



DR. YANG DAO

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About my studies in France, I finished my Ph.D. in France, in the area of social and economic development. I also studied politics and anthropology as minors 'cause I like to study many subjects. I finished my Ph. D. in Sobornne, the biggest University in France. I received my Ph.D. in May of 1972. Two weeks after, the Dean of the University contacted me and asked to meet him. He told me, Yang Dao you are a very good student. I don't want you to return to Laos. I want you to help me and to work here because I need someone to teach in the area of social and economic development. If you return to Laos, now there's still war going on in Cambodia, South Vietnam and Laos. First, you will not have security and if you go to Laos, it's a poor country you will not get good pay. If you work for me, I'll give you better salary so you, your wife, and your three children can have a better life. I told him, you're one of my best professors. You've taught me a lot and I did learn so much from you. There are still things I wish to learn, but the time has come. I had completed my studies and you've offered me a job but I'm very sorry that I cannot accept the job. Because I had promised to my parent, my people, and my country that when I finish my studies in France I'll return to help them. Even though the country is still poor, I must return. Even if there's still war, I'm willing to be with my people.

In July of 1972, I completed my paperwork. At the time I received scholarship for my studies from UNESCO, (United Nations Education, Social, and Cultural Organization) which is an organization within the United Nations. They bought the plane tickets for me, my wife, and our three children for our trip back to Laos. They paid for everything.

When I was studying in France, the Lao government officials who came to meetings there already came and met with me. When we met, they said when I finish my social and economic development study, I should return to work for the governments. I told them, now I'm still studying but when I return I will, anything I can help with I'll do because that is my plan. Only two weeks after my arrival, there was a director general from the Ministry of Planning and International Corporations came. He told me, Yang Dao, I met you on my official trip to France when you were still studying. I need you. Now you've completed your studies, I want you to work with me. I told him, if you see that I can help you then I will work with you.

A week later the General Vang Pao came to Vientiane. He told Colonel Vang Chou to take me to meet him. When we met he told me, now that you have completed your studies, I want you to work with me. If you work for the Lao governments the salary is low. I'll tell the CIA to give you better salary. I told the General if I went to military school, I would come to work for you without you asking. But my studies were on social and economic development and politics then let me stay in Vientiane so that I can help you because the Lao didn't understand the Hmong. I know many of the students who graduated from France and now became directors of different Ministries. I know them so let me be the bridge for the Lao and the Hmong so we understand each other. Colonel Vang Chou was there so he said, General, brother in-law is right. There were a few who completed their studies but were just kicking dust in Long Cheng. They can't help you much. Let brother in-law stay in Vientiane so that he can help you.

I was working on the planning, for example in the next five years how many teachers, technicians, engineers, nurses, doctors, and lawyers we need for Laos. So, I was planning on these things and I had to travel from the South to the North. I've been to many places. When I went to Hmong villages I didn't wear like this. I only wear like this when I work with the government officials. When I visited the Hmong I wore normal clothes and shoes, not leather shoes. When I got to Hmong villages they said, doctor, you're a government official visiting us, we don't have anything to eat. Will you eat our chicken and pig? I told them if you kill your chicken and pig, I won't eat. I wanted to see what you eat. If you eat vegetables, chilli, and rice then that's what I'm gonna eat too. If your daily diet is not chicken and pork and you just do that for me then I won't eat it. So, I didn't let them kill their chickens and pigs. I just ate what they ate. My intention was to see what their daily life was like so that I can help them. If you want them to treat you with great foods then you won't see their true life. At night they said, doctor we don't have a decent place for you to sleep. I told them, uncle there are a lot of places here, right there on the ground, just put a mat there for me. That's how I am and who I am. Because when you're literate you must really love your people. So wherever I went, I tried to see how people live their life, so when I come back I can find ways to help them.

