieting diseases.

This book, the first work of near-scholarship in the new genre, comes to us redolent of controversy [see *The Last Word*]. Before it was even in galleys—on June 1—the Central Intelligence Agency dispatched an employe to Harper & Row in New York to warn the company that the book could well be inaccurate, libelous and "damaging to the interests of this country," according to the recollection of Executive Editor M. S. Wyeth. The next day Alfred McCoy testified before a Senate subcommittee about alleged involvement of high-ranking South Vietnamese officials, Air America and others in the opium business. Alarmed, the C.I.A.'s General Counsel, Lawrence R. Houston, stepped up the pressure, and on July 5 asked to "see the text prior to publication" in order to point out its inaccuracies.

In a display of post-Irving caution—and over the author's objections—Harper & Row agreed on July 19 to let the C.I.A. consider the galleys for a week and submit its criticisms, on the understanding that the publishers would be under no obligation to make any changes. The mountain at Langley, Va., labored and produced a mouse. The 1,500-word critique the Agency returned to Harper & Row on July 28 understandably "underwhelmed" the editors (who appeared to have been concerned mainly about libel suits) and they decided to proceed with the publication of the book.

The C.I.A.'s clumsy intervention—particularly when linked to its ongoing efforts to prevent a former agent, Victor L. Marchetti, from even writing a book about the Agency for Alfred A. Knopf—is seriously disturbing. So is Harper & Row's submission of the book for prepublication criticism; it sets a worrying

precedent even if the company maintains, as it does, that this was a special case. But the C.I.A. assaulted the McCoy book like a bull lunging at a matador's outstretched cape. For what the 27-year-old Yale graduate student has given us is not—as advertised—an expose of "C.I.A. involvement in the drug traffic" but rather a fascinating, often meticulous unraveling of the byzantine complexities of the Southeast Asian opium and heroin trade. To be sure, McCoy weaves a New Left anti-C.I.A. leitmotif throughout his pages and at times lapses into the error (usually made by angry non-Americans) of crediting American espionage with history-bending powers. Thus, in the early (and weakest) chapters of the book we are led to believe that if the O.S.S. had not backed the Mafia in Sicily at the end of World War II and if the C.I.A. had not sponsored Corsican mobsters as anti-Communist strikebreakers on the Marseilles waterfront, these two underworld groups would have subsided into well-deserved oblivion and never gotten into heroin trafficking.

As a former C.I.A. agent told Seymour Hersh (who unearthed the pre-publication fiasco), McCoy's assertions are "10 per cent tendentious and 90 per cent of the most valuable contribution I can think of." "He's a very liberal kid," the ex-agent continued, "and he'd like to nail the establishment. But some leading intelligence officers inside the Government's program think that his research is great." Well they might. For McCoy has done his homework, and, unlike most authors of books about spooks and mobsters, he gives us a rich set of footnotes. It is too bad they are not at the bottom of the pages, because this is a book to be read in tandem with its footnotes. Some assertions in the text are stronger than the footnotes they rest on; many are not.

The book's strength does not lie in its finger-wagging approach to history, but in its astounding-but-true tales of exotic rivalries that make up the heroin trade. Have you ever heard, for example, (Continued on Page 10)

Isadore Selzer.

MS/HIC-344

The Politics Of Heroin

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of the Battle of Ban Khwan, the Opium War of 1967? In June of that year, Chan Shee-fu, a half-Burmese, half-Chinese warlord from Lashio in Burma, dispatched a caravan carrying 16 tons of raw opium to the east, destined for Gen. Ouane Rattikone, commander-in-chief of the Royal Laotian Army. But two ex-Kuomintang generals, Tuan Shi-wen and Ly Wen-huan, whose "armies" had almost without challenge dominated the opium trade, formed a thousand-man expeditionary force to intercept and destroy the upstart's caravan whose "single-file column of five hundred men and three hundred mules stretched along the ridges for over a mile."

