¤ Mus et la « correspondance des intelligences » indochinoises

⅄ Reconciliation, Poetry, Peace, Buddhism, Liberal Democracy and French connections. A commentary on the letter and some documents *Thao* Nhouy Abhay sent to Paul Mus when he was Director of the ENFOM (June 1947).

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Thao (ທ້າວ) Nhouy Abhay was born on 9 January 1909 at Khong in southern Laos.[104] He studied in France and graduated with honors in 1932 from the Sorbonne. He returned to Laos in 1933 where he served as a Chao Muong. He became a teacher at the Collège Pavie in 1937. He was a cofounder with Katay Don Sasorith of the Lao Renovation Movement that promoted Lao cultural nationalism and published the first Lao language newspaper ລາວໃຫຍ່, 1941-1945.[105] During the period of 9 March to 15 August 1945, under Japanese control of Laos, Nhouy was director of education and ran a newspaper, although he was jailed by the Japanese from June-August for pro-French activities. In October 1945, Nhouy was a member of the Issara government serving as its minister of education. Nhouy did not go into exile with the Issara in April 1946, but stayed to work with the French and loyalist Lao (those who aided France's return after World War II). He joined the Privy Council in 1948 and later joined the Literature Committee when it was established in 1951. From 1949-1950 he was a minister of education and health; and from 1951 to 1954 he was minister of foreign affairs during Souvanna Phouma's prime ministership. In 1956 he was minister of the interior. Later from 1960 to 1962 he served again as minister of education in various governments. As minister of education Nhouy wrote the forward to an early Lao language school text on civics which was one of the first topics to be taught in Lao language, so part of a larger shift away from education in French language led by King Savang Vatthana (r. 1959-1975).[106] Nhouy was one of the leading intellectuals of his time and produced many scholarly works and was renowned for composing Lao poetry.

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[104] DEUVE, Jean, *Le royaume du Laos, 1949-1965. Histoire événementielle de l'indépendance à la guerre américaine*, Paris, École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1984, pp. 352-353.

[105] For a fascinating account of Thao Nhouy Abhay before the Lao Renovation Movement see Simon CREAK, *Embodied Nation: Sport, Masculinity, and the Making of Modern Laos* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015, pp. 32-35. See also *ibid*, pp. 1-3, which notes that Nhouy Abhay was accused by a Vietnamese writer of contributing to starting a violent brawl of Vietnamese and Lao football players that broke out in February 1936 during the annual Bédier Cup tournament in Vientiane. Nhouy, according to the writer, "vociferated violently, employing crass terms… undignified of an educated and learned man, of a man as elite as he." For a general account of the Lao Renovation Movement, see further Soren IVARSSON, *Creating Laos: The Making of a Lao Space Between Indochina and Siam, 1860-1946*, Copenhagen, NIAS Press, 2008, x + 238 p.

[106] WOLFSON-FORD, Ryan, « Loyalism and Anti-Communism in the making of the modern monarchy in post-colonial Laos », [*in*] Robert ALDRICH & Cindy MCCREERY (eds.) *Monarchies and Decolonisation in Asia*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2020, p. 187.

1) Edition of the *Lettre* Thao Nhouy Abhay wrote to Paul Mus (1947, June 23)

[p. 1] Al Sola, le 23 Juin 1947,

à Monsieur P. MUS
Directeur de l'Ecole Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer

Paris

Monsieur le Directeur,

Au début de cette année, sur suggestions du Capitaine Tavernier[107] qui m'avait fait part de votre désir d'être renseigné sur le Laos, j'avais rédigé quelques notes sur quelques problèmes laotiens que je croyais propres à vous intéresser. Je me proposais de vous soumettre ces notes dont un projet de conférence[108] – au cours d'un voyage à Paris. Malheureusement, je tombais malade en Mars et ne pus avois l'honneur de me présenter à vous.