On the 21st of February 1973, the Royal Lao government and the Pathet Lao signed an agreement to cease fire. That all parties must focus on rebuilding the country, to promote peace and collaboration, and rebuild the economy for future prosperity. At the time, the government had selected six of us and I was the only Hmong. We were a team to teach the people about

agricultural development, leadership, and governing. So, we taught the Mayors. For example, we taught in Xieng Khouang, then to Luang Phrabang, and Vientiane. So, for each Province we taught all the leaders. We did that all the way from North to South. We also consulted with the Governors. After these duties, I also worked in government ministry and talked to different schools and government officials, this made a lot of them know me well.

I remember it was July 1973, a few months afterwards, The General flew from Long Cheng to Vientiane and he told Colonel Vang Chou to bring me to meet him again. So, I went to meet him. When I got to his place, there was Praya Tou Ger Lyfoung and Representative Tiao Sok Sisana, a Representative from Xieng Khouang Province and a member of the Royal Family was also there. Then the General called me to sit with them. The General then said, the reasons I called the three of you here is because The Royal government and Pathet Lao had signed an agreement and very soon they will establish a new government. So I will send your names to Prime Minister Souvana Phouma. I will propose Representative Tiao Sok Sisana to be the Minister of Foreign Affair. I will propose Praya Tou Ger Fyfoung to be the Minister of Justice. As for Dr. Yang Dao, you are still young so I will not propose you to be the Minister but I will propose you to be the Vice-Minister of Information because you know French, Lao, Hmong, Vietnamese, and Thai well. I raised I hand. I said, General, I am too young. All the leaders were older than me and had experiences in politics but I have none. I cannot accept this proposal. Please find someone older to do it. The General then said he will find someone else. The General then asked, what about Praya Tou Ger Lyfoung and Tiao Sok Sisana? They said, if Souvana Phouma accepts your proposal then we'll do it. So, that was our conversation. It was true that the General had proposed my name but I declined it.

Later on the 2nd of April 1974, the Lao government asked me to survey the northern region of Houay Say, Phongsali Province about the economic conditions of the area because the war has end and they wanted to rebuild the nation. So, I flew from Vientiane to Houay Say in a Dakota aircraft. When I got to Houay Say, the director of USAID Jack Hustienberg used a helicopter to get me to the Hmong and the Khamu villages on the mountains. This time, I went to Phou Pha Dan Mountain north of Houay Say. So, the helicopter landed on a small area on top of the mountain. When it landed many children came to see it because they rarely see one. Many people came so I asked them where the chief of the village lives. They told me it's over there. I asked them to guide me there. Before I left with the villager, I told the pilot, it was around 10:00am, so I told him to pick me up around 2:00pm or 2:30pm. Then the pilot who is a Thai national said ok, I'll pick you up later. So, we went to meet the chief. When we got there we met a very old man with long beard. I asked, grandpa, are you the village chief? He said, no, it's my grandson. He went to the farm. He told me to sit down. So, I sat and talked with him. I asked him how old he was. He told me I might not believe him but he was 140 years old. His beard was all white and about this long, his hair too. He said he was 140 years and he migrated from China. He told me all his sons had died. He now lived with his grandsons. I talked to him maybe for just thirty or forty minutes then the helicopter came back. It landed and someone

came to tell me the helicopter is back to pick me up. At that moment, I thought to myself maybe Pathet Lao was gonna attack this village or something. I told them to pick me up after 2:00pm how come it wasn't even 11:00am why is it backed already. I asked the pilot what was the urgency. He told me he didn't know. They just told him pick me up. When we got back to Houay Say, USAID head quarter, I asked Mr. Jack Husteinberg what happened. He told me, they requested for me to return to Vientiane in 1-2 hours. So, I returned to Vientiane. When I got home, I asked my wife and she said, they called and asked for me to go to Luang Phrabang the next day. I asked for what business. She said, to meet the King. I told her I have no proper clothes how could I go and meet the King. When you meet the King you cannot wear like this. You have to wear a white shirt. You have to wear a "Phasadong", a Royal dress. The next day around 2:00pm we arrived at the airport I saw Praya (Touby Lyfoung). There were two aircrafts, one for the older officials and one for the rest of us.