After an inconclusive skirmish with the Kuomintang marauders, the Shan opium smugglers crossed the Mekong River and dug in at Ban Khwan, a Laotian lumber town. As the two sides readied for battle, General Ouane ordered them both to clear out of Laos. "The KMT scornfully demanded \$250,000 to do so, and Chan Shee-fu radioed his men from Burma, ordering them to stay put." Fighting began between the Shan and KMT forces, inspiring General Ouane "to play the part of the outraged commander in chief defending his nation's territorial integrity." He dispatched six T-28 prop fighters to deal with the intruders, displaying "all the tactical brilliance one would expect from a general who had just received his nation's highest state decoration, The Grand Cross of the Million Elephants and the White Parasol."

Two solid days of bombing and strafing sent 400 surviving Shans piling into the Mekong River and back to Burma, but the fleeing KMT troops were cut off by Laotian army units. Meanwhile, Laotian paratroopers had scooped up the big prize, the 16 tons of opium. But, as McCoy points out, this picaresque clash "appears to have been a turning point in the growth of Southeast Asia's drug traffic. . . . General Ouane's troops won the right to tax Burmese opium entering Laos, a prerogative formerly enjoyed by the KMT, and the Ban Houei Sai region [of Laos] later emerged as the major processing center for Burmese opium."

The book's theme (as distinct from the individual scandals the C.I.A. hoped to rebut when it asked to "see the text") is that when the United States moved into the Indochinese vacuum left by

the French, it picked up, and struck, alliances with shaky governments, politicians and mercenaries (like the Kuomintang remnants in Burma) that earned a good deal of money from opium smuggling. And—since it was only a year ago that President Nixon declared war on heroin—for a long time American diplomats and C.I.A. agents had considered opium trafficking by their client allies a quaint local custom that didn't interfere with the war against Communists. Thus, for example, it was natural that Air America would carry Meo opium in Laos. (In attempting to rebut this point in its correspondence with Harper & Row, the C.I.A. was disingenuous. In its own rebuttal of the C.I.A. "rebuttal," the publishers simply quoted Nelson Gross, the senior State Department adviser on narcotics, who had conceded the point in an interview with The Christian Science Monitor.)

Opium-dealing by America's allies might have remained a relatively benign phenomenon (for Americans) had not a half million G.I.'s been sent to Vietnam—and had not American pressure on the Turks to get out of the opium-growing business sent the ubiquitous Corsicans and other traffickers scuttling to the Far Eastern connection. As the traditional Turkish source was being phased out, there was a rise in the amount of Asian heroin coming into the United States in 1970 and 1971. McCoy exaggerates the size of this flow in order to indict American policy-makers for not putting the screws on their Thai, Laotian and South Vietnamese allies in the war. But he rightly points out that criticism of the G.I. heroin epidemic has unduly focused on the Army's efforts to combat it, when in fact it was South Vietnamese protection of the heroin racket that insured an abundant supply of the drug. And one thing we do know about drug epidemics is that they spread fastest when supply is great; the G.I. epidemic is a striking case in point, and one of the saddest ironies of this irony-ridden war. All across America today, ex-G.I.'s are turning on others to heroin while "war" is waged against addiction.

But McCoy flays his pioneering book at the end with an astonishingly simple-minded chapter entitled "What Can Be Done?" which rejects both addict rehabilitation and the prosecution of traffickers and endorses eradication of the opium poppy as the solution to America's heroin epidemic. It is a bit unfair to focus on this brief concluding chapter, but many Americans are going to read "The Politics of Heroin

in Southeast Asia" and discover a new set of bad guys—and a new panacea. When the French weren't doing enough about the Marseilles heroin laboratories, people boycotted Châteauneuf-du-Pape; next we can expect cries for high tariffs on ceramic elephants and nuocnam. The international war on the poppy has great potential for hysteria; a few home truths need to be underscored. The first is that the Burmese Government, as McCoy shows, is unable to control the miniature Kuomintang armies that still dominate the trade and in fact permits opportunistic KKY militia units to traffic in opium in order to build up their strength against several anti-Government rebel groups. Pursuing a hermit-like foreign policy, Burma, which is thought to produce 400 of the 700 tons of opium grown in the Golden Triangle, is going to be growing it for a long time.