Depuis, vous avez repris contact avec l'Indochine[109] et sans doute avez-vous été saisi également des problèmes laotiens. J'ai pensé cependant qu'il ne vous déplairait pas d'entendre un autre son de cloche sur ces dernières questions et je me permets de vous adresser ci-inclus un exposé sur le problème des cadres français au Laos et mon projet de conférence sur les Lao Issara[110].

Ces deux problèmes sont connexes. Mes exposés et mes conclusions me sont dictés par le fait que le Laos est profondément attaché à la France et que de la France seule il attend le salut. Dans l'Indochine en plein remous, il y aurait sans doute intérêt à cultiver au cœur du pays c'est-à-dire au Laos ces sentiments de loyalisme et de sincère amour que les Laotiens n'ont jamais cessé de témoigner à la Métropole.

En ce qui concerne le problème des Lao Issara, j'estime sincèrement qu'il y va de l'intérêt de la France et du Laos d'y apporter une solution – le plus rapidement possible. Les Lao Issara, je puis vous l'affirmer, ne sont pas plus antifrançais que les autres. Je suis même certain que la grande majorité de ceux qui sont aujourd'hui rejetés au Siam auraient fait de la Résistance franco-laotienne s'ils s'étaient trouvés, à la capitulation japonaise, dans les provinces de contrôle anglais. Victimes des Vietminh et des Chinois, ils ont hurlé avec les loups et, – ce qui est navrant – se livrent aujourd'hui à des incursions et des actes de [p. 2] pillage préjudiciables autant à la paix française qu'à l'autorité du gouvernement laotien.

Ne devrait-on pas les entendre, punir les coupables et pardonner à ceux qui ne le sont pas ? Car le Laos a besoin de cadres et de tous ses enfants.

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107 Captain Ferdinand Tavernier (1919-1948), who had been head of the French resistance in Laos, taught a course that year on "Laos and its problems" at the Collège libre des sciences morales et politiques.

108 Understood to mean: during a conference at the École nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer, of which Mus was then the director.

109 This refers to Paul Mus's second meeting with Hồ Chí Minh on May 12, 1947, which was widely reported in the press.

110 *Cf.* LoC, Fonds Mus, Boîte n°2, II, 12-c : Thao NHOUY, « Les cadres français au Laos », Al Sola [Sanatorium Al Sola, Amélie les Bains (Pyrénées Orientales)], 9 mars 1947, tapuscrit, 7 ff.

Au Cambodge, on a proclamé l'amnistie à l'égard des rebelles. Pourquoi ne ferait-on pas autant au Laos ? Ne faut-il pas éviter de laisser au Siam cette centaine de jeunes gens qui sont de formation française et qui peuvent encore nous rendre beaucoup de services dans le relèvement de notre pays ?

Je m'excuse, Monsieur le Directeur, de vous importuner ; mais je crois de mon devoir de Laotien de vous signaler l'erreur de la politique du gouvernement laotien actuel qui fait semblant d'ignorer ce problème. Cette attitude néfaste n'est dictée, à mon avis, que par des considérations égoïstes et des rancunes personnelles.

Mon état de santé ne me permet pas encore de déplacement, mais je reste à votre disposition, Monsieur le Directeur, pour vous fournir tous les renseignements en mon pouvoir.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Directeur, l'expression de mes sentiments très respectueux et dévoués.

[signature]

[p. 3]

P. S.- Je me permets également de joindre aux pièces dont il est question dans cette lettre un résumé des efforts que j'ai entrepris dans ce sens au Laos[111] ainsi que copie d'une lettre de M. le Commissaire Régional pour le Sud Laos[112] rendant compte des conversations que nous avons eues ensemble en Avril-Mai 1946.

M. Thao NHOUY
Sanatorium AL SOLA
AMELIE LES BAINS
(Pyrénées Orient.)

2) What was Nhouy stating in his text « Le Laos français et les laotiens 'rebelles' », Al Sola, Amélie les Bains (Pyrénées Orientales)], mars 1947, tapuscrit 31 ff.