When I got to Luang Phrabang, I asked some of the officials our business for going there. They told me that we were gonna meet the King. He was going to appoint us. The next day, the King officially appointed some into the Provisional Government of Coalition. In there, Praya Touby Lyfoung was the only Hmong. The second group was us. For the Hmong, there were me and Lao Fong, who was with the Pathet Lao. The rest were Lao and Khamu. We were members of the National Political Consultative Council, similar to a National Congress.

Later I heard that, before they were gonna establish Provisional Government of Coalition and the National Political Consultative Council, the King was not agreed with it. The King agreed to remove all the old member of the Provisional Government of Coalition and replaced with new ones. But the King did not agree to dissolve the National Assembly.

Souphanouvong then went to meet the King and told the King that members of the National Assembly, Pathet Lao did not involve in the election so they won't recognize. So, he asked the King to eliminate it and establish the National Political Consultative Council. The King disagreed, he said according to the agreement, we only dissolve the government, but not the National Assembly. Then Souphanouvong told the King, if you don't eliminate the National Assembly then we're returning to the jungles which mean war. Then the King said, fine, I will dissolve the National Assembly. That was why we were call to Luang Phrabang. Praya Touby Lyfoung and General Vang Pao, they didn't know about this. Some people later said that General Vang Pao proposed me to the King, but it wasn't him.

While we were working in the National Political Consultative Council, we discussed about the Eighteen Point Political Program. We were debating a lot over the issue. At the time, I was young, I had my own principle, and I was fearless. We've been meeting for a month or two. Everyone agreed except for me. We had 42 people in the National Political Consultative Council. 16 people were from our side, 16 were from Pathet Lao side, a total of 32, and 10 people were the neutralists. I didn't sign so, Sanan Southichack, who was the secretary general of the National Political Consultative Council, which according to communism, is higher than the

president, the president was Souphanouvong. Sanan Southichack came and said to me, Dr. Yang Dao all of the 41 members signed it except for you. Why? What was it that kept you from signing? I told him, brother, if we are to establish programs to develop the country, I want it to be right and fair. I don't want it to be more on the left or on the right. It's for the 3 million people in our country. I see that our Eighteen Point Political Program is not balanced. It's heavier on one side. That's why I didn't sign. He asked exactly what it is. I told him, the number, I don't have the documents so I don't remember. Maybe it was point number 4 or 6. It said, we must penalize America and Thailand for invading our country. I disagreed with that. Then Southichack said, isn't it true that Americans and Thai came and destroyed our country. I said of course, yes, but let's add more. We must penalize the U.S., Thailand, North Vietnam, China, and Soviet Union. Please add three more names. He said no, Dr. Yang Dao, there were only the U.S. and Thailand that were in our agreement. He threw me the documents, which I knew was true. He said, we only did it according to our agreement on February 21, 1973. What you said is not in the agreement. There were no North Vietnam, China, and Soviet Union, except for the U.S. and Thailand. I told him, if we were to follow the Vientiane Peace Accord then I will comply with it. But the truth is, if there were no North Vietnam, China, and Soviet Union, how were you able to fight with us for over thirty years. We had the U.S. and Thailand helping us. Pathet Lao is only a small force, how could you fight us. He said, Dr. Yang Dao, we only do this in accordance with the agreement. I told him again, let's do this, we must penalize the U.S., Thailand, and other countries. Please add "other countries". He insisted that there were no other countries. I said, it is impossible for you to fight to this day without the support of other countries, please add them. Then he added them. He asked, what else I wanted. I told him this one too. It said, we must penalize the rightists or the anti-communist. I told him, fine, then let's also penalize the leftists, the communists as well. He said, there were no communists, no leftists. I said, if there were no leftists then there won't be rightists and take out both. And replaced it with, "those who anti-peace." He was angry but he removed it and said to me, you happy now. I said, yes, I'm happy now. I will sign it and I did. This thing, everybody saw it. Souphanouvong was not there but all the 41 members were looking at me. I just want us to really focus on the development of our country. Even if I write, I would say this about Pathet Lao. And if they hear about it, I think it is fine because what I wish for is for all Lao people, leftists and rightists to get along. As I continued my work within the National Political Consultative Council, I learned that it would be impossible for us to get along. At first, I thought we were all Lao, we all eat fermented fish, maybe we'll find a common ground. But when I really work with them, I knew it won't work. Because the Pathet Lao side were so angry at us. In 1960, our side had arrested their leaders, such as Souphanouvong and were planning to execute them as you may've heard. This, I was informed by Phana Than Ngonsanikone. It was his brother Phoui Sananikone, who was Prime Minister at the time who ordered to have them released. General Phoumi Noksavang was the one who arrested them, Souphanouvong and his Pathet Lao team. During that time, they were forming their first government of coalition. So, Phoumi arrested and was gonna kill them but Phoui said no. He said they were all Lao who eat fermented fish like us. Today they may be