More important, however, is the fact, conveniently ignored by McCoy, that American addicts consume only a fraction of the world's illicit opium. According to the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1,200 to 1,500 tons of opium are produced illicitly around the world every year. American addicts are thought to need only 60 to 100 tons of opium a year to feed their habits—that is, six to 10 tons of heroin. This amount of opium can be grown on five to 10 square miles of arable, upcountry land—in Burma, in India, in Turkey, in Mexico, in Ecuador. We are not going to stop *Papaver somniferum* from growing around the world, and even if gypsy moths providentially consumed every poppy extant, it would not be long before underworld chemists were turning out oxycodone, hydromorphone and oxymorphone—synthetic opiates used in medical compounds which established addicts are unable to distinguish from heroin.

International efforts to encourage a reduction in poppy acreage should not be debunked. But we should not invest high hopes or, when it comes to a choice, excessive resources in such undertakings. The best we can hope for on "the supply side of the equation," as the narcs call it, is a reduction of availability on the street—fewer kids experimenting with heroin and getting hooked. Meanwhile, we should not become preoccupied with the glamorous, international-intrigue facet of the heroin problem. We will have to resolve the problem, *pace* McCoy, at home, not abroad. ■

The New York Times Book Review

September 3, 1972

When the Embarrassed Chuckling Stopped Our Allies, Opium, and the CIA

By Michael T. Malloy

We were just about to take off from one of the many secret airstrips the Central Intelligence Agency had cut into the mountains of northern Laos, when a tribal soldier hurried up, spoke briefly to an American CIA agent, and threw a big, white canvas bag aboard. I already half knew the answer, but as we buckled our seat belts I asked the agent what was in the bag.

He looked embarrassed. "Opium," he said.

Embarrassment was the strongest emotion that American officialdom showed a decade ago if anyone mentioned the wide-open dope traffic conducted by our allies in Southeast Asia. Narcotics smuggling was more often viewed with amused tolerance as just another Asian peccadillo like corruption, gold smuggling, and night clubs that advertised "Twenty Fresh Girls Just Arrived From Bangkok With Medical Certificates."

White slavery and gold smuggling still rate little more than an embarrassed chuckle at some of our Southeast Asian embassies ("we're here to fight communism, not to play missionary"), but narcotics is something else. The epidemic of opium-based heroin that struck our armies there in 1970 and the frightening inroads the drug has made among high-school students at home have turned that amusing peccadillo into a deadly menace to our own national well-being.

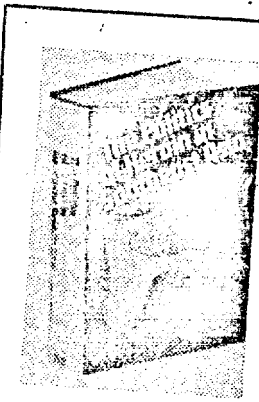
Free Publicity

So *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia* couldn't have been published at a worse time for the men who direct our policies in that bloody and controversial corner of the world. Newspapers, magazines, and television reporters have described allied involvement with the narcotics trade in the past, without generating more than *pro forma* evasions and denials. But this book, published Aug. 17, is so thoroughly researched, so carefully annotated, and so specific in its accusations that even the Central Intelligence Agency has crawled out of its accustomed shell of secrecy to publicly issue 11 pages of denials.

The agency should have stayed in its shell. It guaranteed the book's accuracy.

Staff Writer Malloy spent several years in Southeast Asia as a correspondent for United Press International.

amount of free publicity by asking Harper & Row to suppress its publication. It trapped itself in a "put up or shut up" corner by telling the publishing company it could demonstrate that author Alfred McCoy's allegations were "totally false." It failed to demonstrate any such thing when Harper & Row broke publishing tradition by giving the agency an advance look at the book and a chance to explode



'The book is so thoroughly researched, so carefully annotated, and so specific in its accusations that even the Central Intelligence Agency has crawled out of its accustomed shell of secrecy to issue 11 pages of denials.'

its charges. Instead of preventing its publication, the president of the 155-year-old publishing house said the CIA's response merely "reaffirmed" his company's confidence in the book.