He was above all asking France in March 1947 to make peace with, pardon, grant clemency and reconcile with the Issara. "It is customary in all countries for governments or men the day after a political victory to show clemency and magnanimity." He spoke especially with concern for many innocent people who were simply caught up in events and branded as Issara when not really adhering to its cause, but nonetheless exiled to Thailand. They were "men who deeply love their country and who thought they were doing the right thing by remaining at their post at times when their country risked being taken over by foreigners." He saw how important they were to the future of Laos, and how dangerous it was to have them in exile fighting against the Lao government. In some places in his text he did talk about his visions for a new Laos (ລາວໃຫມ່) that was democratic,[113] unified, and autonomous with Lao trained by France. To Nhouy, it was

[111] *Cf*. LoC, Fonds Mus, Boîte n°2, II, 12-d. Thao NHOUY, « Le Laos français et les laotiens 'rebelles' », [sanatorium] Al Sola, Amélie les Bains (Pyrénées Orientales), mars 1947, tapuscrit 31 ff.
[112] The letter in question is not included in the Mus collection at the LoC.
[113] Thus he wrote "there must also reign there an atmosphere of freedom and grandeur… France must show… that by its liberal qualities as a great and old democracy, it is still worthy of its role as liberator and emancipator of the people."

dangerous for France not to reconcile with the Issara. And he urged for some solution to be found quickly before those in exile fell further under Thai or Vietnamese influence.

He spoke of the violence between French and Lao in 1945-1946 as unthinkable and reported several attempts by the Issara to negotiate with French from October 1945 to April 1946 to avoid bloodshed. Thus he wrote "I have always, for my part, deplored these departures, these ruptures of connection between the Laotian government and the French government. For lack of seeing each other, for lack of being able to exchange view points, for lack of contact, we went, like Barbarians, to insult each other and fight in the dark so to speak without pretext and without explanation at the start and with no outcome on the horizon except the law of the strongest. And this happened between two peoples who loved each other, one of whom had more than one reason for gratitude toward the other." Elsewhere he added "Even today, I remain astonished by the French obstinacy in ignoring [the Issara] and its refusal to engage in any conversations…" and contrasted this to French negotiations with Ho Chi Minh at the same time in Hanoi. Nhouy had published in several French publications (*France-Asie*, *Sud-est*, *Bulletin des Amis du Laos*, *L'Asie Nouvelle*, Kinnari) so he was connected with scholars in France. Nhouy's engagement with his connections in France in 1947 is a highly important part of 20th century Lao history though it is too little known.

Nhouy had been a member of the Issara, but switched sides in April 1946. It seems he did not flee to Thailand with the other Issara, but chose instead to remain in Vientiane after it was reconquered by France. So he is able to provide an uncanny first hand and insiders' account of the Issara that is especially valuable. He notes important aspects of them such as their internal divisions along ethnic lines. Indeed, he saw those Lao Issara who had been in exile in Thailand since July(-December) 1940 as being "Siamese" whereas he saw himself as the true Laotian. He also observed Issara revolutionary violence against their opponents, the loyalists providing an additional source on those to the accounts already known by scholars. He even "narrowly escaped prison" himself when recounting Issara violence against Lao loyalists and wrote "All pro-French people…went into hiding." Yet Nhouy did not flee because "this Laotian and Franco-Laotian heritage had to be defended against the vandals and the excited." Nhouy suggested some motivations for those joining the Issara, including to avoid being punished for illegal acts committed up to that point. He spoke of Vietminh and Chinese urging on events. He even spoke of those who were merely taking advantage of the situation and were not espousing any higher cause. Intriguingly, Nhouy did claim that some Issara acts were highly popular, such as the dethroning of the unloved Luang Prabang monarchy 10 November 1945 and the establishment of democracy. Nhouy Abhay is a significant observer of these events not only for his first hand accounts but also for his unique vantage point straddling the Issara-loyalist divide.