useless, but maybe someday they would be able to help us. So they were released. But the Pathet Lao kept their anger since that time. Also, in military region 2, Colonel Sourik and Major Vang Pao (at the time) had also tried to destroy Pathet Lao 2nd Battalion in Xieng Khouang. It was because of Yang Thao Tou who came to rescue them and that was why the Battalion was saved. That's why they were so angry. Their 1st Battalion in Luang Phrabang was already destroyed. So, I worked with them and I knew that they were still very angry. They were smart so they didn't say much.

In March 1975, there were five countries, I wasn't sure if we were invited or we requested to meet them. They sent eight members from the National Political Consultative Council along with two secretaries. So, there were ten of us. We went to North Vietnam first and we stayed there for ten days. We met with prominent figures of North Vietnam. They said, North Vietnam and Laos were brothers so we must love and care for one another. After that we went to North Korea. We met with Kim Il Sung and he said the same thing, that our yellow skin must love each other. We stayed in North Korea for 8 days then we flew to Beijing. We went to meet Zhou Enlai, but he was sick. So, we didn't get to meet him but we met Marshal Zhu De, a former top general commanding the Red Army who was the President of the National Assembly. As we met him, he also said that we're yellow skin alike so we must help each other. We stayed in China for ten days then we left for East Germany, which was a communist country. When we arrived, they welcomed us nicely. The one who welcomed us was the Secretary General of the Communist Party. I forgot his name. The second person was the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was the one who guided us. The Secretary General was hosting the dinner. On the night that we had dinner, it may sound like a movie if I tell you, but it was the truth. As we ate, the Secretary of the Communist Party gave a speech welcoming us, the delegations from Laos, that we must help each other. So, it was a nice speech and welcoming. We continued eating, then the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs stood up and pointed right at me. Before we went there, they already looked at our profiles and knew who we are. He said, if it wasn't because of the Miao, the communist revolution in Laos could've completed thirty years ago. Because of the Miao, the revolution was delayed for thirty years. He was being mean and spoke in German but there was an interpreter who interpreted it into French for us. I told my friend, Khamfanh Nouangsavang, who now lives in Fresno, CA, and maybe someone else who sat next to me. I give our leaders two minutes to respond. If they don't I will. We had two leaders. One was from the communist side and the other one was from our rightist side. The Communist leader was Sanan Southichack. The second one was Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak. I waited one minute. Everyone continued eating and no one responded. The second minute passed and no one responded. So, I raised my hand. The Secretary General said Dr. Yang Dao, what do you have? I said, I thank you very much for your great hospitality. But I've just heard the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs said that because of the Miao, the communist revolution in Laos was delayed for 30 years. I'll not blame the Vice-Minister because your country was far apart from ours. You do not know the reality. The Miao in Laos are citizens of Laos. We're just an ethnic group, but all are citizen of the country. The Miao in Laos were on both the Royal Government