McCoy is a 27-year-old graduate student at Yale. His book is a monumental piece of scholarship in a field that sometimes resists investigation to the point of killing the investigators. He has interviewed spies, gun runners, opium farmers, mercenaries, policemen, and generals along a trail that ran from dusty European libraries to mountaintops in the no man's land of northern Laos. He produced a fascinating tale of mercenary armies, lost battalions, commando raids on Communist China, and wild mountain tribesmen led by hard-drinking American adventurers who sometimes pay cash bounties for enemy ears. It is right out of *Terry and the Pirates*, and it is all more or less true.

McCoy's chief conclusion is that "American diplomats and agents have been involved in the narcotics traffic

Continued

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." He makes a solid case for the first two charges. Evidence for the third would be equally watertight if he had dropped the word "active" with its suggestion that the United States consciously promoted narcotics smuggling as well as just consciously permitted it.

The book makes it clear that the United States didn't conspire to grow opium, process it into heroin, and ship it off to American school children. But it does show that our Asian pet generals and politicians did do these things and that we knew about it. It shows that we continued to supply arms and equipment to these international pushers, and that they used them to expand their narcotics operations. And it shows we knew that too.

A 'Local' Problem

The reason for this American complicity, of course, was the allegedly tough-minded "we're not missionaries" syndrome that made any anti-Communist an ally no matter how despicable he might be. The CIA's rebuttal includes an excellent illustration of the attitude. The agency's chief counsel argued in its defense that "when this drug 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."

The counsel didn't say just when the CIA discovered that heroin was as bad for Americans as for mere Asians. But it was obviously far too late, after young Americans were already injecting themselves with products of a narcotics apparatus whose construction has been watched with amused detachment by American officials who thought it was a "local Southeast Asian problem."

McCoy contends that helicopters of the CIA's Air America airline were picking up opium from tribal villages in northwestern Laos as late as May of last year. The CIA says Air America has rules against carrying opium. It is possible that both are right, since Air America pilots haul tribal officers and supplies from mountaintop to mountaintop without necessarily knowing the purpose of their missions.

But most damning and revealing is the defense the CIA makes against McCoy's charge that the agency and the U.S. Embassy in Laos threw up a facade of legal technicalities and talk of Laotian "sovereignty" to prevent the U.S. Bureau of



Author McCoy describing his findings to a Senate subcommittee. -AP

Narcotics from even investigating the wide-open narcotics operations of Laotian generals who admit using American-supplied guns and planes to control the smuggling of tons of dope.

The CIA quotes in its defense a Bureau of Narcotics statement praising the embassy and the agency for the passage of a Laotian antidrug law nine months ago and the establishment of a bureau office in Laos soon after. Until then, the bureau said, "programs to effect control of narcotics trafficking could not be initiated without Laotian national drug-control laws."

That is exactly McCoy's point. The United States raises private armies on Laotian soil, bombs Laotian villages, runs commando raids across its borders, and pays off its politicians without particular reverence for Laotian law. And since it also overthrows governments it doesn't like, and pays most of Laos' public and private bills, the United States can get any law it really wants. The most telling confirmation of McCoy's thesis is that U.S. narcotics investigators couldn't even set up an office in this American dependency until a year after local heroin began flowing into Vietnam's U.S. Army camps, and 10 years after I shared an Air America flight with a sack of Laotian opium.

[*The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*. By Alfred W. McCoy with Cathleen B. Read and Leonard P. Adams II. Harper & Row; New York City. 464 pages. \$10.95.]