Overall, the text Nhouy wrote does intend to stress the loyalties of Lao to France. Thus he refers to the Issara as rebels (as other French documents of the time did). And he writes "there is not, young or old, an anti-French Laotian." Yet that is doubtful, especially where Nhouy's account claims that "at least nine tenths" of the population "would like to see the return of French domination." Elsewhere he speaks of "the total adhesion of the Laotian people" to France's cause; and many other places all make the same point over and over again about the loyalty of Lao to France. These are exaggerations by Nhouy to make his other points, especially about reconciliation, negotiation and amnesty with the Issara, more palatable and persuasive. Nhouy did criticize certain local French on the ground in Vientiane and elsewhere who mistreated Lao in events in August-September 1945 (e.g. firing Khammo Vilay for anti-French activities, talk of reprisals), thus writing "deep wounds of self-esteem were unnecessarily made and French prestige was compromised." So while Nhouy could speak of the benefit of French rule he nonetheless was not without criticism but he limited it to individuals in Laos at the time.

Nhouy was also critical of the Vietnamese civil servants who dominated the administration "we wanted an autonomous Laos where the Laotian would have his place in his own country and not be drowned in a flood of foreign civil servants…" And he clearly wanted more local government of its own. Nhouy was also upset by the removal of Prince Phetsarath Rattanavong on 7 September 1945 by the then Luang Prabang king Sisavang Vong (r.1904-1959). To Nhouy, Phetsarath represented the best of Lao leaders and was a symbol for Lao self-rule. Interestingly, where Nhouy discussed attempts by the Issara to negotiate with France Nhouy claimed that the Issara did not demand total independence (an impossible utopia, he said) and felt France had some role to play while still beginning a "more democratic and more Laotian" policy. To Nhouy the Issara were "not enemies of France, but her children."

3) What was Nhouy stating in his text Thao NHOUY, « Les cadres français au Laos », Al Sola, Amélie les Bains (Pyrénées Orientales)], 9 mars 1947, tapuscrit, 7 ff.

In the other text referred to in Nhouy's letter, one notes again Nhouy promotes the idea that Lao are not disloyal to France, writing "Laos is a country without political dissent." He discusses the small print media of the time which was only just beginning in Laos circa 1947. He also mentions ineffective French officials giving the example of those who expensively construct a useless wall only for the next official to come and at great expense have the same wall torn down. He also discusses the Lao Luang Prabang King Sisavang Vong and how in terms of politics everything revolved around him and he was made out to be the "sole arbiter," "his voice was the only one heard" and "for the past 20 years a single man has represented the entire country." Nhouy also promotes the idea (and is quite critical of it) that the country is governed by personal interests rather than the common welfare. This is another of Nhouy's ideas about Laos that was very influential in shaping historical interpretations by Jean Deuve, Bernard Fall and

Martin Stuart-Fox among others. Thus Nhouy writes "…instead of considering the best interests of the country, [one must] focus solely on the interests of a particular individual or clan. Everything happens in small, closed circles: within the family!"

Intriguingly Nhouy does include some criticisms that align with critiques of French rule that were also appearing in Issara texts (authored by Katay Don Sasorith). Nhouy complained about how low level or poor quality French officials were sent to serve in critical posts in Laos, as "Laos was considered the dumping ground of Indochina or a penal colony." Those who had made errors, failed or had a bad record were sent to Laos. Another problem Nhouy mentioned was how Vietnamese living in Laos gave the French a bad impression of Lao. More importantly, the French had overrelied on employing Vietnamese in the colonial administration of Laos and did not employ Lao. Thus Nhouy writes "for more than 40 years, a succession of officials in Laos "swore" by the Vietnamese; adopting the comfortable policy of least resistance, they gave no thought to training local [Lao] personnel…" Such that to Nhouy the French thought "without the Annamite, Laos would not exist…"