side and the Pathet Lao side. Whichever sides we were on, we just followed the orders of the leaders. Those on the Pathet Lao side were doing the same thing. Our Miao people did not just do things our own ways. We couldn't do it. For this reason, Mr. Vice-Minister, what you said earlier was incorrect. It was wrong, but I won't blame you. I know that you do not know about our political situation in Laos. I just want to clarify the situation so that we all would understand. So when both sides came and united together our Miao people on both sides were glad that we were becoming one and not just the Miao but people all over Laos were happy too. We are here on behalf of the 3 million Lao including all ethnic groups. We would like to let you know that our country is stable and peaceful now. I just wanted to make this small addition. The Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs was in big shame. I said thank you, this is all I have. We continued eating and it was silent for about five minutes. All we heard was the sound of the silverwares. I noticed that it was very embarrassing, so I raised my hand again. Then the Secretary General said, Dr. Yang Dao you may speak. I said, I forgot to make a point earlier. We are here because we wanted to befriend with you because you're a very developed and prosperous country. Our country was affected by war for a long period of time and was underdeveloped so, we want to see if you have any project. Then he said, the reason you're here is because we want to talk you about this so that in the future our country East Germany and Laos can be friend and support each other economically. We stayed in East Germany for eight days then went to participate the First of May celebration, a big event in Moscow, Russia. On the second day, the third highest ranking in Russia, I forgot his name. But he took us in for a meeting in Kremlin, which was the highest government level. There was a Russian professor who could speak Lao very well came and interpreted for us. As that leader talked, he did.....which means if they disobey then eliminate them, kill them. But what the professor interpreted was that from now on the rightists must collaborate with leftists. If you don't there will be consequences. So, you must become one and help rebuild the country together. But based on my visual analysis, it meant that in the future if the rightists disobey then cut their head off. After that, I had a hard time sleeping. We stayed for eight or ten days in Moscow then we flew back to Vientiane. When we got to Vientiane it was the eighth of May 1975.

I told my two brothers who came to study in Vientiane to rent two or four taxis for a trip to Long Cheng to bring my parent down to Vientiane. We were gonna flee. We couldn't stay any long. We would have to abandon everything except for money and some clothes. The communist had taken over the country now, so we could not stay. I learned about the situation in Moscow. When the communist took over, they executed the former government officials. The same thing happened with Mao Zedong communist takeover and Ho Chi Minh as well. So, I knew it wasn't safe to stay anymore. At first, I thought that whether you are communist or not we could live together because we are all Lao and eat fermented fish so we could unite. On the 9th, my brothers rented four taxis and went to bring my parent from Long Cheng. They arrived late at night. On the 10th we packed up and got ready and on the 11th we fled and crossed the River. But on the 10th, I made a trip to Long Cheng to report to General Vang Pao. I told him that the situation was in chaos. We don't know what would happen next, you must be careful. The

Americans had abandoned us. Whatever you do, do not open fire. If you fire a shot, there will be repercussion. Just like in Sala Phoukun. You used aircrafts to attack the Pathet Lao and they launched an offensive attack against your soldiers and they were defeated. So you must be careful. They might wanted to do something to trigger a shot and use that as an excuse to kill all of us. After I met with the General I then went to meet with the soldiers and the leaders in the mess hall. I told the soldiers, the world situation have changed. We're in a difficult situation. I urged all military leaders not to make a move. That was my main point because you couldn't say much more than that. About 5:30pm, I returned on the last flight from Long Cheng to Vientiane. As I got home, my wife told me that in the morning Mr. Chansamone came to see me but she told him I've left for Long Cheng and he left me a note. She handed me the note. On the note it said, brother Yang Dao when you return from Long Cheng come and see me. It's an urgent matter, very important one. You must come. After I took a bath and changed to new clothes, my wife and I went to see him. We got to his resident around 8:30pm. He told me, brother Yang Dao, today I heard a very bad news. The Pathet Lao held a meeting for 3-4 days now, that military region 1, 3, 4, and 5 had surrendered except for region 2 in Long Cheng. So, they would attack it. They would attack Long Cheng within 48 hours. Their soldiers had already surrounded the area awaiting order, waiting for the government for a greenlight to attack. I told him, brother, this cannot happen. We, on the Royal Government side already signed peace agreement with Pathet Lao. Why would they do this? May I use your telephone, I asked him. He said yes, but asked who I wanted to call. I told him, I wanted to call Souvana Phouma's secretary, his chief cabinet. I asked the secretary, tomorrow May 11th, I would like to meet Prime Minister Souvana Phouma because of a very urgent matter, so I must meet him. Please, find a time slot for me to see him. He put me on hold for a little bit, then he said tomorrow at 11:00pm you can come and see him.