Spooking the First Amendment

Thursday, Aug. 24, 1972 THE WASHINGTON POST

The CIA Mounts an Operation on a Book

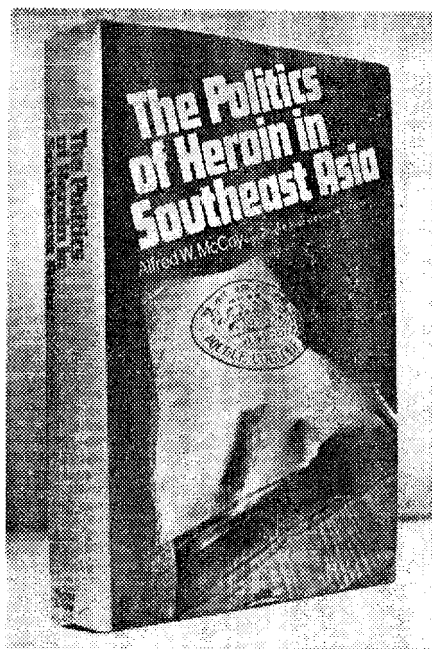
By Roger Wilkins

A FUNNY thing happened to author Alfred W. McCoy on the way to his publication date. He and his publisher, Harper & Row almost got spooked by the CIA in a gambit that does little credit to our secret overseas operatives. It seems that in his book, "The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia," Mr. McCoy argues that American diplomats and secret agents have been significantly involved in the narcotics traffic in the "golden triangle" of Laos, Thailand and Burma. The CIA, upon learning something of the content of the book, apparently decided that it had cause for the expression of some concern. As a result, the author alleges, the agency resorted to "extralegal measures" such as CIA visits to the publisher, telephone calls and letters in an attempt "to harass and intimidate me and my publisher."

I am not concerned with the accuracy of Mr. McCoy's text or his methods of scholarship. I do, however, wonder about the way in which the government expressed its interest in his work. Whether there were visits to the publisher or phone calls, as Mr. McCoy alleges, is not the point. It is clear that the general counsel of the CIA wrote and asked to see the book prior to publication. While he denied that the agency's interest affected in any way the publisher's right to publish, the general counsel went on to apply some heavy pressure, saying "it is our belief that no reputable publishing house would wish to publish such allegations without being assured that the supporting evidence was valid."

HARPER & ROW, for its part, told the agency that it desired to publish the book but also to "live up to the traditions and responsibilities of a great publishing house as we see them." Overriding the author's protests, the publisher decided to submit the book for an unusual pre-publication review by the CIA. A source at Harper & Row reports that the agency wrote the firm saying that it could "prove beyond doubt" that

McCoy's facts were wrong. After reviewing the book, the agency attempted, in an 11-page critique, to demonstrate that the author's evidence did not support his assertions. Apparently, after reviewing the CIA critique, Harper & Row decided the agency



had not proved its case. "They just didn't do it," the source reports. So, the book will see the light of day.

Unfortunately, this is neither the government's nor the CIA's first venture into the murky business of attempting to impose pre-publication restraints on the words and ideas the citizens of this country are to read and consider. The Justice Department's thrust against the Pentagon Papers is still fresh in memory. And the CIA has a rich

history in this business. In recent years, the agency has flitted from Random House to Putnam to courtrooms and to Harper & Row trying to influence what the rest of us do or don't read about the CIA.

But the agency cannot have it both ways. It cannot hide away in the woods when it pleases and then tell the mirrors of the world what to show when it becomes edgy. Its message to Harper & Row was especially pernicious. While disclaiming any intention to inhibit publication, the agency suggested more than once that no reputable or responsible publisher would want to publish a book without first validating the facts. And then the agency offered itself as chief validator. I am not sure whether the publisher needed to go as far as submitting the galley proofs of the book to the CIA for pre-publication review in order to ascertain the agency's views or whether, indeed, that decision was entirely wise. But to its credit, Harper & Row resisted the pressures and retained the ultimate publishing judgment.

THAT IS all to the good, for the CIA, in offering its services as ultimate validator of the author's source material, was dangling a lure that leads down the path to acquiescence in censorship. If Clifford Irving's caper taught us anything, it was that the publisher has ultimate responsibility for checking the validity of the material he proposes to publish. It is clear that the publisher, upon learning that serious questions have been raised about the reliability of material it has on hand, should at least talk the questions over with any responsible doubter.

But finally, the responsibility rests with the publisher, it cannot and should not be shifted to any other party, particularly not to a secret agency of the government. Any other course would lead to the erosion of a publisher's most precious right, the first amendment right of free speech, which is his only guarantee of his ability to promote the free flow of information and ideas throughout society, and our only guarantee as well.

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17 August 1972

Victory over the CIA

Dear Sir:

Although one has the feeling that to respond to Nat Hentoff's recent column about Harper & Row allowing the CIA to see a book prior to publication (Voice, August 10) is only to encourage him to even more dubious efforts, the enormity of his assertions and their potential impact on the author community compel me to put Harper's side on the record at least once.