Also like Katay Don Sasorith and other Issara, Nhouy included pointed criticisms of the existing French literature about Laos. He took issue with Alfred Raquez's oversexualized accounts of Lao women. He also argued against the racist stereotype of "su-su" that he identified with Roland Meyer. Katay and other Issara also were pushing back against French writings about Laos (especially Auguste Pavie's, to the Issara mythical, "Conquest of Hearts").[114] Nhouy added critically "Not one of them suspected that Laos wanted to live." He only viewed the work by Charles Rochet as positive.[115] But it is interesting that Nhouy Abhay writing along the same lines even after he left the Issara and "returned to the King" in April 1946 as a loyalist (and he similarly was highly critical of the King just as the Issara were). His writings may in fact have been more impactful than Katay's at the time given that Katay and the other Issara were writing in exile in Bangkok and so were easily ignored while Nhouy was writing as a Lao who had accepted to some degree French recolonization. Yet Nhouy was quite scathing in his assessment writing that under French rule "Laos was not fortunate enough to be loved: a poor country, life without comforts, a blocked career." And Nhouy also wrote against long established negative views of Lao writing "It took the brutal tearing of the veil by recent painful events for us to realize that, beyond their smiles and resignation, the Laotian people possessed many previously unrecognized qualities: physical and moral courage; patience and perseverance; an aptitude for discipline and hard work…"

Nhouy concluded by writing about the qualities of future cadre of Laos. They must be "Men who love Laos and are determined to build this country with and

[114] On Katay's anticolonial writings see WOLFSON-FORD, R., « Xāt Lao: Imagining the Lao nation through race, history, and language », [*in*] Zhouxiang LU (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Nationalism in East and Southeast Asia*, New York, Routledge, 2023, pp. 504-518.

[115] ROCHET, Charles, *Pays Lao, Le Laos dans la tourmente 1939-1945*, Paris, J. Vigneau, 1946, 277 p.

for the Laotian people." He called for officials who were not merely good at writing reports or who were easily swayed by flattery, but who wanted to make a real lasting difference, were "free from prejudice" and "determined to show the true face of France…" Nhouy called for new French cadres to also learn the language and customs of the country and be posted there for longer periods.[116] He suggested those French who had fought alongside loyalist Lao forces recently could serve in Laos. He concluded by noting that to improve things there should be no more factions and that the new leaders "will strive to train Laotians in all fields and use only them, for they will not forget that it was the constant and widespread use of Annamite intermediaries in Laos that brought about the immense misfortune of that country."

Afterwards: Democracy, reform Buddhism, anti-coup actions, and skepticism of neutralism

On 10 December 1953 Nhouy Abhay in his role as Foreign Minister gave a speech at the Kingdom of Laos/Royal Lao Government (RLG) National Assembly commemorating the fifth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.[117] He spoke of liberal democracy as universal, and said it did not begin in 18th century France or the USA, but had long been part of human history. He saw its failures and shortcomings in the West as only being fully confronted and redeemed in non-Western countries like Laos. He concluded by challenging Lao youths to defend the new Lao democracy saying "Rights are won, they are not freely given." He added that "this struggle" to maintain democracy "is not wagged against this or that power, but against human nature itself. It is against our bad instincts, it is against ourselves that we must fight so that the rights of our neighbors are protected, so that our own human dignity is respected."[118] It was a rousing speech that spoke of a broader RLG elite commitment to liberal democracy since they first established a parliamentary system of government on 12 October 1945 (and even held the first democratic elections in February-March 1946 before advancing Lao loyalist-French armies).

Thao Nhouy Abhay was an important thinker on Buddhism among Lao intellectuals, and he himself wrote several works on Buddhism after 1945.[119] Nhouy had advocated for a reform of Buddhism to modernize it.[120] His reforms called for the revival of religious practice, renovation of temples, and the rise of

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[116] Later US officials and Vietnamese cadres working in Laos realized the effectiveness of learning Lao language and customs.