The next day, on the 11th of May 1975 at 11:00am, I asked my brother to drop me and Mr. Chansamone off. When we met him I told him Mr. Prime Minister the reason I come to see you is because I heard a bad news that Pathet Lao will attack Long Cheng within 24-48 hours. I asked you to please stop Pathet Lao from attacking. Let's resolve this issue in Long Cheng politically. Let's not use arms. Then Souvana Phouma picked up his phone and made a called. Everything was silent. He hung up and dialed again. He was calling Phoumi Vongvichit, his Vice-Prime Minister. Then he said, Dr. Yang Dao, I do not know why my phone is not functioning now. I don't know anything about it. I just heard you mentioned it now. Mr. Chansamone I and the left Souvana Phouma house and headed to meet with Phoumi Vongvichit. It was around 12:15 in the afternoon. We saw the soldiers preparing lunch for Mr. Phoumi Vongvichit. He saw me then he came out and said Dr. Yang Dao, what's your business? I told him I have an important matter would like to discuss with him and I asked for his permission to meet him. He welcomed us to sit down and talk. I told him the communist soldiers, I intentionally avoided to say Pathet Lao or Vietnam because if I say that then he won't talk to me anymore. This was the political language. They denied that Vietnamese troops were in Laos. I told him, I heard that the communist soldiers, New Lao Hak Sat had surrounded Long Cheng,

Pha Kek, Ban Son, and elsewhere and ready to attack within 24-48 hours. We had an agreement on February 21, 1975 to cease fire and focus on peace and development. Why do they still plan to attack Long Cheng? I urge you to stop this attack and let's resolve military region 2 with political solution. What I say here is the truth, heaven can witness this. The first thing Phoumi Vongvichit said to me was, Dr. Yang Dao, if Vang Pao wants war, we're ready. We can fight for 10-20 years. I told him, Mr. Vice-Prime Minister, General Vang Pao is a soldier within the Royal Lao Army. He is your servant. If he doesn't anything unlawful, you can pull him back. You can lecture and teach him. If he commits any wrong doing, you can discharge him. Every month, I would fly to Long Cheng to visit my parent because they live there. So, I met General Vang Pao often. I didn't see him do anything wrong. General Vang Pao was a commanding officer of the Royal Lao Army. You're also an official of the Government. He only follows orders from the Government. So, I see no wrong doing by him. His last word to me was, what about the CIA in Long Cheng. According to our Vientiane Peace Accord in February 21, 1973, all the CIA must leave our country. Why are there still two CIA in Long Cheng? This is a violation of our cease fire and the Vientiane Accord. I answered him, based on what I know there is one American in Long Cheng. He worked for the USAID. If you think that he is a CIA agent then you can ask the U.S. Embassy to call him back. He said, there were still Thai soldiers. Our agreement was the Thai soldiers must leave within 30 days. Why are there still two battalions of Thai soldier in Long Cheng? I told him that it was not true. I was the one who joined General Vang Pao to shake their hands. It was true. I was in Long Cheng meeting the General about world politics at that time. The General told me to go with him to shake their hands, the two Thai battalions. We shook their hands and thanked them before the return home. I went there with the General and saw it myself. They all left, before the end of the 30 days. So, there were no more Thai soldiers in Long Cheng. I told him that all the Lao ethnic groups love peace not war. At the end he said, if Vang Pao complies with our Vientiane Peace Accord then nothing would happen. I thanked him and asked that he keeps his promise. I came home and left for Long Cheng. My parent was crying. I told my father, if I wasn't born as a Hmong, I don't know if it was good luck or bad luck that I became a government official. If I'm not an official then I would've sent all of you across the river already. Because I am Hmong and an official, if I send you across the river, thousands of soldiers and civilians would die and I cannot live on with this guilt. I begged my father to let me go and just pray for me. My father held me and said that I may not return again. I told him, I will return, just pray for me. Ask our ancestors to protect me. I went to the airport and flew to Long Cheng with Hang Chao. It was around 2:30pm on May 11, 1975.