Stripped of its rhetoric, Hentoff's article boils down to the assertions that Harper & Row "surrendered" to "pressure" from the CIA by giving it the opportunity to see the book prior to publication (which Hentoff says is the same as giving them the power to revise it), and that the publisher unfairly persuaded the author into going along with its point of view despite his own feelings to the contrary.

Hentoff's claim that what is involved here is prior restraint is a classic exercise in bootstrap logic. Although he admits that the CIA's request (which he has apparently not seen, although everyone else has, and which is not, as he says, "confidential") is only for permission to review the book, he nevertheless asserts that "what the CIA is after, the wording of the letter makes clear, is permission to revise." Later in his article he escalates this to "an attempt at prior restraint (review)."

Since the real nature of the CIA's request (demand) is central to the issue, I will quote from it: "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. It is our belief that no reputable publishing house would wish to publish such allegations without being assured that the supporting evidence was valid . . . we believe that 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 dis-

torted beyond recognition, and none is based on convincing evidence."

Clearly what is involved here is not a threat but a request, not an attempt to revise but an offer to prove matters which, if they could be proven, might well lead both publisher and author to make changes of their own free will. To refuse even to entertain such an offer seems to us egoistic and irresponsible. We do not want to play God with men's lives, or even with their reputations. Although we have great confidence in the author and in the book, we do not find it utterly inconceivable that someone else may know something we don't. This is simply a matter of intellectual honesty; to convert it into some form of political surrender is an exercise in knee-jerk paranoia.

As everyone knows by now, the CIA did submit their comments, which we and the author carefully considered and rejected as wholly unpersuasive. The book is being published this week without a word changed. And yet Hentoff bristles at calling this a victory. We gave away, he says, a full adversary proceeding in a court of law which would have protected the author's rights and the public's as well. Yet it was just such a proceeding that we sought to avoid or, failing that, win, by making the book available voluntarily.

We are in the business of publishing books, not litigating with the CIA. Whatever it may do for the ego, such litigation is enormously expensive for both author and publisher, and it can tie up publication for months and even years. The CIA could commence an action whether we let them see the book or not, and the moment the issue was joined the Court could, and probably would, have let them see the book anyway. One of the reasons for volunteering the book was in the hope of avoiding such expense and delay by convincing the CIA that they had no case for court action. Another was to put us in the strongest possible position should the CIA go to court anyway, in which case we would have fought

them to the limit. It seems rather ungenerous to fault this strategy for having paid off, as it appears to have done.

But, says Hentoff, there is the "chilling effect" to consider. Just what got chilled in this case? What difference did it make that the CIA saw the book three weeks earlier than it otherwise would have? This is not a series of newspaper exposes where future sources might dry up. And the CIA can intimidate past sources just as well after publication as before, even assuming they need our copy of the manuscript to do it.

I am not saying there is no such thing as a "chilling effect." I am only saying that its importance must be judged on the circumstances of each individual case, and weighed in the balance against the danger of pursuing the opposite course. In this case I believe the danger of "chill" was much less than the danger of publishing serious allegations which might turn out to be unsupportable. I believe that the action of the Freedom to Read Committee, which Hentoff criticizes, was based on a recognition of the delicacy of this balance. Hentoff's simplistic analysis does not, of course, even admit the existence of the problem.

Finally, Hentoff scores Harper & Row for having successfully persuaded the author to go along with its point of view. It does not take much reading between the lines to perceive that what he really resents is the notion that a publisher should have a point of view on such a matter. Yet a publishing house is not a public utility like the telephone company, required by law to transmit messages for anyone who can pay the fare.

Many people associate the credibility of a work with the reputation of the publisher as well as with that of the author, and most are quick to hold the publisher to account when things go wrong. The Clifford Irving debacle is only one of several recent reminders of this fact of life. Surely the author has no more right to force the publisher to publish against his scruples than the publisher has to force the author to write against his.

In this case, the author had other equally attractive publishing options which did not involve showing the manuscript to the CIA. The fact that he chose to go along with us rather than publish elsewhere only reflects the fact that our commitment to the book was clearly more important to him than our difference of opinion about showing it to the CIA.

—B. Brooks Thomas
Vice President &
General Counsel
Harper & Row
East 53rd Street

Nat Hentoff will reply in next week's issue.