[117] WOLFSON-FORD, R., *Forsaken Causes Liberal Democracy and Anticommunism in Cold War Laos*, Madison, University of Wisconsin-Madison Press, 2024, pp. 82-86.

[118] *Ibid*, pp. 85-86.

[119] See for instance Thao Nhouy Abhay, *Le Bouddhisme Laotien. Conférence prononcée à Vientiane le 14 mai 1949*, Saigon, Imprimerie Française d'Outre-Mer, 1949, 13 p. And *IDEM*, *Aspects du pays Laos*, Vientiane, Éditions Comité Littéraire Lao, 1956, 128 p. He often wrote authoritative accounts of Lao Buddhism for Western audiences such as the *France-Asie* journal.

[120] WOLFSON-FORD, R., « The Committee for Defense of National Interests: An anti-communist, Buddhist nationalist movement (1958-1960) », conference paper presented at Interrogating Buddhism and National Workshop hosted by the Burma Studies Program, Oxford University, January 2018, 31 p.

a new highly-disciplined and well-educated elite core of monks to lead the revival. Further, in an issue commemorating the death of Mahatma Mohandas K. Gandhi, Nhouy Abhay wrote a piece illustrating how Buddhism could provide a way out of violence in Laos while noting the important non-violent model set by Gandhi. In the text he recalled how Buddhism's arrival to Laos in the 1300s had stopped civil war but more likely he was thinking of more recent experiences of the Issara-Loyalist civil war (and presaging the coming RLG-PL civil war). [121] This idea was clearly influential among Lao intellectuals and politicians of Nhouy's time, as well as Pierre Somchine Nginn, Souvanna Phouma and Bong Souvannavong among others.

Nhouy spoke of Gandhi as the "living image of the venerated Buddha, apostle of mercy and non-violence."[122] Nhouy meditated on Gandhi's death writing "Sadly, Gandhi is no more. It is with complete Buddhist fervor that we meditate today on his death, a death that once again verifies the teaching of our Buddha: that life is Pain and Penance."[123] Nhouy denounced Gandhi's untimely and shocking death by those who were too strongly nationalist, not unlike what he himself had witnessed in Laos during recent events, "Just as the Bodhisattva of old had, to test him, enraged Devadatta who saw only hatred and blood, Gandhi, too, in the evening of his life, at the very moment when he reached his goal, when he could believe that beings were finally reconciled, Gandhi knew sacrilegious men who did not hesitate to kill their father. "I have laid my heart bare, and you have not understood me," said the great poet Rabindranath Tagore. This is indeed the meaning and the profound lesson that in the final analysis we must draw from these great lives."[124] Nhouy and his peers admired Gandhi as a conservative anticolonialist, one that could be both a nationalist and anti-colonialist without advocating violent revolution. Nhouy expressed his hope that Gandhi would break free of the cycle of *saṃsāra* and be reborn at the time of the future Buddha Maitreya to obtain nirvāṇa/nibbāna: "We therefore hope that the soul of the Sage will finally reach the end of the cycle of his existences and that he will go and wait, among the Arahats finally freed from rebirth, for the coming of the future Buddha." Nhouy concluded by writing that the lesson of Gandhi's life was that "violence serves no purpose and only creates pain."[125]

Later toward the end of his life in 1963 Nhouy gave an interview to a US State Department Official, Perry Stieglitz.[126] Nhouy was described by Perry as "the shining intellectual" of the Abhays. "A singularly learned man, he could have taught French literature in French but preferred to be the most notable scholar of Lao literature in Laos."[127] In the exchange that followed Nhouy asked Perry "…Do you believe in this Neutrality of ours?" Perry replied "Yes, don't you?" to

[121] Nhouy Abhay, « Le Mahâtma au Laos », *France-Asie. Revue de culture et de synthèse franco-Asiatique*, 4e année , t. IV, novembre 1968, pp. 264-265.
[122] *Ibid.*
[123] *Ibid.*
[124] *Ibid.*
[125] *Ibid*, p. 265.
[126] STIEGLITZ, Perry, *In A Little Kingdom*, M. E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York & London, 1990, pp. 76-80.
[127] *Ibid*, p. 76.