When we arrived in Long Cheng, he went to his house and I went straight to the General's house. I told the General, they've surrounded Long Cheng. They're in the jungle. They've surrounded Long Cheng, Pha Kek, and Ban Son ready to attack. As I heard about this I've already gone to see Souvana Phouma and Phoumi Vongvichit. We've negotiated and agreed. I told them not to attack you but you must not attack as well. The next day around 7 or 8, I went to see the General. I remember it was uncle Cher Cha guarding his door. He told me that the General still

have guests and asked me to wait. I waited for a long while about half an hour then I saw Major Yang Chor came out. I asked if there is still someone in there and they told me Colonel Hang Chao was in there. I couldn't sit so I walked around with worries. Then I saw Colonel Hang Chao and the General came out. The General pulled me into the room and said Doctor I've changed my mind. These Lao are so unreasonable, I'm gonna eliminate them all. I've prepared all aircrafts to attack Vientiane. I've ordered pilot Yang Xiong and the soldiers to load bombs on the aircrafts for an attack on Vientiane. I told the General, if you do this, all of us will be killed. If you do this, they will say you've violated the Cease-Fire. They have twenty-thirty thousand troops in the jungle surrounding us. We all would be killed. I urged him not to launch the attack. That was the first time I had the most intense confrontation with the General. All because I loved him and I didn't want to make a mistake. The General had short temper. When it comes to warfare, he was very effective, but also has very short temper. I told him I would not allow him to do it. If he did, all the Hmong would be killed. In addition, he would have a bad name and become a war criminal for killing 450 thousands innocent civilians in Vientiane. At the end the General listened and accepted what I told him. I told him to leave Long Cheng because he's a military officer. I am a politician, I leave Long Cheng and we both leave Laos so that Pathet Lao finds no reason to launch their attacks. So, the General left on the 14th of May 1975 for Thailand. I came back from Long Cheng in a car. We left on the 14th and on the 15th or 16th Pathet Lao occupied Long Cheng. Their spies were all over. They came in and shook hands with General Tiao Virivong, who was General Vang Pao's assistant along with Colonel Choua Vang Lee. All of these things that I talked about were true. If they were not true, I will not mention them. I arrived in Vientiane and gathered my families on the night of the 14th. In the morning around 3:30am we fled. There were 37 of us and we only had 4 small cars. We drove from Vientiane all the way to the Mekong River. God helped us. Our ancestors helped us. We went through 3 check points and all the gates were opened. We passed through. It was so fortunate. I thanked God for helping us. When we got to the Mekong River, we crossed over into Thailand.

I got to Udorn and there was a plane at 8:00pm leaving for NamPhong so I took it. I went there to be with the General and many other leaders. We were there until the 15th or 17th of June 1975. The Thai Government could not allow the General to stay in Thailand. So, the General ask me, Sher Vang, and Tou Fue to take his family to Bangkok. The General's family then departed Bangkok for France and a few days later left for the United States. I had Visa from both the French and the U.S. governments. My wife was crying and asked me to take them to another country. But I told her if I leave, no one else would help the Hmong. Our Hmong people have no place to go. We cannot return to Laos and no country is accepting us so let me stay. I brought Sher Vang with me to see Dr. Bill Ta, who was the commissioner in the United Nations for refugee resettlement in Bangkok. As we met him, I asked him to send us food, medical supplies, water, and blankets because our people were suffering as refugees from Laos living in Nong Khai, Chiang Rai, and other places. He told me, Dr. Yang Dao, the Lao people are not refugees. Your people are not in the same category like the Vietnamese and the Cambodians so

we cannot help you. I asked him how we were different. He said, South Vietnam and Cambodia they both were affected by war and escaped as political refugees. As for your people, you still have your Coalition Government and you're a member of the National Political Consultative Council. Your people just fled. You have no war. So, you are not under the criteria that can receive assistance. I told Dr. Bill Ta, maybe you are in Bangkok and are not aware of the situation in Laos. The Pathet Lao already arrested our leaders and took them in for "samana" (re-education) and put them in Labor Camp. That was why our people couldn't stay. If I stay, maybe I would be in the first group in the Labor Camp. I urged him to care for our people because we didn't just escape so that we can be in a refugee camps surrounded by barb-wire fence, where you can't go anywhere. When we were in Laos, we had a country, homes, and farms. If it wasn't because of war we would never flee. At the end he said, if that was true then I will send a team to conduct a survey. So, it was me and Sher Vang who went. It was on June 18th, 1975 if I remember right. In July, the United Nations sent foods to Nong Khai and the rest of the refugee camps. So, there were no country that would accept the Hmong and the Lao. On August 4th, 1975, Sher Vang and I went to meet with the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok. It was Ambassador Charles Whitehouse and Hugh Tovar who was Charles Whitehouse political advisor. I asked them to that urge the U.S. Government to accept our refugees to go to the United States. In March of 1976 there were still no countries that accepting our refugees then I took Colonel Vang Chou, Moua Tou Shong Ger, Lt. Vang Neng to meet the French Ambassador. We couldn't go to Bangkok so the Ambassador came and met me in Loei Province. Then I asked him to urge the French government to accept our people to France. These were all that we had done and at the end they accepted the Hmong people. I also wrote to the Prime Minister of Australia asking them to accept our Hmong people. I wrote to the President of Argentina to accept any Hmong who's willing to go to their country. I also wrote to the King of Thailand. I asked the King to grant permission for our people to stay in Thailand if they choose to live there. The person who went with me to send the letter was Colonel Vang Chou.

The Hmong people fled the war in Laos and scattered all over the world for nearly 40 years now. The Hmong has advanced very far compare to the time when we were in Laos. Back in Laos, some people had never seen a car. But here we all have cars and jobs. Here in America, some Hmong have become Senator, House Representative, City Council member, Judge, Lawyer, and Teachers, almost everything. Those who earned their Ph.D., we have over 500 people here in America. In France, I have visited. The Hmong are also very advanced. It's just that they only have around 20,000 people. But here we have around 300,000 people. Hmong in France are also economically stable. In other country such as Australia, Hmong are very self-sufficient. In Argentina, I heard Hmong have migrated to other countries I am not sure how many are there now.

The Hmong in this country are very advanced, but there are still issues. When we were in Laos, we were poor but we love and care for one another. When we were poor, we had hope on each other and that united us as a group. When we come to this country, everyone thinks they are

well educated so we no long need each other. That's what causing a lot of division among our people. I want all the Hmong people to think about this. The more educated we are the more we love each other is better. The more educated we are the more we help each other is better so that we can truly change our lives in a positive direction. If we look at the Vietnamese and the Chinese in this country, they are very advanced. Compare to them, we are falling far behind. They are so advanced because they have no jealousy. If one person is literate, the rest support the person. If a person knows something, they go and learn from that person. Because of this they are so advanced in America. This is something that our Hmong people have to think about. We must not have jealousy. We must find the educated or literate one and support the person. We must not look at the last name but for as long as the person is Hmong. When other people accomplish something we have no jealousy. But when a Hmong person accomplishes something many people become jealous and this is wrong. We must compete with other people. I urge all the Hmong people to love each other so that we can unite together and don't let other people look down on us. Do not use the last name and the family heritage as the core, but count on that we are Hmong and we are one family. We must hold hands and help each other to improve our lives in all parts of world so that other people will see us as an important community.

I came to Minnesota in January of 1983. I was invited from France by the University of Minnesota to teach and to do research about the life of Hmong refugees so that we can service and develop the Hmong into the future. When I came here, I noticed that the State of Minnesota has a lot of jobs and the government was supportive. I told many of the government officials here, the reasons there are so many Hmong live here is because the government love and care for us. Secondly, there are great schools and educational systems for our children. And thirdly, there are lots of jobs. Anyone who's serious about working will find a job. They were these three reasons. So, even though Minnesota is cold, we are happy to be here.

Transcription completed by: Kao Chang

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