which Nhouy replied "No…. the prince [Souvanna Phouma] is wrong. No man, no nation, can remain in the middle."[128] Nhouy added that Souvanna was "dangerous" because "he is unable to recognize the hypocrisy that prevails. But those of us on the right deceive ourselves less than do our cousins on the left. They pretend to be solely concerned with the well-being of the masses, a pretext they use to increase their personal power and wealth. We on the other side can admit, even if reluctantly, that we care primarily for ourselves. I admit that I enjoy wealth… And yet, my young friend, we are all victims, all without exception, and our choice is limited. I prefer to capitulate to capitalism. Souvanna will eventually have to make the same choice."[129]

Nhouy Abhay was one of the lone voices to speak out against the CIA backed 25 December 1959 coup by the Royal Lao Army (RLA) and the Committee for Defense of National Interests (CDIN) that propelled Phoumi Nosavan to gain control of the RLA and ministry of defense and interior.[130] In a meeting of the RLA generals involved in the coup and the new cabinet, Nhouy, as deputy prime minister, rebuked the generals saying the RLA "should always remain impartial and neutral; that it did not have to deal with politics, its essential role, and its only, being to serve."[131] Nhouy bravely spoke out against the generals for not adhering to the norm of civilian rule.[132] He was one of the few voices to speak out against the coup (the first in the RLG period of 1945-1975) saying generals had no place in democratic Laos. Even so, he, and other critics, like Bong Souvannavong, served in the first cabinet after Phoumi Nosavan's forces retook Vientiane from Kong Lè's forces in the devastating Battle of Vientiane 13-16 December 1960.[133] He died on 1 October 1963.[134] His *New York Times* obituary reported that "he strongly opposed American support for a neutralist government and said in 1962 that it would lead to a Communist regime in Laos within two years." So while he was critical of a strict neutralist form he also strenuously criticized W. Averell Harriman, US Assistant Secretary of State for threatening the RLG to force it to enter a second coalition with neutralist and Pathet Lao forces in March 1962.[135]

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[128] *Ibid*, pp. 78-79.
[129] *Ibid*, p. 80.
[130] For Nhouy's criticism of the coup see WOLFSON-FORD, R.*, Forsaken Causes […], op. cit*., pp. 127-128. For the CIA's role in the coup see CONBOY, Ken, *Spies on the Mekong: CIA Clandestine Operations in Laos*, Casemate, 2021, vii + 246 p.
[131] *Ibid*, p. 128.
[132] According to a *Times* magazine report even though Kou Abhay was the prime minister January-April 1960 Nhouy was "the man really running things." "Laos: Brother Act" *Time* February 1 1960. https://time.com/archive/6622203/laos-brother-act/. The story also notes that Nhouy was the "quintessence of culture," an honors graduate from the Sorbonne, was the more worldly and efficient one [brother]… Nhouy cultivated a taste for wine, women and gambling, and turned out some of the country's most highly polished poetry." Nhouy was also quoted as saying "I wish fervently that the future may give us peace, that we can always remain a placid people." And asked about the RLA after the coup Nhouy again was critical saying "The army must serve," he said grandly. "That is its basic and only role."
[133] He also served in the Kou Abhay government formed after the 1959 coup as deputy prime minister and minister of interior. In this role he may have some oversight of the notoriously "rigged" general elections of 24 April 1960 which were rigged by RLA and CIA officials among others.
[134] New York Times, « Nhouy Abhay, Laos Minister, Editor and Ex-Government Aide for Education Dies », *New York Times*, October 2, 1963, p. 38.
[135] *Cf*. "We find it tragic and scabrous that Harriman should come and say that it is we who are responsible for the destruction of our country," Mr. [Nhouy] Abhay said. Nhouy objected to Harriman's assessment